

Genesis

A Verse-By-Verse Study

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(Rev 4)

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GENESIS 1:1 (IN THE BEGINNING)

Today's talk is as much about thinking clearly as it is anything else. We all have things we think clearly on and things we don't think clearly on. Some people think clearly on politics. Whether you like Rush Limbaugh or not he is extremely insightful on the political situation in America.

My dad is a big sports fan and can analyze a football play and see everything that happens in it when I don't even know where the football went. When I was younger, my mom got a book about football, something like "Football for Dummies" so that she could think more clearly on what was happening during a game. I never read that book.

Some people can analyze numbers in great detail and make equations in their heads. They can think clearly on mathematics. Ben Franklin used to do mathematical calculations just to relax.

Every discipline takes time and mental effort and we normally only think clearly in the things we're used to or are concerned about but often don't think clearly on the greater and more important issues of life. For example abortion – most people have never thought the issue through, but they simply nod their support for what is only surface deep or what is emotionally satisfying.

When looked at it through the proper lens, the issue of abortion becomes painfully clear, but we may not want to face such clarity simply because it challenges us morally and who wants to face the moral issue of killing another human being?

Even greater than the issue of abortion is the ultimate issue – what is the nature of God? If we can determine this, then every other issue subservient to it becomes far more important in the eternal scheme of things. So today, we're going to learn to think more clearly about the God of Creation.

If any of you have ever seen the 3D picture magic photos that used to be popular, you know that they look like arbitrary lines. But if you look at them for a while, a hidden image will eventually jump out at you. Once you've seen the image, you can't "not" see it – it's as evident as a smile on child with an ice cream cone. But until you can see it, it's as hidden from you as the back side of the sun.

I hope after today, you'll see things about God a little more clearly and that in the future, you'll take time to think the larger issues through in a way which will bring you closer to the Creator.

If you're old enough, you may know the song In the Beginning by the Moody Blues and you might remember how the song starts –

*I think, I think I am, therefore I am, I think.

*Of course you are my bright little star, I've miles and miles of files
Pretty files of your forefather's fruit
and now to suit our great computer,
You're magnetic ink.

*I'm more than that, I know I am, at least, I think I must be.

Those words were a play on the Cartesian conclusion – I think, therefore I am.

Rene Descartes was a 17th century French philosopher who went on a journey of doubting everything... He asked himself, "What can I know is real?" He began to doubt that he was able to see things, to touch things, to smell things – "Can I be absolutely certain about anything?"

Eventually he locked himself in a closet and determined not to come out until he could come to some sense of reality. In a moment of clarity, he discovered one thing he simply couldn't doubt – *Cogito ergo sum* or "I think, therefore I am." If you can think then you must exist.

From finding certainty in this simple, yet profound statement, Descartes built an entire system of philosophy which leads from –

- 1) the mental knowledge of self (there is mind), to
- 2) an eidological (from the Greek word for "idea") and a causal argument for God (God being the cause of reality), to
- 3) the necessity for a material substance to support the physical sensations around us (taste, smell, sight, etc.)

In essence Descartes went from I am, to God is, to this is.

Introduction: Because we're sitting here on solid ground, there's a logical sequence of thoughts by which we can deduce, and which by necessity must be true, about how we got here. This isn't a Christian or even a Jewish idea, but is a universal knowledge that's available to all people. The problem is, it takes thought and consideration to realize what is otherwise amazingly evident. It's mentally challenging to go beyond "I wonder how we got here" and so most people never stop to think it through.

When someone comes to the realization that we are in fact here and then thinks on the process correctly, there are normally one of two reactions –

- 1) Awe and a desire to know more, or
- 2) Denial and a desire to suppress the truth.

In essence we say to God either, "You are what I strive to be, or You are what I strive to flee."

I'm going to give you these reasonings and some of them you'll probably grasp immediately, and some of them may seem as foreign to you as Arnold Swarzenegger's accent. But if you take the time to ponder them, you will be able to properly process the God of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. You will also be able to clearly determine that no other god presented in human history meets these twelve requirements.

These are called the First Principles; there are 12 of them. Before I give these 12 principles, I want to tell you that these are something we should all know, but I, like most other people had never even considered them until they were presented to me at college.

I was talking to Rhoda over here a while ago and brought these up. I pulled them out and started going through each of them and after the first four or so, she said, "Oh I already know these. My parents talked about these things to me." If young girl from Nazareth in Israel is taught these by her parents, then we have no excuse for not knowing them as well.

Concerning these 12 principles, understand first that God is the author of reason and nothing unreasonable will come from Him or describe Him. As Norman Geisler says it –

"He created us to be like Himself, so the basic principles of reason are not arbitrarily imposed **on** God, rather they come **from** God. ... God is rational, and humans are made in His image. So using logic is not opposed to revelation; it is a part of it."

And as Isaiah says, “Come, let us reason together says the LORD.”

We didn’t invent these principles; rather we discovered them. This might be a bit confusing at first, but by the time we finish, it should be cleared up for you.

- 1) Being Is = The Principle of Existence
- 2) Being Is Being = The Principle of Identity
- 3) Being Is Not Nonbeing = The Principle of Non-contradiction
- 4) Either Being or Nonbeing = The Principle of the Excluded Middle
- 5) Nonbeing Cannot Cause Being = The Principle of Causality
- 6) Contingent Being Cannot Cause Contingent Being = The Principle of Contingency (or Dependency)
- 7) Only Necessary Being Can Cause a Contingent Being = The Positive Principle of Modality
- 8) Necessary Being Cannot Cause A Necessary Being = The Negative Principle of Modality
- 9) Every Contingent Being Is Caused by a Necessary Being = The Principle of Existential Causality
- 10) Necessary Being Exists = Principle of Existential Necessity
- 11) Contingent Being Exists = Principle of Existential Contingency
- 12) Necessary Being Is Similar to the Contingent Being It Causes = Principle of Analogy

These principles are undeniable or reducible to the undeniable. In other words, any attempt to deny them will validate them. Take the first one for example. To doubt one’s own existence is self-defeating and, honestly, stupid. The principle of existence states that in order to deny existence one would have to exist.

If we exist, then we came from somewhere. Today, we’ll talk about the One who brought us into existence. The psalmist says –

On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night. Psalm 63:6

Text Verse: *B’reshit bara elohim eth ha’shemayim v’eth ha’eret.*

¹*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The God of Creation

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Aristotle said, “As if the now had remained the same, time would not have existed.”

Imagine an artist getting ready to paint a painting. We’re going to use this analogy for our points today, but even at point one – The God of Creation – it’s lacking good comparison. The God of creation is the One who created time, space, and matter. None of these existed before He created them and they are products of His infinite wisdom and power. But for the lack of a better analogy, we’ll assume that the paint, canvas, and easel aren’t real. Instead, the white silky canvas will simply resemble the nothingness before creation which will come to be something.

Another point, we think sequentially – from one thing to another, but God doesn’t do this. He knows everything immediately and intuitively, so when I say He thought X and then Y, He didn’t really think this way – you see, even thinking reflects an act of change. But there is no change in God. We can know this without the Bible but the Bible bears it out in several verses – “I the Lord your God do not change” for example.

To understand the God of Creation, we need to know what He is like. The Bible says “God is Spirit.” And we could actually know this without the Bible. Before Einstein presented the theory of relativity, monotheistic thinking had already believed in a beginning. The Bible says it; I believe it, but it sure would be nice to prove apart from the Bible. And so very intelligent minds developed ways of proving that time didn’t always exist.

They first needed to determine if the universe really had a beginning. This can be demonstrated in several ways, some more philosophical and some more scientific. One simple way is to look at time. If time always existed, there would be no Present. We couldn’t reach right now, here on Turtle Beach if there was no beginning to time. This can be represented by an infinite line of books. If the line of books has no beginning, then you can never get to the last book. You’re never starting so you’re never ending.

To help you understand that, suppose that infinite line of books is red, then black, red then black... If you took out all the red books, you wouldn’t have decreased the line by even one and yet you would have an infinitely large pile of red books taking up all the space in the universe. This is the philosophical argument. The one from physics is similar but deals with the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics and useable energy. Both come to the

same conclusion and are irrefutable. There is no way around these arguments and there WAS a beginning to time.

In addition to these concepts, comes Relativity (1920) which finally, once and forever, proved that time, space, and matter are co-dependent and came into existence at exactly the same moment.

From this understanding that time has a beginning we can use an Arabic argument called the Kalam which states that if something had a beginning, it had a cause. As the universe did, in fact, have a beginning, it must have had a cause. As an infinite series of causes is impossible so there must have been an uncaused Cause; a necessary Being. (Existential Necessity)

However, this doesn't explain WHY God is Spirit. The reason for this is that if the universe had a beginning – meaning time, space, and matter, then those things didn't exist before they existed. Therefore, whatever was before those things has no parts...no parts. It also means that the Creator is pure Actuality – or no potential. If He had potential, then there would be change. Change implies time and time exists only with space and matter. Therefore He simply is. The Bible bears this out – I AM WHO I AM.

This reasoning, if properly understood, eliminates all other religious expressions but monotheism – you're left with One God.

Polytheism is the belief that there are many gods. In order to differ (as in one god from another), a being would have to lack something found in another being. If this were the case, the entity wouldn't be unlimited or perfect – they would be lacking something. If one is lacking what the other has then this implies change. Change implies time, and time exists only with space and matter. Remember the nothingness of the silky white canvas? This ain't it.

Further, as previously stated, such limited beings would be contingent and contingent beings can't be caused by other contingent beings nor can they cause other contingent beings. (*contingency). Therefore, anything that comes to be must have been caused by a Necessary Being. Polytheism is incorrect.

Pantheism is the belief that all is God. It denies the reality of limited and finite beings. However, it's painfully evident that change occurs in us – such as my beard growing or getting gray – which indicates we're finite. Any real change indicates a being separate and distinct from God because God is unchanging.

The very nature of pantheism is self-refuting because it claims that individuality is merely an illusion of our minds. If this were true then pantheism must be false because there could be no mind to explain the illusion; it is a self-defeating system of belief. A circle of stupidity, if you will. This thinking is kind of like what Descartes faced as he tried so desperately to get away from a mind-only belief.

Because pantheism believes that everything is God, this would also imply that everything always existed. Like before, this is impossible as the nothingness of the silky white canvas is violated by the somethingness of the ever-present universe. Something implies matter and matter implies both space and time. This isn't an acceptable nothingness – especially when something isn't nothing. Pantheism is incorrect.

Panentheism means “all in God.” It holds that God is in the universe like a mind is in a body. However, we've already seen that God is pure actuality – He doesn't change; and He is absolutely simple. Being pure actuality, He has no potential.

Panentheism looks at God as changing (having potential) and finite. He is a director of the universe rather than the Creator. This would mean God changes *essentially* to us. Instead, any change between God and the creation is *relational*, not *essential*. In panentheism, there is a confusion of the world process with God.

Because this says all is in God, then the pretty silky white canvas we're supposed to start with is already filled with the creation that isn't supposed to exist. Time, space, and matter, clutter it up, regardless of the form it takes. Panentheism is incorrect.

In the end, we are left with the inescapable facts. God exists, He is eternal, He is One, and He is Spirit – Monotheism. And, this monotheistic God is prior to His creation, not a part of it.

As the Bible says –

“You are My witnesses,” says the LORD, “And My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, And understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me. Isaiah 43:10

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. Isaiah 40:28

II. The God above Creation

Now that we've had a small, a very small, taste of the God **of** creation, we should look at the God **above** Creation. A lot of this point is tied up in the previous point, but I've separated them so that we can see the nature of Creation in relation to the Creator.

In the beginning... God. He is all there was before there was a beginning. There wasn't time, there wasn't space, and there wasn't matter. Because He created those things, He is separate and distinct from them. Even now, while we're enjoying them, He is not a part of them in the sense that He doesn't change with the change going on around us. He is above His creation.

Although we tend to want to ask the question, "How long has God existed?" the question itself is a category mistake. God is eternal, but not in the sense of time going from point to point, like seconds ticking on a clock or as the sun moves above. Instead, He simply is. There is nothing to count out His days. What we perceive as time is a part of what He has created and therefore He is above it.

Time is merely a result of God's desire to fellowship with His creatures.

Imagine now our invisible, eternal, unchanging Creator getting ready to paint His creation into existence. There is no movement in Him as He does so. He is the unmoved mover. There is no change in thought as it happens. When He paints the silky white canvas, it is an act of His very nature – "Let there be..." is how the Bible describes it – "Let there be light," "let there be a firmament," etc. but the words come from a concept, the concept doesn't come from the words.

How did God create and what is His current situation in respect to the creation? There are three possibilities concerning how He did it

– *Ex Deo*, or out of God – meaning out of Himself; *Ex morphine hules*, or out of shapeless, unformed, pre-existing matter; or *Ex Nihilo* – out of nothing. Only one is possible and the only possible one is the one also presented in the Bible.

Ex Deo, or "out of God" is what pantheism believes, but if everything is God, then time always existed because matter must also have always existed – in God. But we've already seen that time going back infinitely is wrong. *Ex Deo* is not what happened.

Ex morphine hules or “out of shapeless, unformed, pre-existent matter” is what panentheism necessitates. As with Pantheism, you have the problem of an infinite regress. If matter always existed and time is linked to matter, then time would also have always existed. This was put to rest by Einstein with General Relativity. Creation *ex morphine hules* did not occur.

The only possible explanation for us sitting here at Turtle Beach and listening to the wind blow through the trees is creation *Ex Nihilo* or out of nothing. The Bible bears this out on numerous occasions. It says that God is eternal, God is Spirit, God doesn't change, and so on. And the psalms say how God did it –

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.
He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap;
He lays up the deep in storehouses.
Let all the earth fear the LORD;
Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.
For He spoke, and it was *done*;
He commanded, and it stood fast. Psalm 33:6-9

God simply spoke the universe into existence. As God doesn't have a mouth, the psalmist used a metaphor to explain creation via the Word, or the Logos, which is Jesus Christ; the Word of God. In His infinite wisdom and from His very nature, He created something from nothing.

Understanding this, we need to consider something more about the God above creation. “Does He still actively work in the universe?” Or, did He create and then end His work?

Deism is a theistic approach to God – one God – which holds to a Creator who initiated everything and then left for vacation – in essence, God is like a watchmaker who wound up the clock and departed. However, the universe is a dependent or contingent system. Because the universe we live in came from nothing, it could – in an instant – return to nothing. God is, even right now, holding all things together by the power of His word.

Because the universe is dependent, it always needs an independent Being on which it depends; it needs a Sustainer. Let's suppose the universe was created and didn't need to be sustained. What would be the result? It would become a Necessary Being; the universe would become God – an impossibility as point 8 of the First Principles

demonstrates. Because it's not necessary, it is contingent. Because it is contingent, it cannot support itself. If God didn't actively sustain the universe, it would simply cease to exist. Deism is incorrect.

The Bible specifically bears this out – in Colossians, in Hebrews, John, etc.

“For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. **(The God OF creation)**. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” **(The God ABOVE creation)**. Colossians 1:16, 17

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds **(The God OF creation)**; who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power **(The God ABOVE creation)**. ... Hebrews 1:1-3

Both of these verses support what we can know even without the Bible. Jesus made exactly the same claim in the book of John –

“My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.” John 5:1

The God above creation is the God before and the sustainer of creation. The vast blank tapestry was filled with the thoughts of His infinitely intelligent mind. Through His Word, He created all things, and by His Word He sustains those things. The little spider in its web and the great sea creatures came from the same unlimited source of wisdom.

The red giant stars and the protons swirling around the nucleus of atoms were thought into existence by Him. Though to us the sizes are immensely large or unbelievably small, to Him they are equally known and equally understandable. It is no more effort for Him to create a dandelion than it is to create a galaxy full of a billion stars.

III. The God in Creation

The God of creation is eternal and unchanging. The God above creation is unlimited in intelligence, power, and place. The God in Creation is present, active, and caring. He is committed to His creation and directs it for His purposes. These purposes have one

ultimate goal – to bring Him the glory He deserves. When He spoke through the prophet Isaiah, He proclaimed this to His creatures –

*I am the LORD, that is My name;
And My glory I will not give to another, Isaiah 42:8*

He is the God in creation, but He is not the God as creation.

How is God above and yet in His creation? He is in it like a painter making a painting. He is separate and distinct from it and yet He is active in the process. He doesn't change in relation to His creation though, but His creation changes in relation to Him. As He applies the brushstrokes of His wisdom, the creation is directed and formed into the beauty He purposes for it.

When He acts upon creation, it occurs in time – the time He created – and yet He isn't subject to the time. When He gets angry or responds in punishment to our sins, it doesn't occur in the sequence we are familiar with. In other words, when I get angry I first see an offense, then I get angry at the offense, and then I respond in whatever way to the offense. All of this occurs in the stream of time and it is a developing process.

God's anger doesn't work this way. He doesn't watch us committing an offense. He already knew the offense before we existed. He doesn't then get angry at the offense. He was angry at it before we existed. And He doesn't respond to the offense after it occurs. He responded before He created. The tapestry was completed the moment it began.

As Henry Bergson said, "Time is what keeps everything from happening all at once."

*Time is you see,
Is something made for you and for me,
Were time not to be a part of the plan,
Then in the mind of God alone.
Would exist the state of man.*

*Oh, but He spoke and we came to be,
Yes, God spoke and there was you... and there is me.*

*He made us with a special plan
His image-bearer, whom He called man*

*But we neglect him, yes... we do,
There's no God... just me and you*

*But when we get our thoughts just right,
And clarity returns to our sight,
It's so plain and clear to see,
He created you and... He created me.*

The Bible shows us that everything we do, every move we make, every thought we have is occurring right in the presence of God. It does this numerous times and in specific verses. When asked about the resurrection of people who had died 1500 or more years earlier, Jesus told us this –

*“But even Moses showed in the *burning bush passage* that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘*the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.*’ For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, **for all live to Him.**”*

-Luke 20:37, 38

To God, every moment in time is present to Him. From Adam in Genesis to the last person to be born at the end of Revelation and everyone in between are alive in His mind. He is right there viewing His tapestry of creation.

Paul reminded the Athenians of this –

And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being... Acts 17:26-28

IV. The Personal God

Hector Berlioz said, “Time is a great teacher, but unfortunately it kills all its pupils.” We’ve seen the God of creation, the God above creation, and the God in (but not as) creation. Because of what He is like, we know monotheism is true and all other religious expressions are by default false. But can we finally define which form of monotheism is the only one which is accurately portrayed? We’re left with three possibilities – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

The answer is yes, we can know that only one accurately reflects the nature of God. Judaism and Islam teach that God is a monad – a single God not represented by a Godhead. Biblical Judaism, which I will call uncompleted Christianity, naturally leads to Christianity and this isn't the Judaism I'm speaking of. The modern form of Judaism, based on the Talmud and rabbinic teachings is what I'm equating with this doctrine.

If God is a monad, then we wouldn't exist. The 12th of our 12 First Principles is the Principle of Analogy. If you remember, it states – “Necessary Being Is Similar to the Contingent Beings it Causes.” This principle clearly sets aside rabbinic Judaism and Islam as possibilities concerning the nature of God.

The question one must ask is, “How could a being that didn't understand fellowship create anything beyond Himself containing fellowship? He'd be completely contained within Himself.” Because of the fact that we're social beings, God must also have social qualities within Himself, such as the Trinity.

God is the painter – both of and above His creation. He is also immanent in His creation – actively working in it without being changed by it. He is reflected in the things He has created.

The wisdom of the ant reflects the wisdom of its Creator. The intelligence of the periodic table shows His intelligence. The brilliance of mathematics demonstrates the brilliance of the Mathematician who developed them. The spirals of a shell and also of a galaxy both reflect the Fibonacci series which demonstrates the orderly thinking of the great Architect.

Beyond these reflections of Himself, there are several personal ways God is related to His creation. The first is through His prophetic word breathed out and uttered by men of God. Instilled in them is a quality to speak His intentions to the people of the world. His messages through these people tell His very heart – I love my creatures; I am angry at sin; I am merciful; I am just; I am righteous; I am holy; I am full of grace; I embody truth.

His personal messages reflect His personal nature. They also reflect His infinite worth –

Let them praise the name of the LORD,
For His name alone is exalted;
His glory *is* above the earth and heaven. Psalm 148:13

If God were a monad, there would be no need to praise Him, nor an understanding of that praise. To His self-contained existence, praise would have no meaning. But through His prophets, praise is directed back to Him reflecting His social nature. His own words reveal His worth.

I am here and I am infinitely glorious. I have created you to acknowledge this fact.

He is also the personal God through His written word. The second question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism asks –

Q: What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him? A: The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

Not only did the prophets speak His word, but they and other men recorded it, compiled it, aligned it, divided it into chapters and then into verses, translated it, and published it – all at His direction. His word is more than a technical manual about Himself and His creatures. It is a reflection of who He is and His intent for us.

It is the definitive explanation about how He has done things, what He expects from us, and the timeline on which He is accomplishing His purposes. It is His mind, His heart, and His will to and for His people in a language and in a form that we can grasp and respond to.

And there is one more way He is the Personal God. He united with His creation. This is the Christmas story – the Feast of Trumpets. This is the story of infinite love being displayed in a finite setting. This is the loudest cry of emotion in the universe – the voice of Jesus echoes between the finite creation and the infinite Creator.

His cries at birth heralded in a new understanding of the love God; this child breathes the air He created

His cries to still the tossing waves demonstrated His control over the physical world. ... Peace, be still.

His cries to the hurting and the sick showed His control over corruptible flesh. ...Go in peace and be healed of your affliction.

His cries at the grave of a friend demonstrated His control over death. ... Lazarus, come forth.

And His cries on the cross revealed the infinite breadth of His love of man and His triumph over Satan for that man. "It is finished!" He cried and the world was healed – the painting which we couldn't comprehend suddenly came into complete and absolute clarity.

Hector Berlioz said that time kills all its pupils, but Jesus transcends time. Death is swallowed up in victory by the love of God in the Person of Jesus Christ. He calls out to you in your own time of despair –

Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I *am* He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.
-Revelation 1:17, 18

Tom Stoppard said, "Eternity is a terrible thought. I mean, where is it going to end?"

As sure as God made little red raspberries, eternity will continue on forever. But it will be vastly different than things are now. Jesus has opened up a new avenue for the people of the world if they are willing to simply call on Him – no more backaches, no more divorces, or painful losses through death.

Instead, He promises an eternity of joy and blessing. But He leaves the choice up to each of us. We can continue down the path we're on to eventual destruction and eternal separation from the Creator, or we can be reconciled to Him through this blessing of Christmas – the Gift of God, Jesus Christ our Lord – The Personal God.

GENESIS 1:2-19 (FROM CHAOS TO ORDER)

The online dictionary defines chaos as, “A condition or place of great disorder or confusion.” It defines order as, “A condition of methodical or prescribed arrangement among component parts such that proper functioning or appearance is achieved.”

What we perceive around us in the universe is reflected in the definition given for order not chaos. If you were here last week, it should be painfully evident that this order came about by the hand of a Creator, and not by itself.

In fact, there has never been an instance in known history where order has come out of disorder. If you take a bag of rocks, which are a little bit orderly and a little bit disorderly and shake them long enough, your result will be far less order and far more disorder. You cannot take a bag containing the parts of a watch, shake it, and come up with a watch. You will only come up with broken watch parts.

In the article, *The Fine Tuning of the Universe*, we read – “According to growing numbers of scientists, the laws and constants of nature are so “finely-tuned,” and so many “coincidences” have occurred to allow for the possibility of life, the universe must have come into existence through intentional planning and intelligence. In fact, this “fine-tuning” is so pronounced, and the “coincidences” are so numerous, many scientists have come to espouse The Anthropic Principle, which contends that the universe was brought into existence intentionally for the sake of producing mankind.”

For people to deny the precision and perfection of the cosmos in every detail is impossible, so those who deny the existence of God simply acknowledge this detail and then attribute it to chance – even despite the numerical odds which bring this chance to impossible numbers.

Rather than believing such lugheads, we need to pull our heads completely out of the sand, look around us and understand that we humans were, in fact, expected guests of a creation with no other recognizable purpose than to support ... us.

Dr. Paul Davies, the author and professor of theoretical physics at Adelaide University says it this way –

“The really amazing thing is **not** that life on **Earth** is balanced on a knife-edge, but that **the entire universe** is balanced on a knife-edge, and would be total chaos if any of the natural ‘constants’ were off even slightly. You see,” Davies adds, “even if you dismiss man as a chance happening, the fact remains that the universe seems unreasonably suited to the existence of life—almost contrived—you might say a ‘put-up job.’”

Introduction: Today we’ll look over Genesis 1 verses 2 through 19. There’s a lot of information there and we could talk on verse 2 alone for many hours, but we’ll grab some highlights and wander through these verses like a guy in an apple orchard, grabbing the appealing ones as he goes.

Text Verse: *To whom then will you liken Me,
Or to whom shall I be equal?” says the Holy One.
Lift up your eyes on high,
And see who has created these things,
Who brings out their host by number;
He calls them all by name,
By the greatness of His might
And the strength of His power;
Not one is missing. Isaiah 40:25, 26*

May God speak to us through His word and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Heavens and the Earth

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. First, there was only God and then God created. This is what Christians believe. Whether we accept this or whether we accept the Big Bang doesn’t change the fact that there was nothing and then there was something. The only difference is the stupidity of believing that the universe could create itself. In order for the universe to create itself it would have had to have existed before it came to be. Such is the depravity of man that we have to reduce ourselves to something that stupid in order to get away from God.

The Genesis account doesn’t tell us “how” God created. However, the psalms do. The Genesis account just says He did and then tells us the order in which all this took place. The creation account is only 31 verses long and yet it has been the subject of untold hours of thought, countless books, and has been divided into an amazing number of theories.

Some believe the account is literal and to be taken as written – six days. Some say it represents billions of years of development and the 6 days represent 6 epochs of God’s creation. Some say the earth was inhabited and destroyed once before man was created. This is known as the “Gap Theory” and inserts an entire period of Satan’s rule and fall on earth between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. This idea came as a knee-jerk reaction after Darwin proposed evolution.

The list of theories is long and often very convoluted, but in the end the Bible really only presents one option. Even the honest non-believer in the Genesis account will agree that God **intends** for us to believe this is a literal 6 day period.

James Barr, Oriel Professor of the interpretation of the Holy Scripture at Oxford University, says this about the account –

“... probably, so far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer of Genesis 1... **intended** to convey to the readers the idea that ... creation took place in a series of six days which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience.”

After the initial creation, verse 2 says this –

²The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep.

The terminology for “without form and void” is –

Tohu v’ bohu from the Hebrew, but let me share how different Bibles translate this one concept –

Formless and Void
Formless and Desolate
Formless and Empty
Without Form and Void
Without Form and Empty
Void and Empty
Unformed and Void
Without Form and an empty waste
Empty and had no form
Unseen and unready
Chaos and vacancy
Soup of nothingness; a bottomless emptiness

Barren with no form or life
Didn't have any shape, and it was empty
Waste and void
Waste and empty
Waste and wild
Waste and without form
Welter and waste

This same phrase – *tohu v' bohu* is used one other time in the Bible, in Jeremiah 4:23 speaking of the judgment upon the land because of the rejection of God, "I beheld the earth, and indeed *it was* without form, and void; And the heavens, they *had* no light."

²(cont.) **"And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."**

This is the first distinction made in the Bible about the character of God. The word for "Spirit" is *ruakh* and can also be translated as "wind." Because of this, Jewish commentaries and even some Christian translations use wind instead of Spirit here. But Spirit is far more likely and in context makes much more sense. It also parallels Jesus' words about the Spirit in John chapter 3, and so is accepted by almost all Christian translators.

What should be obvious is that if the "Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" back then, that God's Spirit is still hovering over the creation even now. As we live and move and exist, God is hovering around us and directing His creation according to His purposes and His will.

Before we move on, we should consider that everything about the creation account is intended to instruct us concerning the workings of God in relation to man. The earth and in fact the whole universe has been made for our benefit, not God's. God is complete in Himself, and therefore what He has done and the way in which He's done it is for us and for our benefit.

³**Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.**

⁴**And God saw the light, that *it was* good; and God divided the light from the darkness.**

⁵**God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.**

This is Day 1 of creation which would have been a Sunday. What is the **light** God created at this time? It's not until the **fourth** day that the sun is placed in the sky. There are two

main possibilities that have been put forth. The first is that the sun and stars were created at this time, but weren't placed where they are now until the fourth day. This is possible, because a different word than "create" is used later when the sun appears.

The Hebrew word for "create" is *bara*, but the word used about the sun and moon and stars on day four is *asah*. This can then mean that they appeared on the fourth day but were created earlier.

However, this would make a simple and obvious reading of both accounts somewhat convoluted. Just as it's easier to try to reconcile Genesis with evolution by inventing theories which accommodate both, it's also easier to reconcile this light with the sun and stars than it is to imagine that God meant a different light.

A second point is that the words *bara* and *asah* are used synonymously throughout the creation account. Like the sun and the stars, God **made** the firmament, he **made** the beasts of the earth, and he **made** man. But it also says He created man. At the end of the creation account and using the term *asah* it says "Then God saw everything that He had **made**, and indeed *it was very good*." So you see *bara* and *asah* are synonymous.

Personally, I take the account at face value. God created light on the first day. There is every reason to assume that all the matter of the universe was created immediately and then was later rearranged on the days the rest of the account maintains. In other words, we're going to see God create the trees and the fish and man. All of the matter for these existed instantaneously and was then rearranged by God – made into different things. Why should we assume that the sun, moon, and stars are any different?

This light then is part of what was created; not a part of God Himself. Some have tried to explain that this is the same light referred to when speaking of God. In the New Testament it says "God is light, in Him is no darkness at all" for example. But the light John was speaking of in that verse is the very nature of God, not a created aspect. What God created light on the first day then is a reflection of His nature, not a part of it.

⁵(cont.) **"So the evening and the morning were the first day."**

This is where the biblical day finds its home, right in verse 3. Each new day starts at sundown because of this. Even to this day in Israel, the new day starts at sundown, just like ours starts at 12pm. Also, the Hebrew here doesn't really say "the first day." Instead it says יָוֶם אֶחָד *yom echad* – one day.

As a parallel to the work of Jesus, just as God created light on this first day, which was a Sunday, so He also brought the light of the world out of the grave on the same day. After the darkness of the tomb came forth the shining splendor of the Light which can never be diminished or hidden – the radiant light of eternal glory.

Before we move on, I'd like to tell you about something called *Fractal Geometry*.

In 1975 Benoit Mandelbrot coined the term from the Latin *fractus*, which means broken or fractured. A mathematical fractal is something based on an equation that undergoes iteration. Iteration means the act of repeating a process usually with the aim of approaching a desired result. Each repetition of the process is also called "iteration," and the results of iteration are used as the starting point for the next iteration.

This isn't meant to confuse you. Just think of a computer doubling an image again and again and again. Mandelbrot looked at the world around him and realized that everything we see – from the clouds in the sky, to the shape of mountains, to the way lava flows – everything – is based on fractal geometry. When he first proposed this, he was shunned and called a lunatic, but within a few short years, the scientific world realized he was right.

Fractals can identify cancerous cells in a person simply by analyzing the flow of blood through their body. Streams and rivers both flow in a fractal way. Leaves are fractal. Lightening is fractal. The human body is fractal. Wings, spores, viruses, coastlines, planets, galaxies, the skeletal system... all are based on fractal geometry. Even the crashing of the waves is a result of fractals.

With the advent of the use of computers for TVs and movies, you can't get a job as a graphics designer unless you understand the use of fractals. The first time fractal algorithms were used in a movie was in Star Trek, The Wrath of Khan, to produce the "Genesis effect."

Later in the "Return of the Jedi" fractals were used to create the geography of a moon, and to draw the outline of the dreaded Death Star. And fractal signals can also be used to model natural objects, allowing filmmakers to define the environment with a higher accuracy than ever before.

Having told you that, I thought we'd look at a supposition made by a biologist about the form of a virgin forest. Understanding fractals, he supposed that if he cut down and measured a single tree in an unspoiled forest, he could estimate the sizes of all the trees

in that forest. So he and a group of biologists went to South America and entered a completely unspoiled piece of land. They cut down a single tree and measured all of its branch sizes, from the lowest large branch to the highest twigs.

They then made a size guess about the entire forest based on their measurements. After this, they mapped out the trunk sizes of all of the surrounding trees, from the largest behemoth to the smallest sprout. The result was a perfect match. After doing this, they said how amazing it was that nature had evolved in such a marvelous way. They attributed to random chance that which clearly came from an intelligent Being. Don't ever tell me that scientists are any smarter than the average cinderblock.

There's one more area where geometric mathematics prove the amazing intelligence of God. In the most astonishing study of all, we can look to the pages of the Bible to demonstrate the preplanned landscape of God. Gaon of Vilna told Barukh of Shklov, the translator of Euclid's geometry into Hebrew, "To the degree that a man is lacking in the wisdom of mathematics he will lack one hundredfold in the wisdom of the Torah."

In other words, the Bible has detailed and specific mathematical patterns which could in no way have come about by chance.

Vernon Jenkins, Mathematics Professor at the University of Glamorgan in Scotland, who has become a personal friend of mine, calls the Bible a self-authenticating text. He has produced an immense volume of geometric information from the Bible, and his findings from Genesis 1:1 alone would take many course studies at the university level.

His concluding remarks are that "These evidences of deep design in the Bible's opening words throw a completely new light on the true status of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures, for Who alone is capable of simultaneously speaking into existence a meaningful sentence copiously embroidered with such a variety of significant number structures – these incorporating the Author's own signature?!"

The first day ends and God saw that it was good...

II. The Firmament Above

Have you ever wondered why people could live to ancient ages before the Flood? Or why the rainbow didn't come about until Genesis chapter 9? The first rainbow was 1657 years after the creation. The reason is most assuredly given in verses 6 through 8:

⁶Then God said, “Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.”

⁷Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which *were* under the firmament from the waters which *were* above the firmament; and it was so.

⁸And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.

You can't make a rainbow without a prism to refract the incoming light. In today's world, there are droplets of water in the air which act like prisms as the sun shines through them, thus a rainbow is produced.

When God created the earth, He made a firmament above it. The Hebrew word is *raqia*. This was probably a solid and fixed firmament, like a pellucid sapphire above the earth. Thus the “waters above” isn't a fantasy of speech, but an actual body of frozen water which kept out all of the harmful solar and electromagnetic radiation. Think of it as a super ozone layer.

Because this *raqia* was there, the light that was needed to produce a rainbow was already refracted and therefore no rainbows occurred. When Noah stepped out of the ark and saw the rainbow, he also saw for the first time a completely different view of the heavens. There was no *raqia* and there was a gentle blue color to the sky. He probably saw the sun much brighter than he'd ever seen it before and he and his family probably got their first sunburn very quickly and realized they needed suntan lotion.

The *raqia* not only affected the appearance of the skies and the brightness of the sun, but the solar and electromagnetic rays that were kept out certainly allowed people to live for exceptionally long periods of time. There is no reason at all to assume that people couldn't easily reach immense ages.

Add in a higher atmospheric pressure and the animals themselves would live for great periods. Reptiles, which never stop growing, could have grown to immense sizes, just as the archaeological record shows us in the bones of dinosaurs.

Day two ends without the great irresolvable problems that many people think the Bible holds. In fact, they are reasonable and probable explanations about the past history of our world.

III. The Waters and the Land

⁹ Then God said, “Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry *land* appear”; and it was so.

¹⁰ And God called the dry *land* Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that *it was good*.

Remember the fractals we talked about a little while ago? A computer generated fractal landscape looks exactly like an actual landscape. Whether it is a mountain scene as viewed from a valley, or the outline of an island filled with rivers and trees as viewed from above, these are produced with relatively simple computing devices. When God calculated the landscapes, the rivers, the trees, the gullies and ditches, the mountains, and the beaches – He did it not in two dimensions, but in three.

The great Mathematician and the Author of Order brought the waters into submission at the feet of the land.

God asks Job “who has such knowledge?” –

“Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Tell Me, if you have understanding.
Who determined its measurements?
Surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
To what were its foundations fastened?
Or who laid its cornerstone,
When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy?
“Or who shut in the sea with doors,
When it burst forth and issued from the womb;
When I made the clouds its garment,
And thick darkness its swaddling band;
When I fixed My limit for it,
And set bars and doors;
When I said, ‘This far you may come, but no farther,
And here your proud waves must stop!’ Job 38:4-11

The answer to the question shouts back at us. The Lord God Almighty – that’s who! Six thousand years ago, through the use of mathematics so complicated that we couldn’t

even see them, much less understand them, God created order. And not just order that we can see... We have order that we can hear, and smell, and taste. We can feel it and we can enjoy it.

Let's pick a flower and revel in the immense beauty of a highly complicated mathematical calculation – one that a loving Creator has placed in our midst. Anyone who says, "Oh how I hate mathematics" has never truly understood the enjoyment which comes with the taste of an apple.

All of this beauty around us as land came out of the waters and a stable platform for the life we enjoy was prepared. An anxious creation was getting ready for its expected guests.

And God saw that it was good.

IV. Splashed with a Thousand Shades of Green

¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb *that* yields seed, *and* the fruit tree *that* yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed *is* in itself, on the earth"; and it was so.

¹² And the earth brought forth grass, the herb *that* yields seed according to its kind, and the tree *that* yields fruit, whose seed *is* in itself according to its kind. And God saw that *it was good*.

¹³ So the evening and the morning were the third day.

One of my favorite things in the world to eat is bread. I said in another sermon last week that my wife knows if she heats up 10 slices of bread with dinner, I'll eat that and nothing else. The third day is when the bread of the earth came forth as wheat, just as Jesus came forth from the tomb on the third day after His cross – the Bread of Life rose to nourish the earth with the power of His resurrection. And this is the blessing given over the Bread even to this day when communion is taken – Blessed art thou O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth Bread from the earth!

On the third day there was grass, herbs, plants, trees, and fruit. Everything that man would eat for the next 1650 plus years was created on day three. I say this because it wasn't until after the flood that God ordained that man could eat animals.

By the end of the third day things on earth had changed immensely from the way they were just two short days earlier. It was so extravagantly beautiful that only on day three of creation does it twice say that God saw that it was good – *ki tov* in Hebrew.

It's for this reason that many Jewish people choose Tuesday to get married. If God said it was good twice on a Tuesday, then it seems propitious enough to set your wedding for such a day as well.

Just think of what it was like! At the beginning of this day there was just land and sea. There was nothing alive, nothing growing, just a barren landscape waiting for the Master Gardener to dazzle us with His magnificent mind. In the most amazing display of wisdom, love, tender care, and beauty God provided grass, fruit, herbs, and trees. I can't even imagine what the world was like with complete order and perfection in a bewildering array of every shade of green – perfect and unsullied.

Here are some of the interesting things which we have, to this day, from God's wisdom which was revealed on day three of creation –

- Each watermelon has an even number of stripes on the rind.
- Each orange has an even number of segments.
- Each ear of corn has an even number of rows.
- Every bunch of bananas has on its lowest row an even number of bananas, and each row decreases by one, so that one row has an even number and the next row an odd number.
- Each stalk of wheat has an even number of grains.
- And not only wheat, but all grains are found in even numbers on the stalks, and six times the Bible specifically mentions even number harvests of thirty fold, sixty fold, or a hundred fold.

God has caused the flowers to blossom at certain specific times during the day, so that Linnaeus, the great botanist, once said that if he had a conservatory containing the right kind of soil, moisture and temperature, he could tell the time of day or night by the flowers that were open and those that were closed.

One of my favorite flowers is the night blooming cereus, it's one of the plants native to Sarasota and blooms on an unattractive, snake-like cactus that grows up the side of trees. But every year about May, little white balls that look like cotton pop out. They grow a little bit day by day until June when the moon is full. When the sun goes down,

the flowers open up and follow the moon across the night sky. At the sun rises, the flowers close and die.

*Around the world there are fruits to delight,
There are flowers to please our smell and our sight,
There are grains of every kind to feed us each day,
And there are grasses for the horses, we call it hay.*

*Trees give us wood to build all kinds of things,
And they give us shade for sermons...
And for Angelica while she sings.*

All of this comes from the Lord Almighty who is marvelous in wisdom and perfect in His tender care of His creatures.

And God saw that *it was* good. So the evening and the morning were the third day.

V. Diamonds in the Sky

**¹⁴ Then God said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years;
¹⁵ and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so.**

¹⁶ Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. *He made* the stars also.

**¹⁷ God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth,
¹⁸ and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that *it was* good.**

On the first Wednesday the world existed diamonds were revealed in the sky. Even if there was a solid firmament of frozen water above the earth, it was clear enough to allow the stars to be seen. In fact, it's been theorized that the raquia which was the waters above, may actually have acted like a tuning device. The sound of the heavens may have been audible to the pre-flood world. If this is true, then an orchestra of pulsars, magnetic storms, and other cosmic events may have played tunes for the people as they lived out their lives.

It also may have made the stars **clearer** than the sky we have now. Today we have all of the dust and debris which keeps the atmosphere more turbid than it would have been

then. This is all speculation, but for certain we know that the stars were visible through the raquia.

The Bible says these stars were set in place for signs and for seasons, for days and for years. The word for sign is *owth* and this signifies a heavenly portent. Throughout the Bible, heavenly signs are given to alert the people to a divine event.

This doesn't mean however that we can either predict the future or the nature of things by these signs – such as through astrology. This is forbidden in the Bible. So the only signs we can use to determine God's hand are those signs which His word tells us have come or are coming such as when God spoke through Israel about the coming King –

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.

-Genesis 49:10

It's believed that the star which appeared at the time of Jesus' birth is this same alignment prophesied here by Israel as he blessed his son Judah.

The constellations were placed in heaven by God as well. In the book of Job, several constellations are named and credited to God's handiwork –

He alone spreads out the heavens,
And treads on the waves of the sea;
He made the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades,
And the chambers of the south;
He does great things past finding out,
Yes, wonders without number. Job 9:8-10

In addition to signs and constellations, the Lord placed the heavenly objects up there for seasons, for days, and for years. These things whirl around us with such precision that the Mayans were able to calculate out a calendar so exact that it loses only 1 day in every 6000 years. With all of our technology, we still have to add one day every four years.

By evaluating the movement of the sun, moon, and stars, we can tell when to plant, when to reap, and when to have children. The cycle is fixed and so we can always tell the best time to do certain things.

By the alignment of the stars, ancient architects built pyramids and tombs of kings in perfect alignment with whatever they were referencing, be it true north, or a distant constellation.

We could talk all day about the marvel of the heavens God has created. Even on the clearest night, the human eye can only see about 3,000 stars. There are an estimated 100 billion in our galaxy alone and NASA estimates there may be 500 billion galaxies.

When you look at Andromeda, our closest galactic neighbor, which is 2.3 million light years away, the light you see would take 2.3 million years to reach you. If God created the universe 6000 years ago, as I believe He did, then the light you're seeing from Andromeda came solely from the mind of God as He stretched out the heavens during His creative effort.

If you could travel at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second) it would take 100,000 years to cross our galaxy!

And God saw that *it was* good.

¹⁹ So the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

Thus ends the first Wednesday of planet earth.

All of this marvelous majesty was placed in the heavens and on the earth by and infinitely intelligent and loving Creator. But something happened not long after His act of creation which has caused a division between God and man. Man disobeyed God and sin entered the world and death came about by sin. Now God and man are separated from each other because of our fallen state. But the Bible gives us an answer as to how this separation can be repaired – it is through the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ.

GENESIS 1:20-25 (TASTY AND DELICIOUS)

One day a zoo-keeper noticed that a monkey was reading two books - the Bible and Darwin's The Origin of Species. In surprise he asked the ape, "Why are you reading both those books?"

"Well, I'm trying to figure out if I'm brother's keeper or my keeper's brother."

Most people love to go to zoos and see all the fun animals God created. When Hideko and I lived in Japan, we lived literally right next door to the Hamura zoo. My daughter has just started out on a new adventure – raising and handling big cats. She's responsible for three tigers right now. One of them she named Thorr after our son, her brother.

Wherever we go, there are animals to excite our imagination and entertain our lives. I was watching a special on crows just a few days ago with Hideko and it was amazing to see how intelligent they are. They are one of only three types of life that not only use, but actually make their own tools. They can also perform cognitive thinking in multiple stages – something that was previously thought only humans and primates could do.

Crows can recognize individual humans and remember them for over two years and can communicate their knowledge of specific humans to hundreds and even thousands of other crows. If I catch a crow and keep him trapped, after I release him, he will instruct all the other crows to stay away from me, teaching this even to the next generation.

At the Hamura Zoo by our house in Tokyo, they kept crows in a special area so that the people could accurately predict coming earthquakes before they happened. They are such amazing creatures and yet crows are a miniscule part of the vast array of life God created on planet earth.

Introduction: In a little less than two days, the fifth and part of the sixth days of creation, which were Thursday and Friday of the first week, God created every type of animal that exists. On Thursday He created the birds and other winged creatures and all of the life in the sea. And then on Friday, before creating man, he created all of the land animals that we've come to know and love – as pets, as natural curiosities, and as nummy nummy dinners.

Just as with the rest of creation, these creatures were prepared by God for man's expected arrival. Today we'll talk about the six verses which have come to be the focus of our fishing vacations, our dreams of flying like the birds, and our afternoon naps with snuggle partners of the four footed variety.

Text Verse: *Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?" Ecclesiastes 3:21*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. God's Creation

Remember the words which open the pages of the Bible –

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

God is the Creator and therefore the creation is His. What happens to the creation should be as He purposes. He divides up the lands and the nations as He so chooses. He ordains what man can and cannot eat. He bestows authority on His creatures as He sees fit. He is the Creator and therefore the entire creation is subject to Him. He is the potter and the clay can be used, reformed, or disposed of as He determines.

Although all of this should seem painfully obvious to us, we unfortunately often fail to see it as clearly as that. Our modern world treats God's sovereign decisions as if they came from a lunatic.

God has reserved the land of Israel for Himself. Eight times in the Old Testament God specifically calls that piece of property "My land" and He implies it probably thousands of times. It is His alone to parcel out to whom He sees fit. And He has sovereignly given it to one group of people, Israel –

And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power, driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land *as* an inheritance, as *it is* this day. Deuteronomy 4:37, 38

But like many other issues, we snub God, spit on His word, and actively work against His ordinances. The land of Israel belongs to the Jewish people as a heritage forever. And

because the world is actively working against this edict, the judgment of God will fall on all nations –

For behold, in those days and at that time,
When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem,
I will also gather all nations,
And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;
And I will enter into judgment with them there
On account of My people, My heritage Israel,
Whom they have scattered among the nations;
They have also divided up My land. Joel 3:1, 2

Several things don't matter a bit, not an iota concerning this verse, 1) what you think about it, 2) what I think about it, or 3) what the rest of the world thinks about it. The only thing that matters is what God thinks about it. We are currently working to divide the land of Israel in a search for peace, but the Bible says that instead of peace we will only find war, destruction, and judgment.

Another unfortunate action man has recently pursued is the folly of "global warming." In an attempt to restrict how we live and what we do with the world God has given us, people make up bizarre theories about our ability to affect global temperatures, despite the evidence being exactly the opposite.

Because of following this path, the oil God placed in the earth for our use is considered unclean. The trees God gave us for houses and fuel are placed as sacred idols which deserve worship instead of a chainsaw. But God ordained a different path for us –

"Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Genesis 1:28

King David elaborated on what God ordained in Genesis when he penned the 8th Psalm –

What is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?
For You have made him a little lower than the angels,
And You have crowned him with glory and honor.
You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands;
You have put all *things* under his feet,

All sheep and oxen—
Even the beasts of the field,
The birds of the air,
And the fish of the sea
That pass through the paths of the seas. Psalm 8:4-8

Just like the Land of Israel and the earth we blasphemously call “Mother,” it’s become fashionable to reject the foods that we are given by God. Instead we treat them in a harsh manner as well. We can’t enjoy a good steak without being made to feel guilty about it by someone. People demand rights for animals when God has ordained that animals are to be eaten if we so desire. Later in Genesis 9 we read this –

Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move *on* the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. Genesis 9:1-3

And even those who do eat meat will often put restrictions on what kinds of meat we can and can’t eat. Misunderstanding our freedom in Christ, sects and denominations forbid pork, shellfish, and other tasty treats. None of this is biblical and all of it is harmful to the relationship we enjoy in the freedom of Jesus Christ. Speaking of nummy nummy food, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14 –

I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that *there is* nothing unclean of itself;
-vs 14.

We’ll talk more about the food we can eat a little later, but remember that the God of creation is the ultimate authority on what is allowed and what is forbidden in the use of His creation. If He allows something, then we interfere with that at our own peril. If we add restrictions that He didn’t without obvious and valid reasons, then we are adding to that which isn’t at our prerogative.

Likewise, if we detract from His restrictions, then we violate what He alone has the right to mandate. Either way, when we disobey God’s law, then we state that we are more intelligent, more compassionate, or more important than He is.

II. The Fifth Day – An Abundance of Life

Have you ever taken the time to watch a bird of prey catch what it's after? My mom sent me a link a while ago of an Eagle Owl coming in for a piece of meat which was attached to a camera. The camera was set to record 1000 frames per second and the video lasted 59 seconds or a flight of 59,000 frames was recorded.

At first, the bird swoops in at ground level, below where the target is. As it gets closer, it starts to flap its wings to slow itself down while at the same time lowering its legs with its massive claws tucked in like a clenched fist.

As it got closer, it tucked it's legs back behind itself and put its wings out straight, having readied itself for the final few feet – its eyes never diverting from the target. A little closer and its tail feathers begin to fan out like a parachute behind the space shuttle as it lands. Within just a couple feet of the target, the wings fan out along with the tail so that the bird is flat like a wall, facing the target.

Just at this time, its legs rise to point straight out in front of it, while its body remains completely facing out. Within inches of the target, the claws open up just like the mouth of a monster on a sci-fi show. During this entire time, the eyes of the bird never divert in any direction. At the same time its claws are opened up, its wings draw back and the wind rushes against them as it prepares to grab the target and simultaneous fly away.

The perfection of what occurs during this entire display is simply amazing to watch. When all of this occurs in real time, it happens faster than we could ever imagine. This type of beauty and precision comes directly from the mind of God as He constructed His creatures to both amaze us and dazzle our senses.

On the fifth day, which was Thursday, God did a marvelous work when He ordained life in the form of birds and sea life to flourish on the earth.

²⁰ Then God said, "Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens."

²¹ So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that *it was* good.

²² And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."

²³ So the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

As a side note on these verses, the King James Version translates verse 20 differently than most other translations. It says, “And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.”

This translation seems to imply that the sea creatures and the birds were produced out of the waters. However, a different translational choice will allow for a more probable interpretation –

Then God said, “Let the waters abound with an abundance of creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens. ...”

The modern translations clear up any sense that the waters were the source of the life of these creatures. Instead, God is the source and the water was the medium in which He created the sea life. The birds of the air were created by the same great Creator and their domain is the sky above us.

This should seem obvious, but it’s important to separate these so that people can’t jump to the conclusion that the waters are the source of life. For all we know, Darwin, who was raised in a Christian context and most probably with the King James Version, could have come to this insane conclusion as he developed his notion about the origin of species.

On this day God created the immense and much debated Leviathan which is mentioned in the book of Job. The description of it takes up the entire chapter and this, along with another beast we’ll talk about later, the Behemoth, are highly disputed among liberal and even some conservative theologians today. Here’s a portion of the description about Leviathan –

7 Can you fill his skin with harpoons,
Or his head with fishing spears?
8 Lay your hand on him;
Remember the battle—
Never do it again!
9 Indeed, any hope of overcoming him is false;
Shall one not be overwhelmed at the sight of him? ...
14 Who can open the doors of his face,
With his terrible teeth all around?

15 His rows of scales are his pride,
Shut up tightly as with a seal;
16 One is so near another
That no air can come between them;
17 They are joined one to another,
They stick together and cannot be parted.
18 His sneezings flash forth light,
And his eyes are like the eyelids of the morning.
19 Out of his mouth go burning lights;
Sparks of fire shoot out.
20 Smoke goes out of his nostrils,
As from a boiling pot and burning rushes.
21 His breath kindles coals,
And a flame goes out of his mouth...
26 Though the sword reaches him, it cannot avail;
Nor does spear, dart, or javelin.
27 He regards iron as straw,
And bronze as rotten wood.
28 The arrow cannot make him flee;
Slingstones become like stubble to him.
29 Darts are regarded as straw;
He laughs at the threat of javelins.
30 His undersides are like sharp potsherds;
He spreads pointed marks in the mire.
31 He makes the deep boil like a pot;
He makes the sea like a pot of ointment.
32 He leaves a shining wake behind him;
One would think the deep had white hair.
33 On earth there is nothing like him,
Which is made without fear. -Job 41:7-33

I didn't cite the whole description, but it was something that God spoke to Job about as if he was already well familiar with it. Modern scholars try to claim this was probably a crocodile, but describing a crocodile like this would be like giving a description of a 747 when speaking about a little boy's toy kite. This was undoubtedly a dinosaur of some type that Job had seen with his own eyes.

Have you ever wondered about the question "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" We have the answer in the verses we're looking at as well. God created the birds

in a dazzling array of types and kinds, including the chicken. When the first rooster sidled up to the first hen and rolled his eyes at her, she gave a coo, he gave a cockle-doodle-doo, and a little while later there was mom sitting on the first eggs.

Matthew Henry says of the fifth day of creation, “Each day, hitherto, has produced very noble and excellent beings, which we can never sufficiently admire; but we do not read of the creation of any living creature till the fifth day, of which these verses give us an account. The work of creation not only proceeded gradually from one thing to another, but rose and advanced gradually from that which was less excellent to that which was more so, teaching us to press towards perfection and endeavour that our last works may be our best works.”

Mr. Henry is equating each day’s increased nobility of the creation with a general guideline for us to live our lives. We should endeavor to increase the quality of our works as we develop in life so that what we accomplish is progressively better, thus emulating God’s handiwork in creation.

In a similar manner, our lives as Christians should develop as well. Instead of getting saved and then spending the rest of our lives at a marginal level of Christian maturity, we should be actively reading our Bibles, learning about what God has given us in creation, and working out the fruits of our salvation in the help of others through discipleship and ministry.

Let’s move on to verse 24 and into the sixth day which is Friday –

²⁴ Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, *each* according to its kind”; and it was so.

²⁵ And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that *it was good*.

Have you ever stood and watched a cow as it chews the cud? Their mouths just kind of move from side to side and their eyes look off into absolutely nothingness. I can’t think of a more monotonous sight in the world. When I see them doing this, I wonder what they’re thinking... The funny thing is, God knows.

Every animal on earth, whether it’s the bizarre cats that control our entire life, or the monkey swinging from the tree, whether it’s a squirrel or a yak, every animal has a

specific purpose and was designed in a specific way in anticipation of the coming man. God knows every thing about every one of them, every thought they think, and every move they will make. King David says in the 139th Psalm – “*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.*” This is exactly how I feel when I think of the works which come from the hand of God.

On this day came the other great and marvelous creature described in Job. This animal is often footnoted as an elephant or a hippopotamus but listen to the description of the Behemoth and see if it matches either –

15“Look now at the behemoth, which I made along with you;
He eats grass like an ox.

16 See now, his strength is in his hips,
And his power is in his stomach muscles.

17 He moves his tail like a cedar;
The sinews of his thighs are tightly knit.

18 His bones are like beams of bronze,
His ribs like bars of iron.

19 He is the first of the ways of God;
Only He who made him can bring near His sword.

20 Surely the mountains yield food for him,
And all the beasts of the field play there.

21 He lies under the lotus trees,
In a covert of reeds and marsh.

22 The lotus trees cover him with their shade;
The willows by the brook surround him.

23 Indeed the river may rage,
Yet he is not disturbed;
He is confident, though the Jordan gushes into his mouth,

24 Though he takes it in his eyes,
Or one pierces his nose with a snare.

-Job 40:15-24

First, this description says that he moves his tail like a cedar. Have you ever seen the tail of either an elephant or a hippopotamus? Both of them are like little dinky pencils. This creature had a tail like a large tree. Second, this guy is said to be the “first of the ways of God” as spoken from God’s own mouth. To say this is a hippo or an elephant is to call into question the truth of the inspiration of the Bible. This creature was massive; so

large in fact that when the Jordan was at flood stage, raging at a full flow, the Behemoth remained unmoved.

As with the Leviathan, this creature was both familiar to Job and perfectly fits the description of a dinosaur. As a final nail in the doubter's coffin, no such animal exists in the Jordan basin today, clearly indicating that it was neither an elephant nor a hippo. Rather, it was a type of animal no longer in existence today' a dinosaur.

III. Tasty and Delicious

One of my favorite things to do, second only to sleeping, is to eat. And tasty animals are right at the top of my food enjoyment meter. Other than bread and an Asian fruit called durian, I don't think I enjoy anything more than eating a well cooked beast.

If you've been to one of my barbecues, you've seen that I buy enough meat for 5 times as many people as show up. This is so I can eat barbecued tasties for weeks after the party. (buuurp... oh excuse me!)

One area indicating a weak understanding or a poor interpretation of the Bible is revealed on the dinner tables of the Christian, or pseudo-Christian world. What God ordains as good is acceptable for the believer. Finding fault in or misrepresenting what God has allowed then is sin...plain and simple.

Christians have every right to claim as their own the Chinese proverb which says, "If it flies in the sky, if it swims in the ocean, or if it moves on the earth, I will eat it."

We saw earlier that in the first verses of Chapter 9 of Genesis, God allowed Noah and those after him to eat all forms of life. "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you." Not every "every" in the Bible really means "every" just as not all "alls" in the Bible mean "all." Context is always king when interpreting the Bible, and in the context of this verse the "every" **does** mean every.

There were no restrictions on the people of the world about what they could eat all the way up until the time of Moses and the Law. At that time, God set aside a special group of people for His own special purposes. The restrictions levied upon them were upon them alone and all the other people of the world were allowed to continue with Saturday morning bacon fests and Tuesday afternoon possum cook-offs.

When Christ came, He fulfilled the Law on our behalf and the law is set aside in Christ. This is stated explicitly three times in the book of Hebrews and it is alluded to numerous times in the New Testament. The Law is in no way binding on the Christian, in any way shape or form. We obtain our doctrine for life and conduct from the New Testament. To add to, subtract from, or misrepresent the New Testament for the believer is sin. Period.

There are numerous references to the suitability of all foods for the believer, but the example of Peter in Acts is as clear as they come:

Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour. Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again. Acts 10:9-16

This account harkens back to the book of Ezekiel where he was told to eat defiled food as a sign to the people of Israel that they would likewise eat defiled food in their exile. But Ezekiel cried out to God –

"Ah, Lord GOD! Indeed I have never defiled myself from my youth till now; I have never eaten what died of itself or was torn by beasts, nor has abominable flesh ever come into my mouth." Then He said to me, "See, I am giving you cow dung instead of human waste, and you shall prepare your bread over it." Ezekiel 4:9-15

In the case of Ezekiel, God allowed him to substitute a clean source of fuel for an unclean one. By doing this, he maintained Ezekiel's ability to uphold the law. However, in Peter's case, God repeated His statement that what was presented to him was no longer unclean and he was to acknowledge this.

This account actually has two separate applications, both of which are equally valid and both of which are to be understood in the greater context of the New Testament. In the first application, God was ordaining all foods as clean because of the work of Jesus – the fulfillment of the Law.

In the second application, God was showing Peter that Gentiles, whose tummies were full of these previously unclean animals, were to be considered clean when they called on Jesus as Lord. He purified them of any defilement and therefore no further cleansing, such as dietary restrictions, was needed then or in the future.

Because we're talking about food today, and specifically about what the Bible allows I want to take a moment and warn you about "biblical diets" which people promote in advertising and on Christian channels. These are never more than a sham and are always taken out of context for someone to make a buck. Maybe you've heard of the Ezekiel Diet.

This is a diet which supposedly is the biblical way of staying healthy... it must be right? It's in the Bible. The Ezekiel diet comes from the passage I referenced a moment ago – "Also take for yourself wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and spelt; put them into one vessel, and make bread of them for yourself."

So some money grubber put together bread made of this stuff and is selling it as a nutritious diet so you can live forever. Never mind the fact that the **reason** for Ezekiel eating this stuff is mentioned a few verses later –

Moreover He said to me, "Son of man, surely I will cut off the supply of bread in Jerusalem; they shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and shall drink water by measure and with dread, that they may lack bread and water, and be dismayed with one another, and **waste away** because of their iniquity. Ezekiel 4:16, 17

Ezekiel was told to eat this stuff as a subsistence level diet – just enough to keep a person alive each day, but not enough to live properly. The devil is in the details that the Ezekiel Diet folks left out. Be really careful about anyone who promotes a diet which is supposedly a biblical remedy to health and fitness. Whether it's the Daniel Diet, the Jesus Loaf of Bread Diet, whatever...

Paul explains in the New Testament the goodness of the foods God has placed in the world and the deception concerning them which is pushed upon the unsuspecting –

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ² speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, ³ forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴ For every creature

of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; ⁵ for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. 1 Timothy 4:1-5

IV. Care for the Creation

We have just one more short section today because I feel compelled, after talking about eating all the tasty animals that God has given us, to make sure each of us looks at God's creation as valuable and worth preserving and that we don't abuse it or waste what is so precious.

I talked about the owl awhile ago and how splendidly it flew in to grab its meal. When we carefully consider them, every animal, every bird, every sea creature that God created is a marvel of imagination and a delight to our minds. Let me read a few of the marvelous things God has given us in the animal world –

Flying frogs change color throughout the day. They are greenish-blue in sunlight and green in the evening. At night there are black.

The king Cobra can grow to almost 20 feet in length and is regarded as the largest poisonous snake in the world. A tiny amount of its poison can kill up to 30 people.

Anteaters protect their long claws by walking on their knuckles. That's why they look as if they are limping.

Bats eat all types of food. There is no restriction where their diet is concerned.

The hippopotamus's eyes, ears and nostrils are on the top of its head. This enables it to stand or sit, almost completely covered by water with as little showing above the surface as possible.

There is no sideways movement for a cat's jaws.

Armadillos have four babies of the same sex at a time. They are perfect identical quadruplets. They sleep for an average of 18.5 hours a day and they can walk underwater. They are the only other species outside of humans that can carry and transmit leprosy.

Giraffes have no vocal chords, but cats have 100 vocal chords.

A goat's eyes have got rectangular pupils.

A camel's milk never curdles.

I could go on with fun facts all day. God has presented us with such a dazzling array of life on this planet and every type fills a specific role. If God has given such tender care and detail to the life He's created, we then should be equally careful to preserve it for the generations to come.

*I love my little dogs,
But to me cats just don't please
The way I enjoy a cow, is with potatoes and some peas*

*Bears are amazing, but one needs to keep some space
If not you may lose an arm, or the nose right off your face*

*Watching squirrels reminds me
That God knows humor too
Who can't but laugh at how they act
And the funny things they do*

*Wherever you go on this big round ball
All types of creatures abound
From the really big to the really small
Everywhere, they can be found*

*God has lavished us with His loving hand
In the beasties that He's made
Everywhere and in every land
In the open sun or in the darkest shade*

*So let us take good care
Of the beasts He put under our control
Whether out in nature, or in a zoo,
Or beside our dinner roll*

And God saw that it was good.

This is the middle of the first Friday on earth which is the sixth day of creation. Everything to this point has been created by God in anticipation of His final great act. The house is complete and He has one more thing to make to finish His marvelous work.

Next week we'll look at the stupendous wonder of the sixth day – the creation of man.

Last week I told you that only on the third day of creation did God say "it is good" twice. However, after creating the animals on the sixth day he says "it is good" and then pronounces an even greater blessing at the end of the day. The first Friday on earth was a very good day. And since the time of Jesus' cross, Friday has become known as Good Friday, forming a wonderful parallel to the first Friday when God finished up His wonderful works of creation. Next week, we'll look over those last verses.

GENESIS 1:26-31 (A LITTLE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS)

I like to come up with little quips to post on Facebook every day. A couple weeks ago, I posted this – “In today’s living world, there were over 7 billion chances to prove evolution in humans; all failed. Add in animals and you’re in the trillions. Epic fail.” There is **nothing** in the archeological record to substantiate even the slightest hint of evolution occurring anywhere in any form of life.

The best the record shows is changes within species to adapt to current environmental conditions. Some people call that “micro-evolution” but even that is an erroneous term; “adaptation” would be much better. A good example of this would be the size of people living in Japan. When my dad lived there in the 50s, he was a head taller than anyone on the bus with him. When I was there in the 80s, I was taller than all the old people, but the younger ones were no different than young people in America.

All of this was the result of better diet. By the time I got there McDonalds had moved in and they were all over the place. The rice of the previous generations limited their size but the Big Mac changed all that and so the people adapted accordingly. But there has never been evolutionary development of any kind.

If evolution were true, out of the trillions of life forms that come and go with each generation, we would see not a few, but thousands of developments in every generation. But none have occurred... not one. At the top of the ladder of species is and always has been, man. And every new baby’s smile is one more nail in evolution’s already well-nailed coffin. In the end, a faulty premise equals a faulty conclusion.

The order of the creation is as it was because it is the way God ordained it to be. On the second half of the sixth day of creation, God created man. Since then, some people have been born as dummies and some have been born as geniuses, but none have developed according to the evolutionary model. Unusual change does occur though in certain circumstances –

The movie The Rain Man was based on a real person named Kim Peek. What he can do is truly astounding. He’s read about over 12,000 books and remembers everything in them. He’s known as “Kimputer” because of this. He actually reads two pages at once - his left eye reads the left page, and his right eye reads the right page.

It takes him about 3 seconds to read through two pages and he remembers everything on them. He can recall facts and trivia of 15 major subject areas from history to geography and sports. If you tell him any date in history, he can tell you what day of the week it was and he also remembers every piece of music he's ever heard.

Another savant, Daniel Tammet, is one of the world's only highly functioning autistic savants. He has exceptional mathematical and language abilities. He first became famous when he recited Pi from memory to 22,514 decimal places. Numbers are special to him because he has a rare form of synesthesia where he actually sees numbers as having their own unique shapes, color, texture and feel.

He can "see" the result of a mathematical calculation, and he can "sense" whether a number is prime. He's even drawn what pi looks like – a rolling landscape full of different shapes and colors. He speaks 11 languages, one of which is Icelandic.

In 2007, a documentary challenged him to learn the language in a week. Seven days later, he was successfully interviewed on Icelandic television in Icelandic. And it is quite possibly the most complicated language on earth and one which many native speakers find too difficult to master.

Different savants have different gifts – sculpture, mapping, painting, music, mathematical calculations, learning languages, etc... Savants usually acquire their ability after having an illness or receiving a blow to the head. In other words, these abilities were brought out of what already existed in their minds.

This means that any person potentially has these same abilities – all of them. But we are hindered by the limitations that are placed on us – like a transmission in a car. If we were to remove the limitation, or "switch to the proper gear" then we would be able to access the same level of ability.

Introduction: As we've seen over the past 25 verses of Genesis, God created from the simplest to the most complex beings in order. First He created the heavens and the earth. After this, He created light, then a firmament, and then He divided the waters from the land. After this, He created the grass, herbs, and trees and then the great lights in the heavens.

Then He made the sea creatures and the birds, and after that the living creatures on the land – "cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth." After all of this marvelous beauty, order, and complexity, God had one more thing to create.

Everything else was prepared for the arrival of this final participant in the great unfolding drama of the universe in which we live.

Text Verse: *When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. Psalm 8:3-5*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Crown of Creation

²⁶ Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

God’s final part of the created order was man. Man is the most complex and sophisticated organism in the universe and even more, man bears God’s image. Here, in the first chapter of the Bible we see another aspect of God that reveals His nature. The account says, “Let **Us** make man **in Our** Image, according to **Our** likeness...”

Everything in creation resembles the Creator in a limited way, but the Bible proclaims that man is created in God’s image. What does it specifically mean to be created in God’s image? Let’s review a few ways that we, as God’s image-bearer, reflect Him –

Mentally - We have mental powers to deduce things, to search things out, and to act rationally. We have reason and we have free will. This resembles God’s intellect and anytime we use our mental capacities in a constructive way to invent, write, paint, enjoy, calculate, etc. we reflect God in this way.

Morally – We have a sense of righteousness, justice, mercy, truthfulness, etc. and we act on these because they came from God in whose image we were created. In other words, these moral tenets aren’t arbitrary.

Instead when we act in a moral way, we acknowledge that we were created in God’s image and He is the ultimate expression of the morality we display, even if we don’t always make our moral decisions correctly. Paul reminds us of this in Romans chapter 1

when he speaks of the wrath of God which is directed at us for our incorrect moral thoughts and actions.

When we exercise our morals in a positive way, we reflect right morals instilled in us by our morally perfect God. Opposing abortion reflects God's image because it protects life created by Him. When we steal, we move away from God's image which is uprightness and justice.

When societies or people write just laws, punish evil, and promote proper behavior, we confirm that a higher standard exists that reflects God's image. When we use our talents in a way that brings Him honor, we reflect His image more perfectly.

Socially – we were created for fellowship by the God who understands fellowship. Remember what it said in the verse we're looking at – "Let **Us** make man in **Our** Image, according to **Our** likeness..." According to the Bible, there is only one God. But the Bible explains, even in the Old Testament, that within God, there is a Godhead – three Persons in One essence. These three exist in eternal harmony and love. The term "Us" in this verse confirms this concept and also confirms God's social nature.

When God created man He did it in order to fellowship with him. There was no need to create us, but because of His goodness and His social nature He did. This great act of Genesis 1 demonstrates that He is a Being who cherishes fellowship. Our fellowship between each other therefore reflects God's social qualities. Every time a man marries a woman, or when someone makes a friend, hugs a child, or attends church, he demonstrates that part of God's image in his life.

Not only are we created in God's image, but God said "let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

God has given man dominion over the other creatures of the earth. Although these creatures are wonderfully made and are to be cared for by man, they **are not** on the same level as man. Unfortunately, people have taken the care of animals to an extreme never intended by God. Activist organizations like PETA and even the UN are looking for animals to be given the same rights as humans and are thus overturning what God decreed in the creation of man.

We as the caretakers of God's world have been given the right and the responsibility to manage the animals of the earth. Even in the Bible during the times of Israel's judges,

God acknowledged that animals needed to be kept in check so as not to overrun the people dwelling in the land –

Moreover the LORD your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left, who hide themselves from you, are destroyed. You shall not be terrified of them; for the LORD your God, the great and awesome God, *is* among you. And the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you little by little; you will be unable to destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field become *too* numerous for you. Deuteronomy 7:20-22

In Genesis as well as elsewhere in the Bible, an animal that takes a man's life is to be destroyed because it has killed God's image bearer. And the same is true with man. If a man intentionally kills another man, his life is to be taken because he has killed a person created in God's image.

Unfortunately, like PETA with animals, many liberal thinking people cry out against the execution of criminals who commit capital crimes, but the Bible is perfectly clear that the bloodshed of a person can only be atoned for by the blood of the person who committed the murder. We reject these laws at our own peril because they stem **not** from human governmental laws, but from God's eternal laws based on His image.

Here's some of marvelous facts about our construction, which God did on the six day of creation. They show how beautifully we have been sculpted –

1. The stomach's digestive acids are strong enough to dissolve zinc. Fortunately for us though, the cells in the stomach lining renew so quickly that the acids don't have time to dissolve it.
2. The lungs contain over 300,000 million capillaries, or tiny blood vessels. If they were laid end to end, they would stretch 1500 miles.
3. Human bone is as strong as granite in supporting weight. A block of bone the size of a matchbox can support 9 tons. Believe it or not that's four times as much as concrete can support.
4. The largest organ in the body is the skin. In an adult man it covers about 20sq ft. The skin constantly flakes away and in a lifetime each person sheds around 40 lbs of skin.
5. The average person in America eats 50 tons of food and drinks about 11,000 gallons of liquid during his lifetime.

6. Each kidney contains 1 million individual filters. They filter an average of around 2.2 pints of blood per minute, and expel about 2.5 pints of urine a day.
7. The focusing muscles of the eyes move around 100,000 times a day. To give your leg muscles the same workout, you would need to walk 50 miles every day.
8. In 30 minutes, the average body gives off enough combined heat to bring a half gallon of water to boil and the majority of pores are on the head... now you know why some people are so hot-headed...
9. A single human blood cell takes only 60 seconds to make a complete circuit of the body.
10. A foreskin, the size of a postage stamp, from circumcised babies takes 21 days to grow skin that can cover a vast area and is used in treating burn patients. Dr. James McGuire, head of wound management at the Foot and Ankle Institute at Temple University said, "In some cases, we can get four football fields of skin out of one baby foreskin. If taken care of, skin can grow and grow."
11. The skin on the palm side of the hand and fingers is unique for several reasons:
12. It has no hair.
13. It contains fingerprints completely unique to the individual.
14. This skin will normally have no pigmentation and no ability to tan.
15. It's tough and durable, yet sensitive and it's anchored down to the bones beneath it through an intermediate layer of fascia. This arrangement keeps the skin of the palm from sliding around like a rubber glove when we use our hands to grip and twist.

We could go on all day with amazing facts about the complexity of the human body which is a form created by an infinitely intelligent Being who understood not only how we would end up working – such as being able to see, smell, taste, talk, etc., but giving us things to excite those abilities, such as flowers, smiles, cold showers on hot days and hot showers on cold days.

He's given us crickets and birds to delight our morning hours, and every day he paints a new sunrise and a new sunset into the skies for our enjoyment. We can appreciate all of this and so much more because of the way He formed us. As King David so wisely said –

For You formed my inward parts;
 You covered me in my mother's womb.
 I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made;
 Marvelous are Your works,
 And *that* my soul knows very well. Psalm 139:13, 14

In our text verse for today, the psalmist said, you have made him a little lower than the angels. This seems to put us in a lesser category than the angels, but if you go to Hebrews chapter 1, it says this –

But to which of the angels has He ever said: “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? Hebrews 1:13, 14

Although we are a “little lower than the angels” it is the angels who have the job of ministering to the people who will inherit salvation. Angels were created, but they are spirits, lacking potential. On the other hand, man has potential and it is unlimited in amount and variety. And above all the other potentials that man possesses is the ability to be redeemed.

We live in a fallen state in the world, but God has placed angels in our lives to minister to us when we have come to the point of salvation. From that point on, we can infer that angels are there working in ways we don’t even know to guide us in our redemptive walk.

*The crown of God’s wonderful creation plan,
Is God’s image-bearer, known as man,
Angels tend to his needs unaware,
And the domain of earth is under his care,*

*As special as God formed him to be
Man turned away from the Creator, you see
And so there is a rift between God and man
And this rift is a vast one that we cannot span*

*But God did the work to reconcile the two
He sent His Son Jesus, all things to renew
And so again we can stand in His glorious light
Because of the Savior who has made all things right*

II. Male and Female

²⁷ So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Although this point ought to be obvious and unnecessary, it seems that in the confused world that we live in people can't figure out even the obvious. God created man as man and God created women as women. In an attempt to deny this, modern thinking has taken almost everything to extremes never intended simply to deny the difference between the sexes.

Despite this, men have qualities that are suited for men and women have qualities that are suited for women. Neither is better than the other, but both fit what God has created for the purposes He created them.

Concerning the brain alone, there are huge differences between us... as if that shouldn't already be obvious.

In relationships, women tend to communicate more effectively than men. They focus on how to create a solution that works for a group, talking through issues, and utilizing non-verbal cues such as tone, emotion, and empathy, whereas men tend to be more task-oriented, less talkative, and more isolated. Imagine that, men... less talkative than women. hmmm

Men have a more difficult time understanding emotions that aren't explicitly verbalized, while women tend to intuit emotions and emotional cues. These differences explain why men and women sometimes have difficulty communicating and why men-to-men friendships look different from friendships among women. Thank goodness for that.

Men normally process better in the left hemisphere of the brain while women tend to process between both hemispheres. This difference explains why men are usually stronger with left-brain activities and follow a task-oriented perspective while women typically solve problems more creatively.

It seems to me that their creative problem solving techniques are usually best noted when they drive their cars and is the reason why **I choose to drive** when I'm with my wife...

Men normally process language in their dominant hemisphere, but women process it in both hemispheres. I guess this makes sense because it seems to me that women have a lot more to say than men. If they can learn other languages then they can keep talking wherever they travel without interruption.

Women have a thicker parietal region of the brain, which hinders the ability to mentally rotate objects. Research has shown this ability in babies as young as 5 months old and so environmental influences have nothing to do with this ability. So if someone says to a woman she's thick-headed, they may not be far off...

In all honesty though, my daughter is definitely the exception to this rule. She can take a three dimensional puzzle and construct it in her head without ever touching it. Then she can put it together the first time without any effort at all. I, on the other hand, usually can't solve these things even after long periods of time.

As you can see, not only are we physically different, but men and women are mentally different as well. Understanding the differences between men and women is part of understanding our different roles as people, as partners, and as members of the church.

A man is never complete without a woman and a woman is likewise incomplete without a man, but together the two are made to be one. We'll talk about this more when we get into Genesis chapter 2 in a future sermon.

One more note on this point though is that the Bible never diminishes the worth of women, instead it exalts them. However, the Bible does note cultural distinctions between the sexes such as the Jewish culture, the Greek culture, etc. Just because **cultural** distinctions are made in no way means that they are to be universally applied. Only when a verse is prescriptive in nature is it to be applied to men and/or women.

III. What God has Ordained

²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Chapter 2 deals more with the personal relationship between a man and a woman and the subject of marriage is better left until then. However, this verse sets the pattern for physical relationships. God told them, "be fruitful and multiply." What's implicitly stated here is that sex is meant for the people of the world, but that it has been ordained to be between a man and a woman.

The earth can't be filled with people engaged in homosexuality. Instead, God created us male and female for the purpose of procreation in order to fill the earth. Anything contrary to this then is a perversion of what God has ordained. Accounts such as the

destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah are recorded specifically to deal with the issue of homosexuality.

Unfortunately, in order to twist what's written there, homosexual advocates say that what is implied in the Sodom account is a belligerent and unwelcoming attitude of the people, not homosexuality. If they would simply complete their reading of the Bible, they'd find that the Bible interprets this passage elsewhere –

And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Jude 1:6, 7

The Law of Moses also gives us insights into the matter –

If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood *shall be* upon them. Leviticus 20:13

Speaking of what is obvious from creation, including interpersonal relationships, Paul says this in the book of Romans –

For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. Romans 1:26, 27

Another of God's ordinances that we saw previously is also mentioned in verse 28 when God said that man is to "have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

Man has been given ruling authority over the animals of the earth, both for their care and their control. To elevate animal life to the same level as man is to actually bring dishonor on God because God created man in His image. By claiming that animals are comparable in rights to man is to thus negate the very authority of God's established hierarchy.

As a society, it is right to work **actively** against any attempt to give animals rights beyond the normal care and control that was ordained by God Himself. Likewise, it is right for Christians to oppose any and all attempts to normalize homosexual rights and claims within a society.

Issues such as these don't mean we are uncaring about either animals or those who are caught up in homosexuality. But it does mean that we are to hold what God has ordained above what man desires when it's contrary to God's natural laws.

In the end, verbal and physical attacks against Christians are only going to increase in the years ahead when we stand against violations of God's ordinances, but choices have to be made and each person has to determine, in advance, what is and what isn't acceptable and then be ready to stand on those principles in the face of harsh criticism and even attack.

IV. It Was Very Good

²⁹ And God said, "See, I have given you every herb *that* yields seed which *is* on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.

³⁰ Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which *there is* life, *I have given* every green herb for food"; and it was so.

³¹ Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was* very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

On the sixth day, God created all of the beasts of the earth and He created man, thus completing His creative effort. These verses then are a reminder of what was available for man to eat. This seems to imply that there was nothing poisonous in the herbs, the grains, or the fruit at that time. Instead everything was edible to all living creatures and this is what you'd expect from the original creation before sin and death entered the world.

After making His pronouncement about the food available for life on earth, God expands on the comment of the previous five days which said, "it was good." Instead, God says, *v'hine, tov meod*. "And indeed, it was very good."

It must have been an immensely splendid and beautiful place before the fall of man. And even after the fall but before the Flood, the world must have been in an

exceptionally beautiful and life-accommodating state. It will again be this way in the millennial reign of Christ when God restores much of what was lost so long ago.

Matthew Henry says in his commentary of this portion of Scripture, “The time when this work was concluded: The evening and the morning were the sixth day; so that in six days God made the world. We are not to think **but that God could have made the world in an instant**. He that said, Let there be light, and there was light, could have said, “Let there be a world,” and there would have been a world, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, as at the resurrection.”

Mr. Henry is saying that God could have done everything instantly, but he chose to do it in a series and for specific reasons. As we noted last week, God created from the least complex to the most complex which should inspire us to do the same with our own works, ever improving on what we do.

God also did His work in 6 days to show us a good and proper cycle of living; taking one day a week off for rest and relaxation. And also, these six days are representative of a greater picture in redemptive History. God concluded His works on the sixth day and, as we’ll see in the next sermon, rested on the seventh. When we analyze that next week, we’ll look again at the reason for it.

Until then, let’s remember that this world is God’s creation and man was created to dwell in it, to fill it, to subdue it, and to care for it. Let’s contemplate these aspects of God’s plan as we use the water He provides, the food He gives us, and the terrain below our feet as we walk the highways and hills of life.

Everything we see, feel, smell, taste, hear, and sense is a gift of and from God, and each demonstrates His intelligence, wisdom, and love. As the psalmist said, “Bless the Lord, O my soul!”

*It was very good said our God
When he gave His creation an approval nod
Man has a home and a place to live
I’ve prepared it all for Him and to Him it I give*

*I know he’ll go his own way
and that in the end
I’ll have to save the day*

*But when he sees the love I show in my own Son
Again, his heart I will have won
After the cry on that cross... it is done*

*Again it will be perfect and without a flaw
But better than it was before
Because man will stand in humbled awe
Of the work of Jesus who stands at heaven's door*

*All who pass through will in Him delight
And praise His work of powerful might*

*For eternity man will live
In the perfect joy that I give
The waters of life free for all who will but receive
The gift of eternal life if you will but believe*

v'hine, tov meod. "And indeed, it was very good."

GENESIS 2:1-3 (A DAY OF REST)

This was found in a church bulletin: “Tonight’s sermon: ‘What is hell?’ Come early and listen to our choir practice.”

I’m not really sure if that’s what I want to do on my day of rest...

Speaking of our day of rest, let me read you a passage from Matthew. I wonder if any of you see the same fuzzy logic in these verses that I do –

“Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” He said to them, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus. Matthew 12:9-14

So... we can’t heal on the Sabbath, but we can plot to kill someone on the Sabbath? Yeah, that makes sense... Unfortunately, this thinking fits most of us in one context or another. We all tend to get judgmental about this issue or that. And when it comes to denominational mindsets, the judgments get even wilder. At the top of the list is one of the most misunderstood and most argued concepts in Christianity – that of the Sabbath.

Four prevalent and many lesser views exist concerning the Sabbath – The seventh day Sabbath; the Puritan Sabbath; the Lutheran Sabbath; and the Fulfilled Sabbath. Only one is correct and therefore only one can be termed “biblical” for the Christian.

The problem with this is that the exact same verses used to defend a position are often applied by proponents of an opposing view to establish their doctrine. So resolving this dilemma isn’t something either easy or which will be agreed on by others. It’s simply not going to happen.

Having said that, I will tell you which view is the correct one and why. Just because people don’t agree doesn’t mean the issue can’t be resolved.

Introduction: God created in six days and as we'll see in the upcoming verses, He rested on the seventh day. This set a pattern for the people of Israel to observe a Sabbath day as well, but the seventh day Sabbath wasn't only based on creation, it was also based on redemption, a point we'll define as we look into our own weekday life cycle and how we should handle it biblically.

As we look at these things, please know for certain that this isn't a minor issue for a number of reasons. What God ordains and why is naturally of immense significance and so we need to properly regard His word and His decisions.

Text Verse: *'It is a people who go astray in their hearts,
And they do not know My ways.'
So I swore in My wrath,
'They shall not enter My rest.'*" Psalm 95:10-11

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. God's Work

¹ Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.

² And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

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

What's the reason you're here today? I can think of a few possible answers. Maybe you're here because you love the beach and also want to enjoy some fellowship with other Christians. Or you might possibly want to learn something about the Bible you'd never thought of. Some of you might say, I know I'm supposed to go to church on Sunday and this is the least oppressive place to do it. Maybe you feel guilty because you know you're supposed to take a day off and spend it in some religious context.

Whatever the reason, because you're here you're not working. If nothing else, this is certain. That means this is your time off from work. In America, we generally get two days a week off and if someone demands a certain day for religious reasons, then they usually get that day if at all possible.

A lot of the rest of the world doesn't get two days off, but pretty much everywhere I've been, people get at least one day a week off from their job. Whether they use that day to relax or to work a second job is totally up to them, but most cultures and groups follow the one in seven pattern. It's as if it's built into us.

Is how we're spending our day off in line with the Bible and if so, how do we know? Seventh Day Adventists believe that the Saturday Sabbath that was given to the nation of Israel is binding even to this day. Here's what their statement of faith from the Adventist website says –

“The seventh day (Saturday) is an extra-special part of the relationship. The Bible, from Genesis through Revelation, describes the seventh day as the one day God has set aside for focused fellowship with His people.”

“The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God's kingdom. The Sabbath is God's perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God's creative and redemptive acts.”

Is this correct? If so, then everyone here – who assumedly works from time to time on a Saturday, is going to hell. That's what they teach and that's what they believe. First, their statement which said “The Bible, from Genesis through Revelation, describes the seventh day as the one day God has set aside for focused fellowship with His people” is completely false. How someone could say this with a straight face is beyond belief.

They also said, “The fourth commandment of God's **unchangeable** law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath.”

This mindset comes from a confused theology about the work of Jesus Christ. It also comes from a misunderstanding about how God works.

Calling the seventh-day Sabbath one of God's **unchangeable** laws relegates God to the law, not the law to God. Some things are a part of His very nature, such as moral issues. These would be unchangeable because they reflect His character. The Sabbath, in Jesus own words is not a part of His character –

And He said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.” Mark 2:27, 28

As you can see, God created the Sabbath for man; it is not a part of His nature and is therefore changeable. Anything done by God for man is something that is not, by necessity, eternal in nature. Before God created, time didn't exist and therefore a seventh-day Sabbath didn't exist. Once we understand this, then we can properly evaluate the purpose of the Sabbath and how it pertains to us in the context in which God purposes it.

What we need to do is to start first by reviewing the Sabbath law as given to Israel, the covenant people of God.

In Exodus, we read the fourth commandment –

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. Exodus 20:8-11

The fourth commandment is repeated in Deuteronomy, but the reason for the Sabbath is actually different there –

... And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.
Deuteronomy 5:12-15

If you notice the difference, the first reason given in Exodus at the time the people were brought to Mount Sinai was based on the creation account –

“For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day.”

The second reason given in Deuteronomy is based on the consummation of redemption and the promise of entering His rest – “And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm;....

Everything in the Old Testament is a picture of something greater coming in the Person of Jesus. He is the true Redeemer and He has provided the complete rest which could only come about with His **fulfilling** the Law given to the Israelites.

The Law was given to Israel alone. Until the coming of Christ, the Sabbath was a sign, like circumcision, of the covenant law received at Mount Sinai and agreed upon by the people of Israel.

Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it *is* a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that *you* may know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies you. Exodus 31:13

This is mentioned three times in Scripture and is very specific. It was to be a sign between God and the Israelites as a part of the covenant law. So the question arises, “Are we as Christians under the Law of Moses or not?” The answer to this question is the defining mark as to whether we must adhere to its precepts or not.

Unfortunately and again, there are many interpretations from an “absolute yes” to a, “well, partially” to a “not at all.” The “absolute yes” people are the most confused of all because they stand on Sabbath and dietary laws, but they ignore the laws which tell them they have to go to Jerusalem three times a year, perform sacrifices, not wear clothes with two types of materials ... among 613 other laws, many of which are impossible to fulfill in today’s world.

The “well, partially” people attempt to make a distinction between the “ceremonial laws” and the “moral laws” found in the Law of Moses. In other words, the “ceremonial laws” are all the little things they don’t want to do, like wearing clothes of only one type of material, and the “moral laws” are the Big Ten that they’re afraid will crush them if they don’t follow them perfectly.

Unfortunately, these “well, partially/moral law” folks generally pick and choose some of the “ceremonial laws” as taboo too – like eating pork. This is confused thinking based on poor biblical interpretation.

The only sound option concerning the Law of Moses – meaning the entire law, including the Ten Commandments which are a part of that law, is that the law is not applicable to Christians today. There is no distinction made between ceremonial laws and moral laws in the Law of Moses. The reason the law isn’t applicable is because it’s what the Bible teaches. Three times in the book of Hebrews this is stated explicitly and it is implied numerous times.

Hebrews 7:18 and Hebrews 10:9 say the law is “set aside” by the work of Christ and the establishment of the New Covenant. In Hebrews 8:13 it is said to be “obsolete.”

When it says this, it’s referring to the entire body of law and no distinction is made between what is ceremonial and what is moral. What we couldn’t do in living out the law, Jesus did on our behalf.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. Matthew 5:17

II. He Sat Down

So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit. John 19:30

Jesus finished the work His Father sent Him to do and with His last breath, he acknowledged this for an anxious world, lost in sin. After that, He gave up His spirit, having paid the penalty you and I owe and fulfilling the law that you and I could never meet.

When Jesus died the work was done
Perfect obedience performed by God’s own Son

The law complete, fulfilled by the Lord
And a new covenant was given in His blood

In His deeds we find our rest
By faith in them, the only test

Who can bring a charge against God's elect
When it is Jesus who saves us by His grace
In the saved no sin can the devil detect
Nothing can move us from our place

Resting then in His work alone
On Sunday through Saturday, each day at peace
The glories of **His work** be known
So that from **our work**, we do cease

What is it we do when we finish a given task? In the case of Jesus, He sat down.

In the temple, there were all kinds of furniture. There was an altar to burn sacrifices, there was a laver for washing, there was a table with bread that needed to be changed out at regular intervals, there was a lamp which needed to be filled with oil, and there was an incense altar that needed fresh incense. There were all kinds of things that needed to be done morning and evening, day in and day out, all year long. The priest's work was never finished and so there was no chair in the temple.

When a priest reached retirement age, there was someone to replace him and the cycle continued on without any interruption. What happened in the temple was similar to that of an auto assembly line. Day in and day out cars are made and people work their lives putting out new cars.

No matter how many cars they make, there will always be a need for more. Old cars wear out, cars get in accidents, new people turn 16, and the cycle goes on. In the same way, new people were born in sin, sinners kept on sinning, the law kept on being broken, and so the work of the priests never ended.

Every Saturday, the people would rest in acknowledgment of God's creation and His redemption, but they never really entered God's rest as we'll see a bit later when we look at the 95th Psalm. The work went on and the need for something greater still lay ahead.

Suppose cars never broke down and everyone that had a car was happy with it. And suppose there were no more 16 year olds coming along in need of new cars. Eventually there would be a day when no more cars would be needed. The workers would probably have a big party and then they'd go home ... and sit down.

This is what happened with the Law of Moses. It was designed with the purpose of ending if it could be fulfilled. But until it was, it kept steaming along from day to day. Enter Jesus Christ – “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

The Law and the Prophets are as binding today as they were at the time of Jesus. Not a letter or a brushstroke will fall from the Law and all people are bound under that law. If so, then why am I arguing that we are free from the Law? Because this is what Paul argued! If you’re in Christ, then the law is set aside.

Jesus fulfilled the law which couldn’t otherwise be fulfilled. The last sin was atoned for; the last car on the assembly line was finished. The law was made obsolete for those who follow Jesus. When He finished His work, He did something no other priest could do while in the temple. He sat down. As it says in Hebrews –

...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2

Jesus Christ is at the right hand of the throne of God – there in the Most Holy place sitting down, His work complete. And He promises the same for any person who, by faith in Him, acknowledges Him as Lord. By doing so, they overcome the work of the devil, and they also overcome the Law of Moses, and they are granted peace with God. Jesus gives us the wonderful words of release in the book of Revelation –

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. Revelation 3:21

What does all this have to do with the Sabbath? As a part of the Old Testament Law, it is obsolete in Christ. The only laws which carry over from the Old Testament to the New are those which are restated in the New Testament...a covenant which was initiated on the night of Jesus’ Crucifixion.

Therefore, anything recorded in the gospels prior to that moment is a part of Jesus fulfilling the law on our behalf. Only that which is restated as binding after the cross is a part of the New Covenant... and the Sabbath isn’t. No we can’t murder, the New Covenant says so. Yes we can eat pork, the New Covenant says so. No we can’t steal, the New Covenant says so. Our doctrine for life in Christ comes from His New Covenant in His own blood.

The Sabbath is a part of the Old Covenant, not the new. It was based on God's work of creation and God's work of redemption, both of which are answered in Jesus. He is the Redeemer and in Him we are a new creation. Both actions are directed to the cross.

Look at the law this way. Israel was working six days and resting on the seventh. This can be equated with the anticipation of Rest which still lay ahead. Biblical Christians following the pattern set in the New Testament, worship on the first day of the week and then work after that. Israel was working in order to Rest, we Rest in order to work.

This can be equated with the fulfillment of Rest which we look back on. In other words, the Cross of Calvary is the central focus of the faith – be it looking forward by Israel or looking back by the Church.

Jesus Christ sat down on His Father's throne and He promises that anyone who overcomes will have the right to sit with Him. Guess what, that is anyone who has called on Jesus Christ as Lord –

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

-Ephesians 2:4-7

When Jesus finished His work, He sat down. When we trust in Jesus we are seated with Him.

Praise be to God! He sat down.

III. We Who Believe

In the book of Hebrews, the author goes into great detail concerning the work of Jesus and the superiority of His covenant over that of Moses. He then quotes the 95th Psalm to make a point about God's Sabbath Rest.

“Today, if you will hear His voice,
Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
In the day of trial in the wilderness,
Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,

And saw My works forty years.
Therefore I was angry with that generation,
And said, 'They always go astray in their heart,
And they have not known My ways.'
So I swore in My wrath,
'They shall not enter My rest.'"

In what takes considerate thought, the author of Hebrews quotes King David from hundreds of years earlier saying "Today."

He then spends all of the rest of chapter 3 explaining who the disobedient were and how they failed to enter God's rest. Then starting with chapter 4, he says this –

"Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it." Hebrews 4:1, 2

If King David said "Today" when he wrote the 95th Psalm, then he was speaking from his point in time on and he was saying that the word had to be mixed with faith, but Paul explains elsewhere that "...if those who are of the law *are* heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect,"

In other words, it is faith and faith alone in what God promises that brings His people into a state of rest, not the law. And so the author of Hebrews tells us in verse 4:3 – "For we who have believed do enter that rest..."

Go back to King David. If he is saying "Today" at his time, then the promise of rest was still an open issue. It could not have been consummated at the crossing of the Jordan or at any time up to when King David was alive. It was the present at David's time and present at the time of the New Testament as well.

This is what God asks of us – to receive the works of His Son by faith and to acknowledge that He is Lord and that by His unmerited favor we stand justified in everything that the law could never justify us in – including the Sabbath Day observance.

In fact, if we go back and attempt to meet that then we are remixing in the law which is already fulfilled. In our next point, we'll see the error in that type of thinking.

IV. A Day of Rest

Do you remember as we started today that I said only one of the four Sabbath options is correct? Paul couldn't be any clearer in the book of Romans concerning the days of the week and how we handle them –

One person esteems *one* day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes *it* to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe *it*. Romans 14:5, 6

We've been instructed by Paul to be fully convinced in our own mind about the propriety of elevating one day above another – in other words, demonstrating faith in our convictions. To sit in a church that mandates a Sabbath, in any form, is not demonstrating faith. So even if you're simply going to church out of compulsion, then you're not demonstrating faith.

Paul, using circumcision as a benchmark for the work of Christ, says this –

And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Galatians 5:3-5

Circumcision was a sign of the covenant between Israel and God, just as the Sabbath was a sign. And just as every man who becomes circumcised is a debtor to the whole law, so is any man who attempts to merit God's favor in any other aspect of the law, including the Sabbath.

Circumcision is now a neutral issue ... not a neutered issue! If one wants to circumcise their children for health reasons then cut away without fear of reprisal, but if you are circumcising your children or are considering circumcision yourself because of the law, then grace is nullified and you are a debtor to the entire law.

This is exactly the same consideration as a mandatory Sabbath. If you are doing it to fulfill the law, then you are in debt to the entire body of law. You have fallen from grace, and your deeds will testify against you at the judgment.

Our day of Rest then is God's day of rest – the seventh day. Unlike the other six days in the creation account which say “evening and morning were the 2nd (or 3rd, or 4th, or whatever) day. The seventh day says nothing about evening and morning; it is an eternal day... creation is over. The author of Hebrews explains it this way –

...although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh *day* in this way: “*And God rested on the seventh day from all His works*”; and again in this *place*: “*They shall not enter My rest.*” Since therefore it remains that some *must* enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “*Today,*” after such a long time, as it has been said: “*Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.*” Hebrews 4:3-7

This is the “Today” that was present for David and obviously still awaiting some future realization. God's rest, which occurred on the 7th Day was open to Israel and remained open at David's time. Hebrews goes on to complete the thought –

For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. **There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.** Hebrews 4:8-10

Out of the four major views on the Sabbath, I only specifically addressed one of the three incorrect views. There's really no need to address the other two because the only option which is reasonable in refuting the seventh-day Sabbath is the Fulfilled Sabbath. Because this is so, it is therefore the correct view of the Sabbath. If it is fulfilled, it is set aside.

We don't observe a Sabbath day because we are living in our Sabbath Rest – God's eternal seventh day. If you wish to come to Church on the Beach on Sunday, you're welcome to come. If you wish to set aside a Monday, a Tuesday, a Wednesday, a Thursday, a Friday, or a Saturday to worship the Lord, then you may do so. If you don't want to set aside any day, then you may do that as well.

Let each of you be convinced in your own mind, and without compulsion to follow the Lord as you rest in His work and in it alone.

One final point about the 7-day creation pattern – God worked for 6 days and then rested. This is a picture of the 7000 years of man on earth. The period known as the Millennial Kingdom is the last 1000 years before God initiates His new order. During this time, Jesus will sit on His throne in Jerusalem. When He does, Isaiah calls it His place of Rest –

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
As the waters cover the sea.

“And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
And His resting place shall be glorious. Isaiah 11:9, 10

Those who have already received Jesus have entered that Day of Rest in advance of His glorious throne. As we live out our lives, we should acknowledge this, to His glory.

Next week we will see how the Fulfilled Sabbath is actually prefigured in Adam’s time in Eden; something he had a right to and lost. As a foretaste of that today we’ll note that John Sailhamer says this – “The man was ‘put’ into the Garden where he could ‘rest’ and be ‘safe,’ and the man was ‘put’ into the Garden ‘in God’s presence’ where he could have fellowship with God...”

What should never cease to amaze us is that what we had, we gave up voluntarily – rejecting God’s authority over us and determining to do it our own way. And yet, and despite this, God sent His Son to right the wrongs and to lead us back to Him through the work of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

*He sat down, His work complete
Christ sat down on His heavenly seat
Jesus fulfilled the Law for Adam’s seed
And sat down with the Father on His Throne*

*Where Adam failed, He did succeed
To the world, let His victory be known
Christ sat down His place of rest glorious
And to each He offers a place as well*

*The Lord prevailed for each of us
And ransomed fallen men, from the clutches of hell
Hail to the all majestic and glorious King
To Him let the redeemed of the ages sing*

*Spotless and pure in the finest gown
Praise to the Lord, He sat down
For all eternity, sing His renown
Hallelujah! Christ sat down*

GENESIS 2:4-15 **(TO WORSHIP AND TO SERVE)**

Some time ago, I started a through-the-Bible study class and we've gone slowly and methodically through each verse in an attempt to miss as little as possible, but while preparing for this sermon, I was stunned to see how much I missed in Chapter 2 of Genesis.

There are patterns and parallels which are wonderful to see and yet I'd never considered them until I looked more deeply into things in preparation for today. It makes me realize how immense God's word is and how arrogant we can be to assume that we could ever understand everything that He's give us in the pages of this wonderful book. An infinite mind is, after all, infinitely intelligent.

I chose the title for today's sermon "To Worship and to Serve" based on a translation of verse 15 which is completely different than any translation you've probably ever read and yet it's one which is more than likely correct based on patterns in the rest of the Bible, including the very last page in Revelation 22.

What was the reason God created man? Was it to work the ground of the earth as most Bibles indicate? Or was there a completely different reason which is actually reflected in the Westminster Shorter Catechism's first tenet and which we've looked at before –

What is the chief end of man?

Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.

If this is true, and it is, then it only makes sense that the Bible would proclaim this as well – and actually, it does.

Introduction: We need to remember that God is complete in and of Himself. He lacks nothing and therefore anything that He has created is a demonstration of His own goodness and should reflect His infinite worth. Man pursuing works doesn't fit this particular picture very well and so what we need to do is look deeper into God's intent for man in the Garden of Eden – the spot where God dwelt and fellowshiped with him.

Text Verse: *Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!
Tremble before Him, all the earth. Psalm 96:9*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Man Became a Living Being

⁴This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,

Liberal theologians claim that Chapters 2 and 3 of Genesis are a completely different account than Chapter 1 and were written by different people at different times. Their claim is that the two accounts just don't fit.

The obvious reason why someone would come to this conclusion is that they don't want to believe that the Bible is really what it claims to be – God's word to mankind. If different people wrote the two accounts, then by implication God didn't author the Bible and it is just a book, like any other – full of myths.

Instead of this, all one needs to do is simply evaluate the chapters to see that they are merely a detailed insert into what's recorded in Chapter 1. Imagine getting instructions for assembling something, say a computer. There will be general instructions of how to put everything together and then there will be separate instructions for specific parts – like the printer. Chapters 2 and 3 are simply these finer details inserted into the larger overview of Chapter 1.

Because this is God's word, then the account is included to give us specific insights into something that must be rather important for us to know. A jillion unimportant details weren't recorded, such as the height of Adam or the color of Eve's hair. They're not recorded because they have no importance to the story and no bearing on what would occur later. The name of Adam's first puppy, which could have been Fido, is irrelevant...

Remembering this is a good lesson for each of us. When you're reading the Bible, always ask yourself why a particular passage is included. If God included it, then it has importance to the plan and relevance to the story.

In the verse we're looking at we see a new name of the Creator – the LORD God or Jehovah Elohim. In Chapter 1, only the word "Elohim" was used, signifying the God of Power – He's the Creator. Elohim is what's known as a "majestic pronoun." Here in Chapter two, the title Jehovah Elohim or the God of Power and Perfection is seen.

Matthew Henry describes Jehovah this way, "*Jehovah* is that great and incommunicable name of God which denotes his having his being of himself, and his giving being to all things; fitly therefore is he called by that name now that heaven and earth are finished."

We continue with verse 5 and onto 6...

⁵ before any plant of the field was in the earth and before any herb of the field had grown. For the LORD God had not caused it to rain on the earth, and *there was* no man to till the ground;

⁶ but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground.

In what I just read, it appears that man's purpose is to "till the ground." From this verse it would seem hard to assume otherwise. Why else would tilling the ground be included here? And so, it's from this perspective that later verses in the same account have been translated, even though there's a large problem with this.

⁷ And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

A few weeks ago, we looked at what it meant to be created in God's image. We bear His image mentally, morally, and socially, among other ways, but in this verse we learn that Adam consisted of both heaven and earth. Man was formed out of the dust and then the divine Creator breathed life into him.

This doesn't imply that he or we are in any way divine, but that the life of man came from God, not by random chance. The spark of life which quickened the clay jar was none other than the breath of the Creator. The man has become a living being. He is the final act of creation. He is the highest form of what has been made. And he is fearfully and wonderfully sculpted.

From God's hand and His breath
Is how man came to be
From an act of His wisdom and love
Man came not from the slime or from the sea
Nor from a meteor that rained down from above

In His image He created the man
And for His glory and praise
This was for us the original plan

To see Him face to face all of our days
To worship and serve in eternal peace
Was God's intent for us from the start
Our days were intended never to cease
This was the desire of the Creator's heart.

God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing on the first day of creation. Five days later, on the sixth day, He created His final and most stupendous work of art – in fact a masterpiece – out of the simplest and most common part of the creation, dust.

First there was nothing, and then there was dust. God took this “next to nothingness” material and after forming it, breathed His life into it. If we jump ahead just a little bit we'll see that Adam disobeyed God and died spiritually at that moment. Because of this, the thing that made us most like God disappeared at that moment too. Isn't that a humbling thought?

We walk around as if we're pretty big stuff when in fact we are as close to nothing as the breath in our lungs. From the dust we came and to the dust we shall return... Without a new birth, our next to nothingness is all we have to live for. *Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.*

The dust of the earth is what man was created from; the most common stuff on earth. He didn't use gold dust, He didn't use silver dust, He didn't even use zinc... Instead, he used the earth. And to this day we are of the dust of the earth.

Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 15, but so does the psalmist in the 139th Psalm. He says there, “My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, *And* skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.”

We are so closely tied to the earth that David describes the womb in which we're formed as *eretz*, or “the earth.” In the same way, Job calls the place where we're going back to our “mother's womb,” meaning the earth.

The word for womb in Hebrew is *behten* and is comprised of the Hebrew letters *Beth*, *Teth*, and *Nun*.

The meaning of the Beth is “house.” The meaning of the Teth is “mud.” And, the meaning of the Nun is “heir” as in continuance into the next generation. The womb then

is the house where the one of mud continues on. Even in the word itself we see our lowly state. Mix a little water with the dust and you have the man...

On our own, we simply can't get away from the dust from which we were created. We live by what it produces and when we die we will return to it.

However, and despite the unappealing material, the Bible says God "formed the man." The Bible uses the Hebrew word *yatsar* and it implies a careful and attentive shaping of him. This same word is used in the books of the prophets when describing a potter shaping a bowl from the clay. In the case of man, the Latin phrase rings true –

Materiam superabat opus – "The workmanship exceeded the materials." We marvel at the detail of a watch made of intricate tiny pieces of metal; we look with wonder at sand sculptures and finely constructed artwork of hand blown glass. And yet nothing man has ever made comes even close to the intricate beauty of the human form.

Thus the man became a living being. God shaped man into the form He determined and we are as He decided. In the New Testament Paul asks the obvious question –

Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, "Why have you made me like this?" Romans 9:20

Oh, but question we do! But God formed us for His purposes.

The book of John records two wonderfully beautiful parallels to the passage we're currently looking at where it says,

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.."

"When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing." John 9:6, 7

So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. John 20:21, 22

This God, Jehovah Elohim, who created the heavens and the earth and who formed man out of the dust, breathing into him the breath of life, also formed new eyes for a man to see and gave the same breath again to His apostles in the regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, God incarnate, gave both instances as a confirmation of who He is and the power He displays in creation and in the regeneration.

II. The Garden of Eden

⁸ The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed.

⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.

After creating man – only after creating man – does it say that Jehovah Elohim planted a garden eastward in Eden. Eden means “delight” or “pleasure” and was, if man obeyed, a place not for work, but for a different purpose.

This is an important point to consider when looking at the previous verse that said there wasn’t yet a man to till the ground. This garden is something special and something intended for the man He formed. The ground which needed to be tilled was outside of the Garden, not in it.

If you stand back and look at the larger picture of the Bible, it’s clear that God knew before the fall that man would fall. And so the garden, despite being made as a place where God would fellowship with man, didn’t fill the entire earth. Instead, the Garden was a localized place of grace, of abundance, and of provision from God above, not from the ground below.

It was, as God knew from the beginning, a temporary place for Adam to dwell. This isn’t readily apparent though. In this verse the word “put” is translated from the Hebrew word *sum*, but as we’ll see in a little while, a different word is used later which is also translated as “put.”

Appreciating the garden meant they would need to leave the garden. This is how we learn to appreciate anything, by contrast. If there is no contrast, then we have no ability to appreciate our current state.

God knew that we would start in a garden and then be removed from that garden because of our interaction with, believe it or not, a tree. But God's plan is that we are to be restored to the garden because of our interaction with another tree. The plan is so intricately woven and presented in the Bible that it's almost beyond imagination. Everything fits so beautifully.

III. A Tale of Two Trees

^{9(cont.)} **The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.**

Of the many plants of the garden, only two trees are named and there they were, right in the midst of the garden. And of these two trees, the fruit of only one is forbidden. As we'll see next week, the LORD said to Adam, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

More than a little is tied up then in these two trees. Choices are tied up in them, conditions are tied up in them, blessings and curses are tied up in them, life and death are tied up in them, the law and grace are tied up in them, and even the Lord's Supper, our Holy Communion is tied up in these two trees.

– **As a choice:**

The tree of life – you may eat of it.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil – you shall not eat of it.

It's important to note that although Adam was told to not eat of this tree, the choice was still his. God placed the tree in the Garden when he could have simply not have placed it there at all. By placing it there then, it was possible for Adam to eat it even though he was told not to. Obedience is always a test of our priorities and allegiances.

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live. Deuteronomy 30:19

– **As a condition:**

The tree of life – Life is granted through its fruit.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil – Death results from its fruit.

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.

– **As a blessing and a curse:**

The tree of life – you can live with me forever.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil – you will be separated from me.

Admittedly, Adam had no idea what death really meant, but innocence dies not negate guilt. And death was to be the penalty for guilt.

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.

– **As life and death:**

The tree of life – eat and live.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil – eat and die.

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.

– **As the Law versus Grace:**

The tree of life – Eat and find eternal life – God’s grace; His unmerited favor.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil – eat it and be punished. As Paul says, “because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression.” Romans 4:15

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.

– **As the Lord’s Supper:**

The tree of life – Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. John 6:54

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil Believe and be saved, disbelieve and be damned: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of

Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.” (John 6:53) In other words, go back to the tree of life and by faith receive what God has given you.

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.

God set the parameters in Eden, He set them for Israel, and He sets them now for the world. Choose life. To me the most magnificent aspect of what He does though is that He gives man the choice.

IV. The Water of Life

¹⁰ Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four riverheads.

¹¹ The name of the first *is* Pishon; it *is* the one which skirts the whole land of Havilah, where *there is* gold.

¹² And the gold of that land *is* good. Bdellium and the onyx stone *are* there.

¹³ The name of the second river *is* Gihon; it *is* the one which goes around the whole land of Cush.

¹⁴ The name of the third river *is* Hiddekel; it *is* the one which goes toward the east of Assyria. The fourth river *is* the Euphrates.

The theme of the Water of Life goes literally from Genesis to Revelation and winds throughout both testaments. Right here in the Genesis account, we see that one river flowed out of Eden to water the garden and from there it parted and became four riverheads.

This is amazingly similar to the gospel message in which the Lord delights, and in fact, Eden as I said earlier means “delight.” From both the Garden of Eden and from His Gospel we see amazing parallels. The rivers names are Pishon, meaning “increase;” Gihon, meaning “bursting forth;” Hiddekel, meaning “rapid;” and Perath, meaning fruitfulness.

Each of these rivers came from one source and together they wound their way around the world. In the same way, the gospel comes from one source and yet it branches out into four different accounts – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Each of these gospels reflects the glory of the Lord as was revealed in a vision of God to Ezekiel –

As for the likeness of their faces, *each* had the face of a man; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right side, each of the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and each of the four had the face of an eagle. Ezekiel 1:10

The Lion's face is the Gospel of Matthew which describes Jesus as the King of Israel. This is also symbolized by the river Gihon which means to "burst forth." Later in the Bible, the Gihon is where the king was anointed as ruler of Israel. In Ezekiel 32, the king of Egypt is said to burst forth (geeakh) like a lion or a sea monster. This is actually the root of the word Gihon.

The Ox's face is the Gospel of Mark which describes Jesus as the Servant, the ox being a servant animal. This is symbolized by the river Pishon which means to "increase" which parallels Proverbs 14:4 – Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; But much increase comes by the strength of an ox.

The Man's face is the Gospel of Luke which describes Jesus as the Son of Man. This is symbolized by the river Perath which means "fruitfulness." Just as man was told to be fruitful and multiply in Genesis 1:22

And the Eagle's face is the Gospel of John which describes Jesus as the Son of God. This is symbolized by the river Hiddekel which means "rapid." The rapid nature of the eagle is noted in Jeremiah 4:13 – Behold, he shall come up like clouds, And his chariots like a whirlwind. His horses are swifter than eagles.

Together, these four accounts which stem from a single source go out to water the world with the knowledge of the Lord and to proclaim the Water of Life which was symbolized by the four rivers flowing out of the Garden of Eden.

In the first Psalm, we see that a person who delights in the Law of the Lord-

"shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper." –Psalm 1:3

And from this we can learn a few more things about the rivers of Eden. They symbolized spiritual life but after the Fall of Man the rivers' origins have changed. The Pishon is no longer flowing at all, symbolizing death. The Euphrates and the Tigris run through the

lands which in the Bible are opposed to God – Babylon. These symbolize spiritual enmity with God.

Only one river flows out of God’s chosen land of Israel – the Gihon. If you know the size difference, there is no comparison. The Gihon is a small spring that it almost unnoticeable. This is comparable to what Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14-

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴ Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Though the Gihon is just a small brook today, it is symbolic of the wellspring of spiritual life in a world dead in sin; this, in opposition to the immense amount of water flowing through the rivers of apostasy and false world religions which is symbolized by Babylon. The 46th Psalm says –

*There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God,
The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; -Psalm 46:4*

This is represented by Jerusalem, the city which is in spiritual opposition to Babylon. Again, the psalms help us understand this –

By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept
When we remembered Zion. ² We hung our harps Upon the willows in the midst of it. ³ For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, And those who plundered us *requested* mirth, *Saying*, “Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion!”
⁴ How shall we sing the LORD’s song In a foreign land? –Psalm 137:1-4

The Jews exile from their home to Babylon is symbolic of our exile from Eden and God’s presence. The good news is that in the near future, Isaiah prophesied that “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.”

This is symbolically represented by the river which Ezekiel says will flow out of the south side of a future temple in Jerusalem. It will be the Gihon, which will “burst forth’ – just as its name implies – to bring the dead back to life. –

Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the

temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar. ² He brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gateway that faces east; and there was water, running out on the right side. ³ And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the water *came up to my* ankles. ⁴ Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters; the water *came up to my* knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; the water *came up to my* waist. ⁵ Again he measured one thousand, *and it was* a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed. ⁶ He said to me, “Son of man, have you seen *this?*” Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river.” Ezekiel 47:1-6

V. To Worship and to Serve

¹⁵ Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.

Let’s look at how different translators of have worded this verse, but notice how each variation follows the same theme –

to dress it and to keep it // to take care of it and to look after it
to tend and keep it // to tend and guard and keep it
to tend and watch over it // to till it and to guard it
to cultivate it and keep it // to cultivate it and guard it
to serve it, and to keep it // to care for it and work it
to farm the land and to take care of it
to work it and to keep it // to work it and take care of it
to work it and watch over it // to work the ground and care for it
to work the soil and take care of the garden

If you noticed, despite the flowery changes in terminology, every one of these translations demonstrates work is being proposed for the Garden of Eden. If you look at the purpose of the Garden, this makes no sense. Earlier, in verse 5, we read that man was to till the ground. However, this was **before** God planted the Garden of Eden. Man was formed outside Eden and then placed there.

I quoted John Sailhamer last week, let me refresh your memory – “The man was ‘put’ into the Garden where he could ‘rest’ and be ‘safe,’ and the man was ‘put’ into the Garden ‘in God's presence’ where he could have fellowship with God...”

The word for “put” in verse 15 is the word *yanach*, a completely different word than what was used in verse 8. Dr. Richard Howe of Southern Evangelical Seminary notes this about the word *yanach* –

“... the sense of the verb is causative, meaning that God ‘caused Adam to rest’ in the garden.”

If God “caused Adam to rest” in the garden, then why would man need to tend and keep it? Dr. Howe notes, “The problem with these translations is that the pronoun in the verse does not agree in gender with the word ‘garden.’”

The word ‘garden’ is masculine in Hebrew and so ‘garden’ can’t be the object of the verbs. Because of this, either this verse is an exception to the rule of the Hebrew language or the verbs aren’t referring to the garden at all and instead something else is meant.

Doctor Howe’s conclusion is that the verbs should be taken as abstract in meaning and that “The significance of “resting the man in the garden” is not to demonstrate man’s relationship to the garden, but rather to provide a setting for the story to demonstrate man’s relationship and responsibility to God.”

Therefore, his translation has an abstract meaning. Instead of “tend and to keep” he says they should be translated “worship and serve,” as both words **are** translated elsewhere in the Bible.

And isn’t this exactly what the gospel itself proclaims? We can’t in any way supply for ourselves our own good. Instead, Jesus is the One who supplies our every need. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

It wasn’t the garden to which Adam was responsible, but to God – to worship and to serve Him. Dr. Howe notes that, “Before the fall, Adam’s attention was directed upwards toward God.” He was to serve God through keeping His commandment and he was to worship Him through trust and obedience.

But “After the fall, Adam's attention was directed downwards toward the ground.” Instead of looking to God for sustenance, he had to look to the ground. Instead of looking to God for eternal life, he would look to the ground as his final resting place.

The lesson here is that we also have a choice. We can look upward to God, to worship and serve Him as He determines, or we can look to the ground and attempt to have our own works justify us. In the end, the ground is a hard master, one of bondage and pain, but the Lord – Oh, the Lord is gentle and mild.

Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.”

-Matthew 11:28-30

The Garden was lost to man, but through Jesus, it can be restored. In the Garden was a river of life. There was no curse – just the chance to worship and serve the Creator. Jesus promises the same to us on the final page of the Bible –

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ² In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, *was* the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. ³ And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.” Revelation 22:1-4

*To worship and to serve the Lord our God
Eternal fellowship in a land of Delight
On hallowed soil our feet will trod
And the Lord shall always be in our sight*

*In His light, to walk and also to praise
The Lamb of God who was slain
Illuminated by His ever-glowing rays
No tears, no fear, no sorrow, no pain*

*Come to the waters and be restored
Drink and receive Grace from the Lord*

Heaven's door is open for all to go through

*But you see it's guarded with cherub and sword
So to pass through the gate, this you must do
It is the gospel, "Call on the Lord"*

*By faith in His work and by faith alone
Access is granted past Heaven's sword
His blood was shed for your sins to atone
Again I beg you, call on the Lord
Again I **implore** you, call on the Lord*

A while ago, I said that we learn to appreciate things through contrast. If there is no contrast, then we have no ability to appreciate our current state. Beauty ultimately derives from comparison; hence, the infinite beauty of the cross.

GENESIS 2:16, 17
(FREE TO WILL OR NOT FREE TO WILL THAT IS THE QUESTION)

If you remember Jacob Marley in Dicken's classic, *A Christmas Carol*, he was the friend and co-worker of Ebenezer Scrooge who had died many years before and who returned as a ghost to warn Ebenezer. When Scrooge asked him about the chains he was bound in, he said this "I wear the chain I forged in life....I made it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own free will, and of my own free will I wore it."

Marley acknowledged that he exercised free will to his own detriment. While studying quotes for this sermon, I was surprised to find the number of people on both sides of the religious spectrum that deny free-will. Believe it or not, even some atheists deny free will.

Talk about a contradiction in the thought process – how can someone claim there's no God... nothing but the universe, and then deny that the choices they make belong to them alone? If the atheist doesn't have free will, then Something must be directing him. If there is something beyond him, then no matter what it is, it is greater than Him. Atheism, at its core, is a mentally corrupt thought process.

For an atheist to ascribe his decisions to the interaction of atoms as I read in one commentary is to simply pass a red herring over the question. Either the will is free or it isn't regardless of the make up of the decider of the decision.

And then there are the multitudes of Christians who not only deny free will, but who claim that people who believe in free will are enemies of God. W. E. Best said: "God's character is maligned by every person who believes in free will."

I have to ask, "How does free will malign God's character?"

It's hugely important to understand why we have free-will and to be able to defend it from the Bible. The reason is twofold. First, if man doesn't have free will as Best claims, then God must be the ultimate author of evil. How someone can come to any other conclusion when reading the Bible is astounding.

And secondly, if we don't choose Jesus as He asks us to, such as in John 3:16, then God is forcing us to love Him. It doesn't matter how corrupt we are and how deep is the pit from which He pulls us, if He does it against our free will, then it isn't allowing a

demonstration of love and devotion on our part. And this is exactly what both testaments of the Bible expect from us.

RC Sproul, the modern Presbyterian theologian and free-will denier said once, "If intent is sin as when Jesus said, 'he who looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart' then Adam fell before the fall, because he sinned before eating of the forbidden fruit by intending to eat it. So the question is, 'from whence comes evil?'"

Yes RC, whence comes evil? If you deny free will, then that is a gigantic problem because God supposedly created everything good. I mean, if He created man already intent on evil, then you have a real dilemma. But that's Dr. Sproul's conundrum.

Thomas Aquinas, the 13th Century Theologian says this about free-will "Man has free choice, or otherwise counsels, exhortations, commands, prohibitions, rewards and punishments would be in vain."

Introduction: The Bible is as much a book of choices as it is anything else. Freewill is implied on almost every page and in every account it records. The verses which seem to deny free will, and free will deniers have a lot of them, need to be taken in the context of God's sovereignty, His foreknowledge, and His love.

Text Verse: *And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in your hand. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go. Exodus 4:21*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The choice in the Garden

¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Toba Beta wisely stated, "If there was no free will in men, then there is no sins. When sins happened, it was 'free will' that made them doable. This is true, unless God has predestined human to do and to have sins."

RC Sproul, reads this account and can't comprehend how Adam actually fell. He has a couple of reasons. First, he cannot accept that man has freewill. His doctrine tells him that man is incapable of doing anything good – a state known as Total Depravity. He misreads and misinterprets verses of the Bible which tell of our fallen state and our inability to fix the mess and equates that with an inability on our part to get out of the mess at all.

Secondly, he knows he cannot ascribe evil to God as no sound theologian ever would or could. And therefore he is left with his amazing and unanswerable question, “Whence comes evil?”

But this is a problem of the heart and a problem of conditioning, not an unfathomable mystery that only God can answer within Himself. Rather, it is a revealed truth contained in the verses we just read – “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat...”

Three points we have to think through are all revealed in this one verse.

Point 1: You may – Of every tree of the garden **you may** freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat...

Mi kol ets ha-gan a-kol tochel, uh-me-ets ha-da-at tov va-ra, lo tochal mimenu (2:44)

There is a lot of information we can glean from this one sentence –

First, there were multiple trees in the garden and they were graciously granted to Adam. Second, man was given the freedom to choose. As it says, “You **may** freely eat.” And third, only after acknowledging Adam’s free will was he told what he couldn’t eat.

This verse contains the very first words ever recorded as spoken by God directly to man and it certainly indicates him possessing free will. You may eat. “May” indicates choice... and it’s neutral – in other words, you may or you may not – it’s up to you Adam. Snack on what you’d like except this one thing.

If I’m leaving my house with a sitter while I go on vacation, I might say, “Sitter, the refrigerator is full and you may eat whatever you want in that full refrigerator.” If I came back and the fridge was empty and I had given no other instructions, I could only say “Gee Sitter, you had a big appetite. You even ate all the dog food that I had in the Tupperware.”

And if I came back and the refrigerator was still full, I might think the sitter was good at restraining herself, but I at least offered the food to her.

Point 2: You shall not – “Shall not” indicates **choice** as well because the tree is there. Were “shall not” a choice, God would have put no tree there at all, or He would have made it inaccessible. Maybe He could have put a force-field around it or guarded it with cherubim like He would later guard the garden itself. In that case, God would have said, “You can not.”

What if I said to my house sitter, “Sitter, I’m only going to be gone for 2 days, so don’t eat the food in my fridge.” She still has the choice to eat it, but it would be out of disobedience and she would have to face whatever consequences I decided on.

If I wanted to make sure she didn’t eat it, I could put a lock on the fridge, leave nothing in it, or hire a security guard to keep her out of it. No matter what, unless I acted first, the implication is that she could use her free will even though she wasn’t supposed to.

Everything so far implies free will in man. God didn’t keep the tree from him, but simply warned him not to eat of it. Paul says in 1 Corinthians –

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

-1 Corinthians 10:13

God certainly gave Adam a choice in the matter and He also provided a way of escape. There was no burden beyond his ability to bear.

Point 3: The knowledge of good and evil. To finish our three points of this verse we return to the thought, “From whence comes evil?” What we need to do is to simply think these words through. “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.”

Man was given free will. From the context of what we’ve look at, this is absolutely certain. Those who deny this point have failed to come to the text with clear eyes and instead are wearing rose colored glasses as they teach and preach from such a clear and carefully worded statement from God.

However, this free will was given and exercised in a state of innocence. If he hadn't yet eaten of the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" then he didn't have... well, obviously he didn't have the knowledge of good and evil.

In fact, as we see in chapter 3 when we get there, two obvious things occurred when Adam ate of the fruit. First, he became more, not less like God – at least in one way – and secondly, he became aware of right and wrong –

Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. (vs:22)

Adam was told to not eat of this particular fruit or he would be punished. At the time, he was in a state of innocence – not knowing good from evil, but innocence, as I said last week, doesn't negate guilt. And that brings us to our next major point today.

II. Disobedience is Sin and Sin Leads to Death

The great philosopher and author of last century, CS Lewis said this about free will –

"God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong, but I can't. If a thing is free to be good it's also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. ... Of course God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way: apparently, He thought it worth the risk. (...) If God thinks this state of war in the universe a price worth paying for free will – that is, for making a real world in which creatures can do real good or harm and something of real importance can happen, instead of a toy world which only moves when He pulls the strings – then we may take it [that] it is worth paying."

¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;

¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

As I said, innocence does not set aside guilt. The speed limit on your way home tonight will vary from time to time and from place to place. When you first pull out on Midnight Pass Road, you're not going to see a speed limit sign. So suppose you go 40 mph when

you leave here. You might get a ticket because the speed limit is actually 35 until you get around a few turns and then it turns to 40.

If a cop pulls you over and says, “You were speeding,” you might try to defend yourself by saying, “but there was no sign posted from the time I pulled out onto Midnight Pass until now.” Do you think he’s going to say, “Oh, well then, never mind – my bad.”?

Of course not! You are responsible to know the laws of the road and obey them. Your lack of knowledge doesn’t excuse your guilt.

What Adam did was in innocence because he had no knowledge of right and wrong. However, he had his warning clearly laid out for him – “for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Just as every driver knows that a ticket waits for the speeder, Adam knew that death would come if he disobeyed God’s law.

This brings up a point that we shouldn’t miss though. Adam had never died and he had never experienced death around him. When he was told that death would result from disobedience, he had no way of understanding death’s implications.

If you tell a child that doesn’t understand death that they can die from something, they have no idea what you’re talking about until you explain it to them. Without the knowledge of good and evil, Adam could not comprehend death – the result of evil.

Again, this innocence towards death in no way relieves him of the consequences of guilt. Guilt comes about from disobedience and death results from guilt. James explains this in his small epistle which appears 59 books into the Bible –

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

-James 1:13:15

Adam was placed in the garden and given instructions. When God placed the tree there that He wasn’t supposed to eat from, it wasn’t God’s fault if Adam disobeyed. God in no way tempted Adam. He created and therefore everything is as He purposes. And plus, He gave Adam the warning.

If he wanted to make every tree in the garden forbidden except one and that one tree could sustain Adam's life, then that would have been fine. Instead, he **allowed** every tree but one. How much more is God clear of Adam's sin?

On the other hand, if God made Adam the way He did, knowing that Adam needed to eat and drink in order to survive, and then He forbid Adam from eating and drinking anything at all, then God would be guilty of tempting Adam and forcing him into sin.

What if a mother said to her newborn baby, "You'd better not cry, baby If you cry, then I'm going to punish you."? Mom would be guilty both morally and criminally of abuse. The same might be true about one of my sermons. I could say, "If I catch you sleeping, I'm going to punish you..." you might have a case against me.

But Adam had no case against God... not even a hint of it. As David wrote after his horrendous sin of murder and adultery –

Against You, You only, have I sinned,
And done *this* evil in Your sight—
That You may be found just when You speak,
And blameless when You judge. Psalm 51:4

III. One Command, and in the Negative

TH White in *The Once and Future King* said this – "There was just such a man when I was young—an Austrian who invented a new way of life and convinced himself that he was the chap to make it work. He tried to impose his reformation by the sword, and plunged the civilized world into misery and chaos. But the thing which this fellow had overlooked, my friend, was that he had a predecessor in the reformation business, called Jesus Christ.

Perhaps we may assume that Jesus knew as much as the Austrian did about saving people. But the odd thing is that Jesus did not turn the disciples into storm troopers, burn down the Temple at Jerusalem, and fix the blame on Pontius Pilate. On the contrary, he made it clear that the business of the philosopher was to make ideas *available*, and *not* to impose them on people."

The Bible is just a book of do's and don'ts... I suppose you've heard this at one time or another. It's not really. Instead, at least on these lines, it's a book of choices. Do's and

don'ts are involved in many of those choices, but in this context the choices are set out for our good.

If there is a “do” it's there to keep us following the right path. If there is a “don't” it's there to keep us from getting onto a wrong path.

When mom says to her son, “Don't put that screwdriver in the wall outlet” she says it because she doesn't want him to get hurt. When she says to her son leaving for the military, “remember to go to church on Sunday” she's telling him this to keep him walking in a straight and upright way.

In both instances, the choice is his. If he wants to try the screwdriver in the outlet thing, he'll wish he'd listened to his mom. And if he skips church and goes to soccer matches while stationed in England, he will eventually wish he had made church the priority. When his life wanders off into meaninglessness, he'll hopefully understand why his mother asked him to go to church.

The book of proverbs is a lot like this. There are do's and don'ts in there, but they are stated in the form of choices. Proverbs opens with these words –

¹The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel:

² To know wisdom and instruction,

To perceive the words of understanding,

³ To receive the instruction of wisdom,

Justice, judgment, and equity;

⁴ To give prudence to the simple,

To the young man knowledge and discretion—

⁵ A wise *man* will hear and increase learning,

And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel,

⁶ To understand a proverb and an enigma,

The words of the wise and their riddles.

⁷ The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge,

But fools despise wisdom and instruction. Proverbs 1:1-7

After saying this, Solomon pens 31 chapters of wisdom for those who are simply willing to listen and he contrasts them with those who turn away from his wise counsel. He says, “...the complacency of fools will destroy them; But whoever listens to me will dwell safely, And will be secure, without fear of evil.”

So do's and don'ts aren't all bad and they always imply free will. In the case of Adam, he had no do's and only one don't. In other words, a command that was in the negative. If this is the premise of Adam having eternal life in the Garden of Eden, then there must be a similar premise for returning to that Garden. If not, then there might seem to be a problem with the way God is dealing with His children.

One of the hindrances to understanding God's favor of individuals is tied up in the Law of Moses. In those five books, meaning Genesis to Deuteronomy, also known as the Torah, there are 613 laws – a lot of do's and don'ts.

If there are all of these laws heaped upon laws, then what God expects of us must be immensely complicated, even burdensome. I mean who can do all that stuff? And the LORD even said in Leviticus, "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the LORD."

And the penalties for failure... I mean if you slip up you can get beaten with rods, exiled from the community, stoned to death, and so on. Those aren't just minor issues. And time and time again, right after receiving the laws, either individuals or groups turn around and break them.

Within just 40 days of receiving the Ten Commandments, Aaron and the people of Israel made a gold calf in place of God, thus violating the first two commandments. When they did, it cost 3000 people their lives. There are accounts of people being stoned for blaspheming God's name, for breaking a vow of dedication, and for working on the Sabbath. Terrifying stuff.

What happened to Adam's "one command which was in the negative?"

And what about the other side of the coin? David committed adultery and killed the lady's husband and he didn't get stoned. He allowed his children to get away with things that should have called for the death penalty and what... did God turn a blind eye?

And then when David takes a census of the people of Israel – admittedly, something he shouldn't have done, God sends his destroying angel to kill 70,000 Israelites! How does that fit in?

Unless you understand the reason why these things occurred and how they fit into the greater picture of what God is doing, you might come to the same conclusion as some

who call God an evil sadist. But this is the furthest thing from the truth and completely misunderstands what God is trying to tell the people of the world.

Free will.

Free will.

God is telling us about our choices, our free will choices, and what the consequences of them are. In the end, He understands our limitations and our faults – He created us.

And He understands the difference between those who love Him, and their internal struggles, like David, and those who either ignore or outright hate Him and act against Him in a high-handed manner. He understands the difference.

What is the reason that God could call David “a man after my own heart” and protect Jerusalem for David’s name sake even hundreds of years after he was dead and buried? It was because, despite his faults, despite his internal struggles, David loved God and understood His morally depraved state in the presence of perfect righteousness.

Paul explains the law, which David was under, and it’s over-arching purpose in the book of Galatians –

*Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. ²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. ²³ But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*

-Galatians 3:21-25

The law and all of its associated death and punishment was a tool, or better – a mirror – to get us to look at ourselves and see how desperately sinful we really are and that we needed something more to be right before God.

The law could never give life back to man. Just as Paul said, “if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.”

So what is it that even those under the law needed? They needed grace. And this is exactly what they got, once a year, on the Day of Atonement. The very fact that they

needed a Day of Atonement meant that they could never meet the demands of the law. And where did the atonement come from? Did the sacrificed animals take away the people's sins? No.

The book of Hebrews says that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." So think it through... if the Day of Atonement was God's grace to the people and the blood which was shed on that day didn't provide the grace, then what did? It was the people's faith in God's provision.

Back to Adam ... what was Adam lacking from the tree? He was lacking the knowledge of good and evil. Is knowledge faith? No. Faith is faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. And this is the evidence that God wanted from Adam – the surety of things not seen.

This is also what God respected Enoch for. And not only Enoch but Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Rahab, David, and a host of others throughout history who were sure of what they couldn't see.

Was Adam faithful about the promise of surely dying if he ate the fruit? No. Was the man who was gathering sticks on the Sabbath day faithful about believing God would provide for him the other six days? No. Was David faithful when he had Uriah killed after sleeping with Bathsheba? No.

Then why was the Sabbath breaker stoned and David allowed to live? Why are some treated differently than others? Some are examples of God's justice. Some are examples of God's mercy. Some are lessons of high-handed sin and some are lessons of repentant hearts. Each case is given to teach us of the many facets of God and the key to obtaining His favor – which is always faith.

And faith only comes – ONLY COMES – through free will. Forced faith isn't faith. The book of Ephesians says this –

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8

The construct of these verses tell us that we are saved not by grace alone nor by faith alone, but by grace and faith together and that these are a "gift" of God. A forced gift – be it grace or faith or both – isn't a gift at all. Rather, these are offered to us by God. They are unmerited and they are available to all. And that brings us to our final point –

IV. Your Choice

“Mi kol ets a-gan a-kol tochal, uh-me-ets a-da-at tov va-ra, lo tochal mimenu.” Of every tree of the garden **you may** freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat...

Jim Butcher says this about your free will – “God isn't about making good things happen to you, or bad things happen to you. He's all about you making choices--exercising the **gift** of free will. God wants you to have good things and a good life, but He won't gift wrap them for you. You have to choose the actions that lead you to that life.”

One argument used by Dr. Sproul and most others who argue against free will stems from Paul's comment in Romans –

¹⁰There is none righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ There is none who understands;

There is none who seeks after God.

¹² They have all turned aside;

They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one.” Romans 3:10-12

Their claim is that if there is “none who seeks after God” that we can't freely choose life through Jesus Christ. Free will is nullified in humans based on this verse. But this quote of Paul comes from the psalms. It's repeated in Psalm 14:1 and Psalm 53:1-

The fool has said in his heart,

“There is no God.”

They are corrupt,

They have done abominable works,

There is none who does good.

The questions I submit to you are, “Are Muslims seeking God?” “Are Mormons seeking God?” “Are Jews seeking God?” The answer is “Yes.” The context of the quote from Paul which comes from the Psalms is speaking of the atheist – “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”

The problem with people like muslims and mormons isn't that they are lacking faith. The problem is their faith is misdirected. And misdirected faith is wasted faith. One can't use

Paul's verse as an overall claim to deny free will. In fact, the opposite is the truth. One must freely deny God in order to deny God.

In our previous point I said that in the Garden there was one command and that it was in the negative and that "There must be a similar premise for returning to that Garden. If not, then there might seem to be a problem with the way God is dealing with His children."

A similar premise? There is, you know. There is a similar premise for returning to the Garden. Paul lays it out in the book of Romans. In the Garden, there was one command in the negative and that command was based on faith. In Christ there is one request and it is in the positive. And it, likewise, is based on faith.

...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

That sounds like two things, but it's really one. If you confess Jesus as Lord, it's based on the assumption that Jesus is alive. If He is alive, then God raised Him from the dead.

*I am free to choose, this is known
Because to deny that I can
Is a choice of its own*

*Free will doesn't claim the place of God
Instead it exalts Him when He judges
Wouldn't it be rather odd
To blame on Him all of my life's smudges?*

*Perfect and pure is my Savior
Undefiled are His ways
My free will is mine alone
To withhold from or to give Him praise*

*I can choose to be a fool
And deny He is God
I can follow Muhammed or Buddha if I choose
Or I can give Krishna a favorable nod
But I choose life, I choose Jesus
He alone destroyed the grave*

*And He is ever here with us
He alone is able, our souls to save*

*Great and worthy – behold the Lamb
Sacrificed because of our choices
Let us turn our souls to Him
And lets us to Him raise our voices*

*Thank You O God for the gift You granted
Grace and faith tied into one
Thank You for the greatest Gift
Thank You O God for Jesus, our Lord Your Son*

Hallelujah and Amen
Thank You for Jesus, our Lord Your Son

GENESIS 2:18-25
(BEAUTY FROM A RIB)

If you kiss her, you are not a gentleman
If you don't, you are not a man
If you praise her, she thinks you are lying
If you don't, you are good for nothing
If you agree to all her likes, you are a wimp
If you don't, you are not understanding
If you visit her often, she thinks it is boring
If you don't, she accuses you of double-crossing
If you are well dressed, she says you are a playboy
If you're not, you are a dull boy
If you are jealous, she says it's bad
If you aren't, she thinks you do not love her
If you attempt a romance, she says you didn't respect her
If you don't, she thinks you do not like her
If you are a minute late, she complains it's hard to wait
If she is late, she says that's a girl's way
If you visit another man, you're not putting in "quality time"
If she is visited by another woman, "oh it's natural, we are girls"
If you kiss her once in a while, she professes you are cold
If you kiss her often, she yells that you are taking advantage
If you fail to help her in crossing the street, you lack ethics
If you do, she thinks it's just one of men's tactics for seduction
If you stare at another woman, she accuses you of flirting
If other men stare at her, she says that they are just admiring
If you talk, she wants you to listen
If you listen, she wants you to talk
In short:
So simple, yet so complex
So weak, yet so powerful
So confusing, yet so desirable
So damning, yet so wonderful...
...WOMEN!

Introduction: If there were no other reason to disbelieve in the theory of evolution than the presence of women, it would be enough. No amount of random chance, no amount

of adapting and changing, nothing in the equation could ever form women to be so bafflingly complex and yet as delightfully simple as they are.

Only an infinitely intelligent mind could give man such a wonderful gift, such a challenge to our patience, such a trial to our souls, such a delight to our eyes, such a knock in our hearts, such a knock on our heads, such a source of frustration, and such a well of delight. Only God could have created a woman. And he did it from a rib.

Now I love ribs from the grill and I like to rib my son about things. The veins in a leaf are known as ribs, and so is the molding on a vaulted ceiling. Sailboat hulls have ribs and so do airplane's wings. If you alternate purl stitches with plain stitches while sewing, you'll make a ribbed pattern. All of these have meaning and purpose, but nothing could compare to what God did with one of Adam's ribs.

Text Verse: *Her children rise up and call her blessed;
Her husband also, and he praises her:
"Many daughters have done well,
But you excel them all." Proverbs 31:28, 29*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. It is Not Good

¹⁸ And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."

¹⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought *them* to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that *was* its name.

²⁰ So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

²¹ And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.

²² Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

“It is not good that man should be alone; – *Lo tov hayoth ha'adam li-vado*. God used the term “*lo tov*” to describe Adam’s situation. “It is not good...” Far too often, we try to justify why we can do it alone, but in the end, God created woman for man. The two fit together much better than one does all alone.

They compliment each other, they meet each other’s needs, and they fill God’s purposes for His creation. It is *lo tov* that the man should be alone.

Interestingly enough, these two little words, *lo tov*, prove the literal six-day creation account – at least from a biblical perspective. In Genesis 1, it says at the end of the sixth day that “... God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was very good*. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”

If, in fact, everything was “very good” or *tov meod* at the end of the sixth day and it was “not good” that Adam was alone on the sixth day, then God must have created everything in six literal days. There is no other way around this. The biblical account stands or falls on a literal six day creation.

“I will make him a helper comparable to him...” – literally “a help answering to him, or one who answers.” This doesn’t mean God made a secretary for man, although that can be part of the equation I suppose. The woman was prepared by God to share man’s responsibilities, respond to him with love and understanding, and work together with him in serving and worshipping God.

As it says in the book of Ecclesiastes –

Two *are* better than one,
Because they have a good reward for their labor.

¹⁰ For if they fall, one will lift up his companion.

But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls,
For *he has* no one to help him up.

¹¹ Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm;
But how can one be warm *alone*? Ecc 4:9-11

¹⁹ **Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought *them* to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that *was* its name.**

²⁰ So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

God created the animals, but as we noted in chapter one, God gave man dominion over them. The giving of names to the animals implies this dominion over them. In the first chapter of the book of Daniel, the King of Babylon renamed the exiled Israelites as he so chose, indicating his dominion over them –

Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, ... To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel *the name* Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego. Daniel 1:4 & 7

In the same way, parents name their children, we name our possessions, such as a boat on the water, and if we start a company, we give it a name. Designating a name indicates dominion and authority over the thing which is named. God gave this dominion of the animals to man.

We do this even today. If we buy an animal and let one of our children name it, then the animal implicitly belongs to that child. In reality, we get to feed them, clean up their messes, and pay for the vet bills, but that child will always feel as if he is the owner.

In the case of God, man has no dominion over Him and so we can only ascribe titles to Him. Later in Genesis, Hagar, the Egyptian concubine of Abraham calls Him El Roi, the God who sees, but this isn't a name, only a title. Any god with a name given by man is no god at all. And only the true God reveals or conceals His name as He so chooses. He revealed one name to Moses –

"I am the LORD. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but *by My name* LORD I was not known to them. Exodus 6:2, 3

And in Revelation 12, He hides another name for Himself alone. It says, "He had a name written that no one knew except Himself."

Because God's name identifies His authority and dominion, we are to use it carefully and with respect. He is God and we are man. He is the Creator and we are His creatures.

²⁰ So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

God brought all the animals to Adam and he was probably pretty impressed with every new creature that came his way. “Here comes a...a... I’ll call that a platypus, and look I’ll call that a wombat. This one... I’m calling this one a dog.”

“Lord, these are all so cool. I can’t believe the variety of life here! But God, there is something missing in me. All of these creatures have a friend to play with and despite all that you’ve done, I feel lonely looking at them playing together. There’s something missing from my heart and although I’m not sure of what it is, I feel it when I see the animals play.”

Just imagine Adam’s thoughts as he named the animals and looked around him. He was in the very presence of God and in the midst of God’s paradise – a garden of delight. And yet there was something missing in Adam that needed to be reconciled before God could pronounce His final blessing upon the work of the day, the work of creation, and the completion of His efforts.

After 27 years of marriage, I can tell you that I find my life lacking when Hideko isn’t around. She does the cooking, I do the dishes. She feeds the puppies, and I do the laundry. She does the comforting and I do the whining. We fit so well together that when she’s not around, my whining goes unanswered, my food is from a can, and the puppies... poor, poor puppies!

Since God gave Eve to Adam, no man has ever had a wife who fit so perfectly. As Proverbs says –

Who can find a virtuous wife?
For her worth *is* far above rubies.
The heart of her husband safely trusts her;
So he will have no lack of gain. Proverbs 31:10, 11

I assure you, I found the virtuous wife.

²¹ And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.

²² Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

The term the Bible uses indicates a deep sleep Adam was placed under. Nothing is said about how He did it, but today we can work ourselves to exhaustion, use anesthesia, or get into a boxing match with our best friend to achieve this type of state.

By putting Adam to sleep, it takes man completely out of the equation. If God consulted man, Adam might have asked for chrome bumpers or a built in attachment where he could place fishing poles. He might have said, "I want a helper that doesn't talk too much."

But God knew better than Adam that chrome bumpers would need polishing. On the other hand, women stay lustrous without any effort. He also knew that fishing vacations were a chance to get away from the woman and relax with friends and so He didn't include the fishing pole attachment. And he knew that man needed to learn patience and to listen while the woman talked. And so Eve was prepared **while** Adam slept.

All joking aside though, whatever way God put Adam to sleep, it seems as if mercy was being granted during the first operation ever performed on a human being. Normally when we take something out of a body, we do it because it's something that's defective and can harm us... I won't even go in that direction today, alright...!

Modern surgical procedures are for healing and removal of corruption. But instead of something defective being brought out of Adam, something close and personal was removed. At the same time it **was** also for a sort of healing just as would be the case in any modern operation. What God would make from the rib would be of the same essence as man, complimentary and yet different.

²² "Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman,"

This was a deeply personal act which God performed. The word used for making Eve is the Hebrew word *banah*. In this account, the Hebrew letters which spell *banah* are Beth and Nun. Beth means a house and nun reflects an "heir" or the continuance of a generation. God took a part of Adam's "house" and sculpted from it a comparable part so that the two would be able to continue on for the generations to come.

This continuation would be from their very life and every human today bears the marks of their first father and mother. As it says in Acts 17:26 – “From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth...”

Everything in this account, even to the letters used, shows us that man is never fully complete without a woman and that woman, who came from man, is incomplete without the man. This is how God ordained things to be. She was created to help him and he is under the obligation to protect her and be devoted to her just as he would be to any part of his own body.

Paul explains this mystery in 1 Corinthians 11 –

For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have *a symbol of authority on her head*, because of the angels. Nevertheless, neither *is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord*. For as woman *came* from man, even so man also *comes* through woman; but all things are from God. 1 Cor 11:8-12

A few weeks ago I called man, the Crown of Creation, but this was only fully realized after God made woman. We noted that God created from the least complex to the most complex and from what is least excellent to what is most excellent.

Woman, being formed after man, has a glory and an honor upon her that Paul notes in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 when he says that “woman is the glory of man.” As Matthew Henry notes, “If man is the head, she is the crown, a crown to her husband, the crown of the visible creation. The man was dust refined, but the woman was dust double-refined, one removed further from the earth.”

Together, the two of them form the pinnacle of God’s marvelous wisdom in the creation and the way He did it shows their complete interdependency on each other.

In the use of a rib to form the woman, it’s been said that “woman was not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.”

22 (cont) **...and He brought her to the man.**

Adam woke up feeling an empty spot in his chest just like he did before he went to sleep. The only difference was that he had a scar there too and the empty spot he felt was more than an emotion now. Something really felt like it was missing...

After yawning and looking around, you can just hear it... "Wow! Where did this come from?" I can just imagine what he thought when he saw the woman. "Man o man, o boy or boy." One empty spot, the emotional one, was gone in an instant, and when God said that she was for him, his other empty spot was made full by her presence. Nothing was lacking. Everything was right.

"Oh Lord, this is so much better than chrome bumpers..."

What is it a father does in modern weddings? He walks the woman to her husband and presents her to him. And so God, as the Father of the woman, her Creator, "brought her to the man." He gave his consent to the man to take this beauty and unite to her in the first wedding ever performed. And this wedding was in a state of complete innocence. As such, it was one of a kind in all of history.

*"Never alone" with my wife by my side
What God has done has been done very well
A flood of emotions, like the rising of the tide
This woman is perfect for me, I can tell*

*A gift of the most beautiful kind
Sculpted and formed beyond imagination
Her beauty fills every thought of my mind
This is certainly the jewel in the crown of creation.*

II. She Shall be Called Woman

²³ And Adam said:

**"This is now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man."**

It's been noted that for every need, there is a fulfillment of that need. We get thirsty and there is water to fill that thirst. Likewise there is thirst because there is water. If water didn't exist, there wouldn't be a need for thirst.

Fish need to swim in water and there is water for fish to swim in. In the same way, there are fish because there is water for fish to swim in. If the water didn't exist, there wouldn't be anything called fish.

Men need women and there are women for men to join to. And without a doubt, there are women because there are men. If man didn't exist, then there wouldn't be anything called woman.

God has filled every need with the answer to that need and God has made “**needs**” for the things He has created. We need sunlight and God has given us a sun. But God created the sun first and made us afterward. Everything fits so perfectly that all we can do is marvel at the perfection of His wisdom.

In my soul is a need to praise God and God has given me psalms, a mouth, and breath in my lungs to allow me to do that. But praise of God implies that there is a God. Praise God that God is God.

²³ And Adam said: “This *is* now bone of my bones And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man.”

Modern translations will often set this verse off in poetic fashion. The man was making a pronouncement, acknowledging that God had fashioned the woman from his very bones and flesh. The Hebrew word for “man” is *ish* and for woman is *ishsha* and despite a difference in spelling, the only real difference is the feminine ending of the word for female.

Therefore she is a she-man. We differ in sex, but not in nature. The woman was made **from** the man and she was made **for** the man.

Adam received from his Father the woman who was being presented from her Father. He created them both and determined every detail that would perfectly fill every void in each other. What one lacked, the other filled. Every need finds its fulfillment. And so it is, even to this day. The cycle of marriage goes on between God's faithful in acknowledgement of His loving act of making woman for man.

III. Leaving Home

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

This verse sets the stage for the bonds of marriage which have followed down throughout the ages. A man “shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife.” The word “joined” is the Hebrew word *dabaq* and indicates an action of “sticking like glue.”

Another time this term is used is when Ruth the Moabitess joined to her mother-in-law, refusing to leave her after the death of her husband, “Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.”

When it says the man shall be joined to his wife it is the man who joins like glue to the woman. He is the stronger vessel and he is the one who bears the responsibility to hold tightly to her. And if he demonstrates the kind of loving power reflected in this verse, she will naturally want to be held by him.

The woman’s responsibility isn’t negated at all though. “They shall become one flesh” indicates that this is a two-way union and that the bond is indissoluble.

When asked about the acceptability of divorce, Jesus referred right back to this account to remind the people that marriage is to be a life-long commitment –

“Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God *‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’*; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” Mark 10:5-9

In Ephesians 5, Paul explains the connection between a man and his wife and that of Christ and the church. This mutual “give and take” relationship is reflective of that which is demonstrated by Him and which we should likewise demonstrate towards Him.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the

church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. *“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”* This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife *see* that she respects *her* husband. Ephesians 5:22-33

As I said, the Hebrew word for “join” is *dabaq* and it indicates that the onus is on the man. Christ has promised to never leave us and never forsake us – accepting the onus upon Himself. It is He, the husband, who fills this role. But we are to give him the honor and glory He is due, deferring to Him that which is rightly His and submitting to His authority and headship.

When God breathed life into man, there was the intimate connection of God to man. That was lost through sin, but when God regenerates us with His Holy Spirit, that intimate connection is reestablished.

And it is the same with man and woman. A connection is lost between the two and a void exists until the two are joined again in marriage. What man lost in the rib, he regains in the wife. And man o man – she is so much better than a rib!

IV. Not Ashamed

²⁵ And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

When God created man and woman, they were naked and there was no shame – either vertically or horizontally. In other words, God created them in a state of beauty and perfection and there was nothing to cause them to hide from either God or each other.

Nakedness implies more than just shame though. It also implies that there was nothing that could harm them. The temperature would have been perfect, none of the animals were a threat, and there wasn't even anything that could hurt their feet. They were naked, secure, and they were also unashamed.

I think this verse is specifically stated here to show us the contrast with the rest of the Bible where there is perpetual conflict with our bodies through the elements, from the animals, and also from the shame of our actions and the actions of others – both in front of others and in front of God. When shame is lost in people today, it reflects not just an unnatural state, but an anti-natural state.

I've seen a lot of my old school friends get divorced in the recent past. Some of them have been married between 15 and 25 years and they've decided to give up. One of them, a self-proclaimed atheist, said his wife had gotten fat and saggy after having three children and he didn't like it. He was ashamed of her appearance.

What are you ashamed of in your husband or wife? If they've gotten old and wrinkly or gray, guess what? They got that way around you!

I know of a preacher who was in the Vietnam War and he got burned so badly that he looks almost like a monster. While he was in the hospital recuperating, another guy next to him was visited by his own wife. When she got there and saw how he was mutilated he was she took off her ring and threw it at him.

Later his wife came to visit and when she saw him – who was far worse off than the guy in the bed next to him, she hugged him and held tightly to him. More than thirty years later, she's still holding tightly to him, despite his monstrous looks.

What is shame? In the end, it's not a reflection of others, but it's rather a reflection of oneself. In his great cry of repentance for the faithlessness of the Israelites, Nehemiah cried out to God, ashamed of their deeds as a people –

⁵At the evening sacrifice I arose from my fasting; and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the LORD my God. ⁶ And I said: "O my God, I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to You, my God; for our iniquities have risen higher than *our* heads, and our guilt has grown up to the heavens. ⁷ Since the days of our fathers to this day we *have been* very guilty, and for our iniquities we, our kings, *and* our priests have been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, to plunder, and to humiliation, as *it is* this day. ⁸ And now for a little while grace has been *shown* from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and give us a measure of revival in our bondage. ⁹ For we *were* slaves. Yet our God did not forsake us in our bondage; but He extended mercy to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to revive

us, to repair the house of our God, to rebuild its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem. ¹⁰ And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Your commandments, ¹¹ which You commanded by Your servants the prophets, saying, ‘The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land, with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from one end to another with their impurity. ¹² Now therefore, do not give your daughters as wives for their sons, nor take their daughters to your sons; and never seek their peace or prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good of the land, and leave *it* as an inheritance to your children forever.’ ¹³ And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, since You our God have punished us less than our iniquities *deserve*, and have given us *such* deliverance as this, ¹⁴ should we again break Your commandments, and join in marriage with the people *committing* these abominations? Would You not be angry with us until You had consumed *us*, so that *there would be* no remnant or survivor? ¹⁵ O LORD God of Israel, You *are* righteous, for we are left as a remnant, as *it is* this day. Here we *are* before You, in our guilt, though no one can stand before You because of this!” Eza 9:5-15

The shame Nehemiah felt is the attitude that God responds to with great mercy. Nehemiah’s shame was felt because of the intermarrying of God’s people with pagans. When King David’s adultery with Bathsheba was discovered, David acknowledged that

“The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit,
A broken and a contrite heart—
These, O God, You will not despise. Psalm 51:17

Both of these great men of God understood the contract between God and His people and the contract of a man and a woman. These contracts were broken and their shame was openly acknowledged.

Did you know that despite the life you’ve lived, Jesus will forgive your sins, no matter how great they are, if you will simply acknowledge your guilt?

For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹² saying:

“I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.” Hebrews 2:10-12

The author of Hebrews says that Jesus shared in humanity so that He could empathize with us. The very Creator of man – who lovingly gave him a wife, took on mortality in order to destroy death and restore us to Himself. When we call on Him, He is unashamed in calling us His brethren.

Because of this immense demonstration of forgiveness the apostle Paul turned around and returned the same honor to the Lord –

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes... Romans 10:16

*Beauty from under Adam's side
Formed from a rib near his heart
God made a woman with man to abide
Together a new life as one to start*

*She was formed as he lay in his sleep
God molded her specially for him
They would form a bond wide and deep
That would last till their eyes grew dim*

*Likewise God gave Christ a bride
When a soldier pierced His own side*

*Out came the blood which purchased us back
As He lay in death's sleep for a spell
The devil thought he had won the attack
But Christ rose victorious over death and hell*

*The Bride of Christ has nothing to fear
The Lord her husband has reign over all
Nothing so precious, nothing so dear
As for the sinner on His name to call*

*Come unto me you who are weary and worn
And to your souls I will give you rest*

*By My Spirit you too can be reborn
Drink from Heaven's waters, be eternally blessed*

Enter the cross with me –

²¹ And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.

In this account, Adam was being used as a symbol of Christ to come. Just as God took a rib from the side of Adam while He slept, God formed His church through the death of His Son – His moment of deepest sleep. The soldier pierced His precious side and out came blood mixed with water. Two men with similar scars 4000 years apart – one received a bride of flesh and the other a bride of the Spirit.

If God was willing to do that for us, we should respond in kind by calling on His name!

GENESIS 3:1-6 (WHO IS THE LIAR?)

Albert Einstein said, “If you are out to describe the truth, leave elegance to the tailor.”

Today we’re going to look at where truth was first called into question. Is what is true for you not necessarily true for me? Is truth even knowable at all? If truth is presented, how can we know if the elegant trimmings Einstein warned about have a subtle and cunning purpose of twisting it?

It’s scary to think that we can be manipulated so easily in life by words which sound correct, but which are so wrong. What we need to do is to think clearly, but in our society, clear thinking isn’t even taught anymore unless you get to the college level and even then it’s taught only as a single discipline and not as a general rule.

Proverbs says – “The first *one* to plead his cause *seems* right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him. (18:17)

If we attempt to use clear and rational thinking in a global warming class, we’ll probably get a failing grade. If we challenge a theory such as evolution, again... there’s a big fat F for you.

Our first parents were presented with challenges to the truth and they didn’t handle it very well.

Their choices, based on bad decision making have resulted in everything from Joseph Stalin and Adolph Hitler, to communism and fascism. Their bad decisions have caused us to lose little babies through death and spouses through divorce. What a sad state we’re in... all because of words of deception.

Introduction: Despite the depressing circumstances which surround the Fall of Man and all its subsequent woes, without the fall, we could never fully appreciate the greatness and the glory of God. There was no mistake in God’s plan then and there is no mistake in God’s plan now.

Everything each of us faces in life, including my own trials and frustrations, is known to God and will be used for His glory and for the benefit of those who He has called. If you can truly accept that, then what Adam and Eve did, shouldn’t make you kick at their

memory and say “stupid, stupid, stupid.” Instead you can look on what occurred and say to God, “Oh God, how great Thou art.”

Text Verse: *Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. James 1:13-15*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Cunning Foe – Twisting Things Around

¹ Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”

Chapter 3 starts out with the tempter, the serpent, whom we later find out is the devil or Satan. He remains a part of the unfolding story of the Bible almost to the very end. Not until Revelation Chapter 20 is he done away with. He makes his entrance on the scene in the third chapter into the Bible and he makes his exit from the scene in the third chapter from the end of the Bible... the symmetry in the Bible never ceases to astound me.

In this verse, it says he “was more cunning than any beast of the field...” The devil’s cunning brings about a hugely complicated issue. If God created the devil and the devil caused evil, then did God cause evil? We’ll ask this question now and again later as we go on. The answer to this is one of the most important issues we can determine and nothing could be more relevant.

There is evil in the world, this we all know very well. The question is, “why?” Did God lose control of things or did God cause the evil? If either of these is the case, then we are at the arbitrary failings of an inconsistent Creator.

Augustine said “There is no possible source of evil except good.” Evil is simply an absence of good and this only comes from something else drawing it out of the good state it was originally in.

But whatever draws it out of the good state is something else that is good as well, because as Thomas Aquinas says, “Only good can be a cause; because nothing can be a cause except inasmuch as it is a being, and every being, as such, is good.”

What he means is that nothing can cause something unless it is a being and that every being God created was good at its creation. When we understand that, we see that good doesn't cause evil which is contrary to itself. Instead it causes **some other** evil.

In the case of the devil, he was created “good.” However, something else which was good drew the evil out of him. What good could draw out the evil from the devil? The answer is found in Isaiah 14 and in Ezekiel 28. These passages are speaking of the King of Babylon and the King of Tyre, but the premise is the same as for the devil –

I established you;
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.
¹⁵ You *were* perfect in your ways from the day you were created,
Till iniquity was found in you. ...
¹⁷“Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor;
Isaiah 28:14, 15 &17

For you have said in your heart:
‘I will ascend into heaven,
I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;
I will also sit on the mount of the congregation
On the farthest sides of the north;
¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,
I will be like the Most High. Ezekiel 14:13, 14

The good which the devil saw in the rule and authority of God drew out the evil of envy in the devil. And his own beauty and splendor in comparison to others drew out the evil of pride. The good in God and the good of His creation drew out the evil.

What God intended for His creation is the good of the order of the creation. However, the good order of the creation requires that some things will fail – stars exploding for example, or trees dying to make mulch for new trees to grow. So God causes in things the proper order of the universe, and by the nature of that proper order, by accident, things corrupt.

It says in 1 Samuel 2:6 that “The LORD kills and makes alive.” But God didn’t make death for the sake of death. He made Adam alive and to live. Death however, is the result of justice which belongs to the universe based on the nature of God. This requires that sinners are to die. The result is that God is the author of the evil we know as penalty because God’s standards are immutable, but He is not the author of the evil which is fault. This can only come from a lesser being, a point we’ll clarify later.

Once he was corrupted through no fault of God, the devil went about his business of corrupting God’s crown of creation – man. Why would he do this? For the same reasons as we already explained, envy, boasting, and pride.

By subverting God’s authority over the physical world, he would gain rule over it, including man because man was given dominion over the other parts of the creation. He wanted to rule and be like God and this was how he could do it.

This is proven in the devil’s tempting of Jesus when he said, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.” Luke 4:6, 7

When man fell, the devil gained rule over the earth.

The first words the devil spoke to the woman came from a being perfectly described in the verse, “cunning.” He said to her –

“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”

But this isn’t at all what God said. What God said was, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,…”

The devil knew he couldn’t destroy man as he was because the natural order of things says that in order to die, one must sin. He also knew that if they couldn’t eat of **every** tree of the garden that man would be forced to sin because man needed to eat, so his question was a subtle attack.

“If you’re not forbidden from eating from every tree because that would result in death, then how could eating from just one tree result in death? Come on girl, think it through…”

As Matthew Henry said so well, “The divine law cannot be reproached unless it be first misrepresented.”

This is a really good lesson for all of us today. When we hear people telling us what the Bible says, we’d better check it out for ourselves. It’s so easy to fall into the trap of the prosperity gospel, idol worship, or a host of other things simply because the word is misrepresented to unsuspecting hearers.

Balaam was told by God that he couldn’t curse Israel, so he came against them by tempting them. The devil did the same thing. He had to tempt them to sin and once they sinned, they would be under his authority and would also die. As Jesus Himself said, the devil was “a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.”

If Adam, as the federal head of mankind, could be won, then all mankind was his. And the devil was going to do it through the woman while the man wasn’t present. She was created from him and was the weaker vessel.

Not only that, but if you remember from a previous sermon, women process information differently than men. In both problem-solving and reacting to stressful situations, the woman is the ideal target for the devil’s cunning work. By coming to her, he would have the position of working against her processing abilities in a way that wouldn’t work with the man.

And watch out Eve, the devil is coming at you in a way which will make you think he’s looking out with your best intentions. This is how he worked then and this is how he works now. Paul says in 1 Corinthians, “For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.” His tricks never change.

II. Subtracting From or Adding To

² And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ”

There are a couple things to consider in what the woman said to the serpent and what is said **must** be inferred, so please make sure you know that before I give you these thoughts. Let’s go back over what Chapter 2 records –

The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. (9)

Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (17)

What I’m going to say here is based on assumptions and I’ll explain each one as I get to it. What I just read from Chapter 2 is all that’s recorded for the points I’m making, so there is no proof that it’s everything that was said by God. In other words, I don’t want to make unfounded conclusions, only reasonable deductions.

The woman said, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden...” This differs from Chapter 2 which says “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.

If you notice the difference, the woman said they “may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden,” whereas the earlier verse says “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat.” Already her defenses have been weakened by the subtle attack of the devil. She has waffled on what God so clearly laid out.

Also, she said, “but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden...” Chapter 2 said “The tree of life *was* also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”

There were two trees in the midst of the garden, not one. She simply noted that she couldn’t eat of the tree in the midst of the garden without making a differentiation between the two. Her defenses are showing the weakness of not processing what God had said and repeating it back in that way. What is good in her is being drawn out as evil or a “lack of goodness.”

Think of it this way. Your dad tells your brother that there are two women in a house down the road and that one is engaged and one isn’t and to leave the engaged one alone. Your bother then says to you, “Dad says you can have any girl in Sarasota as a wife, but leave that one in the house down the road alone.”

When the devil comes up and says, “Did your dad say ‘You can’t go out with any girl in Sarasota?’” If you answer, “Oh no, I can date any girl I want except the one in the house

over there...” You have set yourself up for trouble. He knows very well there are two girls and he is only going to tempt you with the engaged one.

When God spoke to Adam, in Chapter 2, it doesn't mean there weren't more conversations with more details later, but remember the general rule – everything recorded is for our understanding of what happened and why. So, we can make the deduction that Adam told the woman what God said he and wasn't as clear as he should have been or she simply didn't pay attention.

Either way, if what is recorded in Chapter 2 is accurate, then what the woman said is inaccurate. If this is the case, then let's review her errors –

God said they could “freely eat” but she said only that they “may eat.” This may seem inconsequential, but elsewhere in the Bible, the term “free” or “freely” is used to indicate divine grace such as in Romans 3:24, where it says “being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

Paul could have said, “...justified by His grace” but he added in “freely” to indicate the superbly gracious nature involved in the gift. The woman left this out accidentally or thoughtlessly.

A second omission is what I said a minute ago, “but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden...” There were two trees in the midst of the garden; the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge. The tree of life was not forbidden from them, only the tree of knowledge.

Assuming these are her words as she spoke them, this is a big error and one which proves the subtlety of the devil because later he never brings up the tree of life when he speaks to her, only the tree of knowledge.

And a third change is one which isn't an omission, but is an addition. She said, “You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.” But Chapter two says nothing about touching the fruit. It only warns them not to eat it.

Admittedly, God could have told them on another occasion not to touch the fruit, but this would leave the account missing something important that's added only by Eve. When we get to the next verse, we'll see that the serpent never mentions “touching it” but only mentions “eating” and so for this reason, we can deduce that Eve added

“touching” as a warning, possibly given by Adam.

The reason why this is important is because we are dealing with God’s word. The only words to this point which man has as his rule and guide of the faith are what we read in chapter two –

Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. (16, 17)

That is Adam’s complete set of instructions for life. He and the LORD could have had ten other conversations about almost anything, but God has shown us that this is what was important to the account... and the woman has negligently misrepresented it. The lesson for us here is to remember Proverbs 30:5, 6 –

⁵ Every word of God *is* pure;
He *is* a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

⁶ Do not add to His words,
Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

III. Mixing Truth with Lies

⁴ Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die.

⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

The serpent first says, “You will not surely die” or literally, “No dying you will die.” *Lo mot te-muthun*. This is a bald faced lie and brings the LORD’s integrity into question and is a direct challenge to His authority. The serpent denies that there is any danger in disobeying. It may be a transgression, but he says there won’t be any penalty.

The second thing the devil says is actually true, “God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” The problem is that Adam and the woman weren’t told this and it was therefore something God held back for His own purposes.

The purpose of placing Adam and the woman in the garden was so that they could worship and serve Him. To the woman, being like God would mean that she and Adam would also be worshipped and served. Imagine her wheels turning over that one. The

devil has tempted her with pride and he also has revealed something that God didn't reveal to her... "What more has been kept from me?"

In Chapter 10 of Revelation, we read this –

I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow *was* on his head, his face *was* like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. ² He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and *his* left *foot* on the land, ³ and cried with a loud voice, as *when* a lion roars. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. ⁴ Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them." (Revelation 10:1-4)

Paul speaks of the mystery of the blindness of the Jews, the mystery of the church, the mystery of lawlessness, the mystery of the gospel, as well as other mysteries of the wisdom of God.

In all of these examples and so many more in the Bible, God keeps certain things a hidden from us for our good, in order to unveil His plan in His own timing, and to satisfactorily bring about what He determines. This was also the case with Adam and the woman.

Having the knowledge of good and evil was a mystery to them and the fact that they would be like God in this respect was kept from them for their own good.

By his cunning, the devil will undermine what he can't actively overthrow. And this is the pattern he always follows. He gets people to doubt God first and then eventually to deny Him. He starts with skeptics and produces atheists.

He's done it in people, he does it in families, he does it in societies, and eventually he even accomplishes his goals in seminaries and churches.

In people and families he does it through tragedy and death – maybe of a loved one. He calls God's word and His goodness into question and eventually people walk away from faith all together.

In societies, he works against goodness and truth, bringing once God honoring cultures to apathy and eventually to destruction. In England, Charles, the Prince of Wales is

planning a symbolic change of his title from Defender of the Faith to Defender of Faith when he becomes King.

He's doing this to reflect Britain's multicultural society. This would mean that the Supreme Governor of the Church of England would no longer be known as Defender of the Faith – meaning Christianity – for the first time since the reign of Henry VIII. Unfortunately, Defender of Faith means Defender of Anything and therefore Defender of Nothing.

In seminaries, the devil has taken great institutions, founded on the Bible and the gospel message, such as Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and so many others, and has turned them into bastions of secular humanism and worldly lies such as evolution and global warming.

And the devil has actively used these same lies in churches almost since the beginning. Within 1 generation after the time of Christ, the Lord wrote 7 letters to 7 churches, 5 of which had fallen partially or almost completely under Satan's dominion. Today, once Christ honoring denominations are filled with homosexuality, supporters of abortion rights, and New Age spiritualism.

All of these examples have come about because people would rather follow the lies of the devil than the truth of God and His eternal word. In the end, only death will result from not following the clear word of God as He reveals it to us. Jesus tells us of the devil's cunning in the book of John –

He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. (John 8:44b)

IV. His Song Remains the Same

In our sermon on Chapter 2, verses 16 and 17, we asked the question, “Whence cometh evil?” The answer was from free will. The obvious question which arose from that, and which we didn't fully evaluate or answer is that “If God created man with free will and free will is the cause of evil, then didn't God create evil?”

We did mention that what occurred was done in innocence, but that really wasn't a full explanation of the problem of evil. If it was, people wouldn't argue over the issue, they would comprehend it.

The Bible says in 1 John 5:19, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one.*” How did this come about and fit into God’s plan without God being the author of evil?

In order to completely understand this, we need to grasp what Thomas Aquinas wrote in the 13th century. He said, “...evil never follows in the effect, unless some other evil pre-exists in the agent or in the matter... But in **voluntary things the defect of the action comes from the will actually deficient**, inasmuch as it does not actually **subject itself** to its proper rule. **This defect, however, is not a fault**, but fault follows upon it from the fact that the will acts with this defect.

Whether you got that or not, it is astonishingly profound – and the Bible in the book of Romans bears it out. “The defect of the action” – in this case eating of the fruit which is a defect of the action – “comes from will actually deficient.” What was deficient in Adam and the woman’s will? It was the lack of the knowledge of good and evil – they were in a state of innocence.

But was this God’s fault? No, Aquinas says it is “deficient, inasmuch as it does not actually subject itself to its proper rule.” What was the proper rule concerning their state of innocence? It was to obey their Creator and not eat the fruit.

When they disobeyed by using free will, was it because of a fault in them as created by God? No! It “is not a fault, (according to Aquinas) but fault follows upon it from the fact that the will, (meaning their free will) acts with this defect.” The blame is placed squarely and solely on man.

The “defect” as we perceive it was part of what was “very good” in their creation. Creating a man with no knowledge of good and evil is called a “defect” by Aquinas, but we could rename it a “lack.” Just because there was a lack, doesn’t mean there is anything wrong with it. When Adam and the woman acted against proper rule with this lack of knowledge, it resulted in fault (or sin).

And fault, as you know, resulted in death. Our text verse today can be understand far more clearly now –

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has

conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.

-James 1:13-15

Let me give you another example which may help with this. If the Bible is the Word of God, then its doctrines are perfect. But people disagree on issues – for example some say Jesus is God and some don't. Only one can be true.

However, our lack of knowledge in understanding what the Bible says and then teaching it inaccurately is sin. But it's not God's fault. It's ours. We have the instructions just like Adam did. Therefore, evil can result from two "good" things. "The defect of the action comes from the will actually deficient." Wah lah.

Now you can see how God is neither the tempter nor the author of evil. The only way this could never happen is if God never created any other beings because what He creates is necessarily less than what He is and is therefore deficient in some way.

And we are now ready to evaluate our final verse of the day –

⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

The devil seized upon the opportunity to draw out of the woman's lack, meaning her innocence in knowing good from evil. When he did, he drew out of it disobedience which resulted in fault and this fault resulted in death...for all of us ever since that moment.

And the three modes of drawing out this lack? The first was the lust of the flesh, when she "saw that the **tree was good for food.**" The second was the lust of the eyes, when she saw that "it was pleasant to the eyes." And the third is the pride of life, when she found it was "a tree desirable to make one wise."

This one verse is the complete example of every sin that has ever been committed in human history. Any sin that you can recognize in yourself or in another will stem from right here. And how effective is it? The Apostle John warns of it in his first epistle 62 books into the Bible –

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

-1 John 2:15, 16

Not only is this the prime example of worldly sin, but John addresses it in exactly the same order of categories as Genesis does, lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It worked in Eden and it is still at work in each and every human soul today. But John gives us a remedy in his next verse –

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. – 1 John 2:17

This brings us to another dilemma though. If this pattern of sin has infiltrated every human since Adam, then how can we “do the will of God” in order to abide forever? We already stand condemned. This is a destiny deciding thing and looks hopeless. But yes, there is hope. God hasn’t left us without a remedy. Enter Jesus Christ.

After his baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan in exactly the same manner as the woman was tempted. Let’s read the account together –

Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.” [**This was a temptation of the flesh**] But Jesus answered him, saying, “It is written, ‘*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*’” Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, “All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for *this* has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours.” [**This was the temptation of the eyes**] And Jesus answered and said to him, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘*You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.*’” Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. For it is written: ‘*He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,*’ and, ‘*In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your*

foot against a stone.” [This is the temptation of pride] And Jesus answered and said to him, “It has been said, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’”

-Luke 4:1-12

During these three temptations, the devil twisted God’s word. He mishandled it and misapplied it in an attempt to subvert God’s work. At the same time, he used his same old tricks against Jesus, but it was Jesus who prevailed and the devil who failed. Jesus defeated the devil at his own game.

There are two ways open for each of us to “do the will of God and abide forever.” The first is to do what Jesus did every time he was tempted, to properly quote and apply Scripture to the situation. But the only way you can do this is to know what the word says. If you’re not reading and memorizing your Bible, you are setting yourself up for continual defeat.

But even if you’re well armed, it doesn’t take care of the other problem we all face. We’ve all sinned already. We’ve all failed the test. How can we “do the will of God and abide forever” if we’ve already violated the word of God? The answer is Jesus...

“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” John 6:29

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2

*Cunning and sly is our foe
He waits to set an evil snare
The serpent hisses his moves are slow
But when he pounces it’s a tragic affair*

*He searches for whom he may devour
And masks himself as an angel of light
He is an enemy of terrifying power
And to steal man’s soul is his delight*

*He is the accuser of the brethren
He is the one who appeals to our faults
He is the leader of every false religion
And the one behind disobedient cults*

*He engages us in mortal battle
And leads men astray like lowing cattle
The unsuspecting are easy prey
But the wise stand in safety of the Lord
Though he can easily ruin our day
He cannot prevail over the Holy Sword*

*Stand firm then in the Lord Jesus
Who triumphed o'er the wicked foe
By His blood he did purchase us
And in His strength and power we will go*

*Hail to the Lamb of God
On the serpent's head He did trod*

*Though tempted thrice He stood fast
And gained man's freedom from certain hell
At the cross it was finished at last
Once again with God we can dwell*

*Call on Jesus who will save your soul
When you accept the gospel story
Then through heaven's gates you will stroll
Praising the God of everlasting glory*

GENESIS 3:7-13 (NAKED AND EXPOSED)

Introduction: Our last sermon closed with this verse – “So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.” Before we go forward, let’s go back...back to chapter 2 –

“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (17)

A question needs to be addressed and answered before we can move on. This is an issue that comes up many times in the remaining 1187 chapters of the Bible and needs to be remembered by everyone willing to accept the Bible’s overall premise.

The question is, “If God said that Adam would die on the day he ate of the fruit, then how could we be doing more sermons on the life of Adam, starting with today? Did God lie?”

The answer is, “No, God didn’t lie.” Well, if God didn’t lie and Adam didn’t die physically, then something else must have happened. From today’s passage on, even until this first day of 2012, man has been dead... spiritually dead. We are born dead and remain that way if and until Christ works in our lives.

Adam and the woman died spiritually the moment they ate of the fruit and all people are born into Adam, spiritually dead. This is the premise of the Bible – that all are born into sin and are thus separated from God at conception. The only thing that can correct this is a new birth – to be “born again” as Jesus declared.

Paul, in the book of Romans, explains this. Although he is writing about the Law of Moses, the same premise applies to the disobedience of Adam and the woman.

⁷ What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “*You shall not covet.*”⁸ But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all *manner of evil* desire. For apart from the law sin *was* dead.⁹ I was alive once without the law, but when the

commandment came, sin revived and I died.¹⁰ And the commandment, which was to *bring* life, I found to *bring* death.¹¹ Romans 7:7-11

Paul says, “I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.”

Death resulted from the law, even though the law coming from God was good. Our last sermon resolved this when we looked at how two things, both created in a “good” state, can produce evil. The law, in this case staying away from the tree of knowledge, acted on the deficient will of Adam and the woman.

This is what brought about death and death continues in man until this day. Apart from a rebirth, we will remain spiritually dead and separated from God for eternity.

Text Verse: *Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. John 3:3-6*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Covering Up

⁷Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

Adam and the woman (I’m calling her the woman because she hasn’t yet been named – not as an offense to her. Eventually she will be called his wife, and then later, “Eve.”) Anyway,,, they had their eyes opened. They saw the effects of evil because they had eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and they suddenly realized their naked state.

They knew what it was to feel shame and they tried to hide the shame they felt. They did this by sewing fig leaves together. There are several things we can get from this one verse and deeds are the focus of the three aspects –

The first aspect is that they realized their sin because of their deeds. They had been given a law and they disobeyed it. Paul, speaking of the Law of Moses, said the following. I'm using his logic in a way comparable to what Adam did –

... as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law (for not the hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified;)

-Romans 2:12, 13

Adam and the woman failed in the law they had been given. Their deeds testified against them.

In Galatians 3:11, he compliments this same logic –

But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.”

I hope you are beginning to understand or are more fully able to comprehend what I explained in the sermon on Free Will from Genesis 2:16, 17. No one is justified by the law. Adam and the woman needed faith, but their deeds, which weren't based on faith, are what brought about their pitiful situation.

The second aspect in sewing fig leaves is that they knew their helpless state. They relied on their deeds to make them to “be like God.” But even though this did occur – that they became like God, to know good and evil – it also made them less like God in another way. Their spiritual death at that moment and their works testified against them. This is amazingly similar to the dead church of Laodicea in Revelation chapter 3 –

Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

-Revelation 3:17, 18

Adam and the woman thought that they would gain everything and have need of nothing, but instead, like the church in Laodicea, they became *wretched* – creatures that would live a toilsome existence from the soil that would stubbornly provide for them.

They became *miserable* – creatures that would long for a return to the garden they had lost and who were destined instead to have trials, troubles, pains, and sorrows.

They became *poor* – creatures who no longer had the riches of heaven, but the thorns of the earth. They would no longer have the waters of life. Instead, their waters came from wells dug into the land and which needed to be drawn up by the strength of their arm.

They became *blind* – creatures without spiritual life or eyes to discern spiritual things. Instead, they would grope through a world of darkness and evil.

And they became *naked* – creatures that were exposed both physically and spiritually. Their nakedness testified against them then and it continues to testify against us even to this day.

Do you think it's any coincidence that Jesus brings up these points to the church of Laodicea? No. God was speaking to them and is speaking to us that all the deeds in the world will do nothing for us unless they are done by faith.

The third aspect of their attempt to cover themselves is that they tried to make things right on their own initiative. In other words, here they have disobeyed, they've sinned, and they've seen their nakedness, and they tried to cover it with fig leaves. Fig leaves are unsuitable to cover a person. Here's a few reasons why –

They aren't *strong enough* for the task – a leaf can't withstand the stress that's applied to them. They aren't *durable enough* for the task – they wear out as they dry and will fall to pieces quickly. They aren't *protective enough* for safety as the material isn't user friendly for the hardships we face.

Each of these points parallels our deeds in trying to obtain God's favor. They aren't *strong enough* to cover our sin. Our deeds cannot hold up to the stress of sin's consequences. They aren't *durable enough* for the task; temporary deeds can't satisfy an infinite penalty.

And they aren't *protective enough* for the safety of the person. The fiery darts of the devil, the internal struggles of sin, and the weakness of our souls cannot be overcome by deeds. Instead, they leave us in the same sad shape, or even worse, than we were in.

This pattern has been repeated countless times since sin first entered the world. We do wrong and we try to hide our wrong.

When Bill Clinton was discovered to have had an extra-marital affair, he lied about it and did what he could with his presidential powers to cover it up. He even went as far as publically mulling over what the definition of “is” is. He shamefully sewed fig leaves together in an attempt to hide his guilt.

In the same way, Jim Bakker, the disgraced TV evangelist was accused of offering a \$265,000 bribe to a secretary in the ministry to cover up their adultery. He was also tried and convicted on charges of fraud, tax evasion, and racketeering stemming from his involvement in several illegal financial transactions during the construction of Heritage USA.

Even the first King of Israel, Saul, attempted to cover up his wrongdoing. When he found that his sin was exposed before God, he had the nerve to say to Samuel “I have sinned; yet honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel, ...”

In contrast to these people, Job held onto his righteousness as a badge of honor and even compared his acts against the unrighteousness of Adam.

But whether it’s a politician, a minister, a king, or Job, whether we have done something amiss or not, we stand naked and exposed before the God who searches the hearts and minds of His creatures.

II. A Moment in Time

⁸ And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

It’s surprising how many theologians deny the literal reading of this verse. The LORD God, Jehovah Elohim – the God of Power and Perfection walked in the garden in the cool of the day – in Hebrew, the “wind of the day.” Adam Clarke gives us his comments on this passage –

“The voice is properly used here, for as God is an infinite Spirit, and cannot be confined to any form, so he can have no personal appearance.” In other words, He doesn’t believe God walked in the garden.

The main premise for people who follow the literal method of Bible interpretation is that we should be satisfied with the literal interpretation of a text unless very substantial reasons can be given for advancing beyond the literal meaning.

In the case of this account, the LORD GOD walking in the garden, there is no good reason to deny it being taken literally and there is the authority of God's word that it should be. In other words, Jehovah Elohim really walked in the Garden of Eden just as He did when He met Abraham in Genesis 18; just as He did when He wrestled with Jacob in Genesis 32; just as He appeared to Joshua before the battle of Jericho; and just as He did on many other occasions in the Old Testament.

This same Lord God walked among His people after the Incarnation, when the Holy Spirit united with human flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the master of time and space and He walked in the Garden and elsewhere, appearing in His own history.

People speculate on how long it was before Adam and the woman actually ate of the fruit in disobedience. In one of my Bible classes I was asked this and my answer was, "Probably not very long."

One Jewish commentary, which includes a timeline of all of history, says this, "On the very day he was created, man committed the first sin of history, transgressing the divine commandment not to eat from the 'Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.' Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden, and mankind became subject to death, labor, and moral confusion."

This seems to be validated by the term "the cool of the day." It was the end of the day, the evening, that Jehovah Elohim walked in the Garden... plenty enough time had gone by for his innocent and precious creatures to have their eyes opened.

If this is so – if they really sinned on the first day they were created – it brings about an immensely profound theological concept and so I would caution you to take my personal thoughts here with a complete grain of salt and yet ponder them as if they were the choicest of fruits.

In Genesis 1, it said at the end of the sixth day of creation, "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was* very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day."

If Adam fell before the end of the sixth day, and everything was very good on the sixth day, then God's plan included His creatures to be complete and not lacking knowledge by the end of the sixth day. Is an innocent creature – one that doesn't know good from evil – complete or not?

If the man was placed in the garden to worship and serve His Creator, could he do it without this knowledge? Personally, I would say not. And therefore the book of Revelation where we see the restoration of the Garden to creatures who **have** the knowledge of good and evil is even more significant than we might imagine!

Out of 7000 years of human existence which is 2,520,000 days, only 1 day was as it should have been and Oh! how we wait for the restoration of that perfect day.

I think this is supportable by God's rest on Day 7. God rested from His labors on that day and the purpose of man was to enter God's rest. Because this is so, then it makes complete sense that He was expelled from the Garden before the 7th day.

Only when the fullness of time had come when Jesus was crucified and resurrected was man allowed to actually enter God's rest. As it says in Hebrews 4:3, "For we who have believed do enter that rest..."

That Adam and the woman fell on the sixth day of creation is also supportable by the comment in Revelation 13:8 – "All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, was "slain from the foundation of the world." Sin is what necessitated the death of the Lord and therefore sin occurred at the foundation of the world – known to us as the six days of creation.

We look around us and see death, troubles, misery, and pain, but God sees a plan that will bring many sons to glory and one which is worth the cost to have creatures that can appreciate the greatness of His marvelous plan. Never underestimate the immense glory of what God has done and is doing in this on-going bubble of time and space!

III. Hiding Away

⁹ Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where *are* you?"

¹⁰ So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” And He said, “Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”

Man o man... nothing has changed in the last 6000 years. The Lord called to Him. “Adam... hellooooo Adam.” Where are you? Of course He knew where Adam was, but He was drawing him out in a tender manner, just as a parent would to their wayward child. Jeremiah asks this rhetorical question from the Lord –

Can anyone hide himself in secret places,
So I shall not see him?” says the LORD;
“Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the LORD. -Jer 23:24

The great King of Israel, David, tried to hide his own sin from the Lord after having slept with Bathsheba and then having her husband Uriah killed. Let’s take a few moments and read the account –

And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, “I *am* with child.”
⁶ Then David sent to Joab, *saying*, “Send me Uriah the Hittite.” And Joab sent Uriah to David. ⁷ When Uriah had come to him, David asked how Joab was doing, and how the people were doing, and how the war prospered. ⁸ And David said to Uriah, “Go down to your house and wash your feet.” So Uriah departed from the king’s house, and a gift *of food* from the king followed him. ⁹ But Uriah slept at the door of the king’s house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house. ¹⁰ So when they told David, saying, “Uriah did not go down to his house,” David said to Uriah, “Did you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?” ¹¹ And Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are encamped in the open fields. Shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to lie with my wife? As you live, and *as* your soul lives, I will not do this thing.” ¹² Then David said to Uriah, “Wait here today also, and tomorrow I will let you depart.” So Uriah remained in Jerusalem that day and the next. ¹³ Now when David called him, he ate and drank before him; and he made him drunk. And at evening he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but he did not go down to his house. ¹⁴ In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent *it* by the hand of Uriah. ¹⁵ And he wrote in the letter, saying, “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die.” ¹⁶ So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there *were* valiant men. ¹⁷ Then the men of the city came out and fought

with Joab. And *some* of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also. ... (And going down a few verses) When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. ²⁷ And when her mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

-2 Samuel 11:5-17 & 26, 27

David tried to cover up his sins with fig leaves but the LORD knew what had happened. Instead of working wickedness and trying to hide our shame behind foliage, Paul gives us a much better way of handling things in the book of Romans –

Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts. Romans 13:13, 14

Because what David did is so intricately tied to Adam's account, let's go back there and see the continued comparison – "Then the LORD sent Nathan to David."

Nathan is the king's prophet. Right here, can't you hear the LORD calling Adam... "Aaadam, Oh Aadam." But instead of Adam, the LORD is calling out to His beloved King – "David... Oh Daaavid."

"...And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. ² The rich *man* had exceedingly many flocks and herds. ³ But the poor *man* had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴ And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." 2 Samuel 12:1-4

David listened intently to the account, this parable about his own sin being given to him by his prophet Nathan. He was the king and the one to judge legal cases. As he sat and listened, he wasn't clueing in to what his own prophet, his mouthpiece of the LORD, was trying to tell him.

Who else would he be talking about? But just like Adam, he was secretly hiding in his own little garden. He was naked and covered in fig leaves, just like his first father.

And just like the Garden, the woman he had conspired with was securely hidden with him, behind the walls of his palace. “Oh, Zion is nice and comfortable and the LORD doesn’t see a thing.” But the LORD found Adam who was hiding in Eden and the LORD found David hiding in Zion.

The Garden of Eden means a “Garden of Delight” and Zion means a “Parched Place.” From one extreme to another, “the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.”

IV. Passing the Buck

¹² Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

I get to do this a lot. Whenever I’m found out for some misdeed, I simply pass the buck to my Beauty. “It was all Hideko’s fault, can’t you see this. She made me do it, the little devil.”

Well, maybe not all the time...

But this is our natural proclivity. We blame our co-workers when things don’t go right at work. We blame our brother or sister when mom and dad find out the thing we did. We blame McDonald’s for making the coffee too hot when we stupidly drop it and burn ourselves. We blame the rich for our financial woes. We blame God for every bad thing that we can’t control. We love to point the finger and pass the buck to someone else.

Adam passed the buck and it landed at right Eve’s feet. But what is also included here is a bit more... “The woman whom **You gave** to be with me...” *ha-issaha asher nathata imadi*

“The woman made me do it, but really, it’s **Your** fault. **You** put her in my lap. Things sure would have been better without her.” And this is the pattern of the unrighteous of human beings down through the ages. Not only do we pass the buck, but we somehow find a way of blaming God in the process.

This really is the mark of the unrighteous soul. This is what King Saul did when he disobeyed God’s order to destroy everything belonging to the Amalekites when he fought against them –

“Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul said to him, “Blessed *are* you of the LORD! I have performed the commandment of the LORD.” But Samuel said, “What then *is* this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?” And Saul said, “They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.” 1 Samuel 15:13-15

Saul passed the buck on to God, “I did it because it’s what God would have wanted.” But this unrepentant attitude after being found out... the attitude which was so similar to Adam, wasn’t at all like David. How could the LORD call David “a man after my own heart” even after he committed adultery and murder? Let’s continue with David’s trial before the LORD –

“So David’s anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity.” Then Nathan said to David, “You *are* the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your master’s house and your master’s wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if *that had been* too little, I also would have given you much more! Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife *to be* your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon.’” 2 Samuel 12:5-9

V. Kicking the Can

Most of you have probably heard the term “kicking the can down the road.” We use this to say that someone who’s getting blamed for something turns around and blames someone else. In the world’s first cast of “kicking the can down the road,” the woman taught us how to do it.

Women have given us other firsts as well. After tedious research on the internet and elsewhere, I found 7 women who accomplished wonderful firsts –

- 1) Bette Nesmith Graham invented liquid paper;
- 2) Sixteenth century noblewoman Lady Mary Wortley Montagu discovered the smallpox vaccination;
- 3) Helen Greiner invented the first bomb diffusing robot;

- 4) Sarah Blakely, comedian turned entrepreneur, invented SpanX – in her case, I’m not sure if she ever left the field of comedy;
- 5) Margaret Knight invented paper bags... she didn’t invent paper or bags, but she did invent paper bags;
- 6) Marion Donovan invented disposable diapers; and
- 7) Hideko Garrett invented a workable method of turning a completely helpless soul into an effective dish washer and husband. All notable firsts...

Women accomplished all of these notable tasks, but our first mother, Eve, gets sole rights to “kicking the can down the road.”

¹³ And the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Adam was very careful to assign blame directly to Eve and indirectly to the LORD, but Eve – without missing a beat, turned around and blamed the serpent. Paul made sure to note in the New Testament though that kicking the can only goes so far –

For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. -1 Timothy 2:13, 14

I appreciate Paul reminding of this. By the time we get to 1 Timothy, which is 55 books into the Bible, it can be tough to keep all these things in order.

In all seriousness though, this pattern has remained pretty much uninterrupted since it first occurred. It’s so easy to pass the buck and kick the can and it’s rare when someone will own up to their own failings.

In the case of King David, what did he do after he was confronted with his transgressions? He stood fast and took the heat –

¹³ So David said to Nathan, “I have sinned against the LORD.” And Nathan said to David, “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴ However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *who is* born to you shall surely die.” ¹⁵ Then Nathan departed to his house. -2 Samuel 12:13-15

Yes, sin has consequences and David paid for them in his family and in the many trials he faced, but because of his repentant heart and the depth of his emotions when confronted with his own sin, God favored him.

The 51st Psalm is David's heartfelt acknowledgment of his misdeeds and it has filled the souls of people for over 2700 years with a deeper understanding of the type of person God rejoices over in His dealings with the sons of men. When we sin, let's be strong enough to admit it and to not attempt to cover ourselves with fig leaves and then assign blame when we're found out. Rather, let's openly acknowledge our sins and move on. I'll leave you with this final verse to remember tonight –

And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account. Hebrews 4:13

Tragedy in the Garden

The woman was enticed, and she ate of the fruit
She passed it on to Adam and he ate as well
He became the second willing recruit
And together they left a sad story to tell

Their eyes were opened to their exposed state
They realized that life in sin just ain't so great

They sewed together figs to hide their shame
And made coverings that just wouldn't suffice
The Lord questioned them about their hiding game
And they realized that sin just ain't so nice.

"Where are you?" called the LORD. (Though he already knew)
"I was hiding because I realized something wasn't right
I was afraid to answer, I'm naked ... yes it's true
And so I hid myself, like a shadow in the night."

"Who told you that you were naked? What is this you did do?
Have you taken of the fruit which I told you not to eat?"
"It was the women who did it... the one made by You
She told me of it's yumminess,,, and how it was so sweet."

I thought it would be so good, but I guess I paid the price
I'm beginning to see that sin really ain't so nice

"Woman, what is this thing that you have done?
Traded life under the heaven's for life under the sun."
Oh my LORD it was the serpent. He deceived me and I ate
And now I'm seeing that sin just ain't so great."
Oh God that we could take it back and undo what we have done
Life was wonderful under the heavens
But it's terrible under the sun.

What can we do make things right?
Where can we turn to be healed?
How long will we be cast from Your sight?
How long until the grave is unsealed?

I have a plan, children, but you'll have to wait
Many years under the sun toiling in the heat
But I will someday open wide heaven's gate
When my own Son, the devil will defeat.

I will send my own Son, the devil to defeat.

GENESIS 3:14, 15 (THE PROMISED ONE)

When we look around at the state of the world, the state of our lives, and the troubles which hem us in, it's often hard to imagine that God has got everything figured out. Imagine what Habakkuk thought when he saw the armies of Babylon coming against his people –

² O LORD, how long shall I cry, And You will not hear? Even cry out to You, Violence!" And You will not save. ³ Why do You show me iniquity, And cause *me* to see trouble? For plundering and violence *are* before me; There is strife, and contention arises. ⁴ Therefore the law is powerless, And justice never goes forth. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore perverse judgment proceeds.
Habakkuk 1:2-4

The horrifying things which have happened in history can really cause us to question God's goodness and His ability to keep things under control, but that's the furthest thing from the truth.

Why should God interfere in our free will when He isn't wanted around most of the time? As humans, we normally only seek Him when things are going poorly, but when all is ok, we figure we can do whatever we want.

I email and post on line a Bible devotional every morning. I started with Romans 1:1 and am now up to Revelation chapter 4... one verse a day with analysis and a prayer. This has taken many years and I've noticed a trend...

When I post a verse that is happy and uplifting, people sign on for the devotional, but as soon as I post one that mentions God's judgment in it, numbers drop and people accuse me of not being like Jesus,,,,, when Jesus is the One who wrote the book.

The same thing has happened in my Bible classes and sermons. If I speak on judgment, people get offended and leave. But this is a problem with misunderstanding the nature of evil and the consequences of sin – be it individual, within a church, or on a national level.

If judgment bothers you, take it up with God. He will tell you that it will all work out in the end. First though, the devil needs to be dealt with and sin needs to be dealt with.

Judgment begins at the house of God and with God's people. If you struggle with this, you have to spend more time in your Bible.

Introduction: The two verses we're going to look at today begin the long process of dealing with the devil and conquering sin. The first verse details the curse of Satan and the restrictions placed on him and the second details in veiled terms his final defeat.

Genesis 3:15 is known as the *Protoevangelium* or the "first gospel" because it is the first explicit reference in the Bible to the coming Christ. All things will be made right when the devil is destroyed by the Promised One – who we know to be our Lord and Savior, Jesus.

Text Verse: *Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. Zechariah 3:1*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Defining the Curse

**¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent:
"Because you have done this,
You *are* cursed more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;
On your belly you shall go,
And you shall eat dust
All the days of your life.**

With this pronouncement and the verse which will follow, defeat of the devil is assured. The LORD God didn't even bother to interrogate the serpent like He did with Adam and the woman. He knew what He heard was true and simply pronounced judgment. And the judgment gets progressively worse as the LORD speaks. As He does, there is both a physical and a spiritual element to what He says. The pronouncement is upon the serpent as the physical vehicle which was used by the devil, but it is also a spiritual pronouncement upon the devil himself.

The physical pronouncement of the serpent starts with "You are cursed more than all the cattle." In other words, "even dumb oxen will be ahead of you. They are unreasoning animals and brute beasts, but you are less than they are."

The ox is are so stupid that they have to be prodded along with poking rods to wherever they are going, but a serpent can't even reason that far.

The most they can do is be charmed out of a basket just as the devil charmed the man out of the Garden. And just as the charmer is able to put the serpent back into his basket, the Lord is able to again put the man in the Garden. Baskets are for the wicked, paradise is for the righteous.

In Zechariah 5:6-8 we read this nifty parallel – “So I asked, “What *is* it?” And he said, “It *is* a basket that is going forth.” He also said, “This *is* their resemblance throughout the earth: Here *is* a lead disc lifted up, and this *is* a woman sitting inside the basket”; then he said, “This *is* Wickedness!” And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth.”

Just as wickedness was shut up in the ephah basket, so will Satan be shut up eternally in the Lake of Fire which was prepared especially for him and the fallen angels.

Next in our verse, the LORD says the serpent is cursed “more than every beast of the field.” This doesn't mean that the other animals are cursed, but that the curse on the serpent would make them lower than the other animals.

“Not only are you lower than the cattle, every animal is above you. You are the lowest of the low and the vilest of the vile. You are exceeded by platypuses, wombats, badgers, and squirrels. Everything will be ahead of you. Even swine which eat the refuse of the world, my fat little walking garbage cans, will be ahead of you.”

The curse continues with “On your belly you shall go.” This particular phrase really has to be taken literally, or we will rob the very meaning of the Bible. In other words, the serpent was physically altered from what it originally looked like to what it looks like now. And now he is a slithering slimy slippery serpent.

“Just as you slithered into the lives of my humans and brought them to the state where they will return to dust, so you will live your existence in the very dust that you have condemned them to.”

“From the dust they came and to the dust they shall return, but you will be united with the dust from beginning to end. You have your kingdom and you have rule and authority, but it is from the lowest position. Other rulers sit above their dominion, but you reign from below it as you lay on your belly.”

Let's continue on with the LORD's curse of this vile serpent – "And you shall eat dust all the days of your life." The defeat is decided. "Just as the slain warrior's future is in to lay the dust he walked on, so you, serpent, will be like him. You will eat the dust and it will sustain you."

In this case, it's possible that the earthworm is included in the overall picture.

The earthworm really does eat the earth and everything that returns to it. As man dissolves back into the earth, so the earthworm finds its food. The serpent destroyed the man in the garden and he would continue to destroy fallen man outside the garden.

But what may appear as a victory for him in this sense is really a condemnation of the devil's deeds. The only food he would have is that of the death and corruption of his fallen creatures, not of the wellspring of life.

This curse is by far worse than the death mandated for the other animals because it's of an eternal nature as we'll see when we get to the book of Revelation many long years from now...

The theme of the Bible's curse on the serpent carries through every dispensation as well. In the millennial reign of Christ after the tribulation period and when the devil is bound in chains, Isaiah makes this prophesy –

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together,
The lion shall eat straw like the ox,
And dust *shall be* the serpent's food.
They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,"
Says the LORD. –Isa 65:25

When the creation is restored to idyllic conditions for the other animals, the serpent will still be licking the dust.

As I said earlier though, there is a spiritual pronouncement as well. This curse is laid on the devil or Satan who filled the serpent. Satan was an angelic being and even in the book of Job it relates that he could freely enter the Lord's presence, but in Luke 10 we read this account –

And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of

the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” -Luke 10:18-20

The curse upon the devil then means that he would never again enjoy the riches of heaven or his angelic position. The food of angel’s is replaced with the souls of fallen men and the degradation of them through impurity and wickedness.

Instead of a marvelous witness to God’s majesty in creation, he would be reduced to being “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.”

Elsewhere in the Bible, unreasoning animals that injure or kill man are put to death for their actions. But unlike them, what the serpent and devil did was of a moral, not a physical nature and so instead of extermination, a curse is the result.

This pattern isn’t unique to the devil either. When we get to Chapter 9 of Genesis, we’ll come across the morally offensive sin of Ham, the son of Noah. There, the result is also a curse –

²⁴ So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him. ²⁵ Then he said:
“Cursed *be* Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brethren.” Genesis 9:24-25

A moral transgression requires a substantial moral curse. This is a lesson we all need to pay heed to.

*On your belly you shall go you slithering snake
Your rule will be from the dust of the earth
From corruption and death souls you will take
And to the sons of hell you shall give birth*

*The world of wickedness is your domain
And every vile thing you shall rule
Your army will be the sons of Cain
The disobedient, the vile, and yes also the fool*

*But you and your kingdom will have its end
And all the evil that you brought into my creation
To the Lake of Fire all of it I shall send
And there you will receive eternal destruction*

Now that we've looked at this verse and its repercussions for both the serpent and the devil, let's see how they actually become a veiled picture of the atonement provided by the coming Christ.

Satan went from being the beautiful angel of God's creation to a serpent – the cunning and loathsome reptile. On the other hand there is an interesting use of the serpent in the book of Numbers –

⁵ And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For *there is* no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." ⁶ So the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

⁷ Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." ⁹ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived." -Numbers 21:5-9

In John Chapter 3, we read what this bronze serpent symbolized. Jesus Himself explains it to us –

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:14, 15

One other time this particular bronze serpent is mentioned is in the books of 2 Kings. There we see how it degraded into an idol and also what its name was.

"He removed the high places and broke the *sacred* pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan."

-2 Kings 18:4

One important lesson here is that even God's mode of saving can become an idol. When we look to the cross, we need to remember that it is only a symbol of the greater Person and work of Jesus and not a talisman that replaces Him. We need to be on guard even in the things we think on and boast about most. As Paul said in Galatians 6:14-

“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

Yes we boast in the cross, but only because of what it signifies which is the great deliverance of humanity from sin at the expense of the life of the Lord Jesus. We need to be careful not to make the error that we use the cross as a good luck charm.

This bronze snake we're talking about was called *Nehustan* in Hebrew. This word sounds like three different words – “snake,” “bronze,” and “unclean thing.” All of which point to the work of Christ.

The snake – Just as the snake was lifted up in the wilderness, so was Christ lifted up on the cross.

The word bronze – Bronze speaks of judgment. The altar of sacrifice was made of bronze and it was the spot in the temple where sin received its judgment. This like Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as our final judgment on sin. And one more aspect of bronze comes from the book of Revelation where Jesus is said to have feet resembling burnished bronze indicating His authority to judge.

And as an unclean thing – 2 Corinthians 5:21 says this, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Jesus Christ became our unclean thing that we could be cleansed and purified in the presence of an infinitely holy Creator. He was crucified outside the walls of Jerusalem just as the unclean bodies of the sacrificial animals were burned outside the camp.

As you can see, everything eventually points to Jesus Christ and what He did for us, even an obscure passage about a bronze snake from the Old Testament and even the curse upon the serpent.

II. Enmity with the Woman

**¹⁵ And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,**

**And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”**

This first half of verse 15 is directed solely to the relationship between the devil and the woman. The question is, “Who is the woman?” Is it speaking of Eve only, or of all women who come after Eve, or is it speaking of a spiritual woman? I would prefer the third option here.

Throughout the Bible there is a distinction made between the sons of men and the sons of God. The sons of God are the chosen line which leads from Adam, through his son Seth, down to Noah, then Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. This line continues to the coming Christ, who is Jesus, and encompasses the nation of Israel.

On the other hand, there is the line of Cain and all of those outside of the Messianic line who are the seed of the devil. This pattern is unmistakable and carries all the way through the Bible.

In 1 John 3, we read a about those who belong to the devil – “For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, ¹² not as Cain *who* was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother’s righteous.”

In the same book 2 chapters later, John tells us that the whole world is under the sway of the wicked one. Paul says the same thing in 1 Corinthians 15 when he makes the contrast between those in Adam and those in Christ. If you are in Adam, you are under the devil’s control and headship.

Therefore, the woman is the godly line whom the devil is at enmity with. And this is fully confirmed in the awesome apocalyptic words recorded in the book of Revelation –

“¹ Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. ² Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth. ³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. ⁴ His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. ⁵ She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God

and His throne. ⁶ Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. ...

¹³ Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*. ¹⁴ But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵ So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. ¹⁶ But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. ¹⁷ And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

-Revelation 12:1-6, 13-17

The woman depicted in these astonishing verses is specifically the nation of Israel “who gave birth to the male Child.” And her offspring, as it clearly states, are those “who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

If you’re a Christian and you wonder why life can get so hard, the answer is right here. The devil is out to destroy you and to rob you of your joy.

The devil doesn’t need to spend his time attacking the rest of the world – he already owns them! And so he can spend his time directing his demons to tear at you, fight against you, and make your life miserable. The rest of the world makes their own life miserable because they belong to the author of misery.

Do you wonder why I so constantly nag people to read their Bibles? It’s because this is the only way to know God’s will, to stay in fellowship with Him, and to prevail over the devil’s attacks. Without knowing your Bible, you’re totally exposed to the enmity which came about in Genesis 3:15.

Paul asks you to do the same thing in Ephesians chapter 6... to prepare yourself for the battle which is going on all around us –

“¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities,

against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.” -Ephesians 6:10-12

After saying this, he spends 7 more verses explaining how to win in this battle. Please read your Bible and learn what the devil doesn't want you to know!

III. The Protoevangelium

**¹⁵ And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”**

Like I said at the start of our talk today, *Protoevangelium* means the “First Gospel.”

This particular verse is translated differently in different Bibles. The Latin Vulgate and Douay Rheims Bibles, both of which are Roman Catholic say “she” shall crush your head. The King James Version says “it” shall bruise your head. And others say, “He” shall bruise, or crush your head. The neutral nature of the personal pronoun in Hebrew could render all these possibilities correct.

A. Minto says this, “The second sentence begins with a personal pronoun. The word may refer either to the “woman”, or may refer to the offspring or seed of the woman. Thus the beginning of the second part of Genesis 3:15 is translated primarily in two ways. ... In view of the epicene personal pronoun (one form to indicate both male and female sex) as described above, both are correct!

If it is the woman, then it is Eve and her line which leads to the Messiah, and if it is the Seed, then it is specifically referring to the Messiah.

In arguing for “she,” we can note that in Genesis 3:20, Adam calls her “woman” but eventually names her Eve or *Khavah* which means the “mother of all the living.”

No matter what, the Protoevangelium is prophetic in nature because there is a promise in the future of redemption and that someone will crush the head of the serpent. This judgment on the serpent contains a promise of ultimate victory through the woman by her Offspring, Jesus and so either “He” or “she” is acceptable.

I would still argue for “He” because, the general rule of language is that personal pronouns normally refer to the nearest antecedent, in this case, the nearest antecedent is the word “Seed.” And secondly, the rest of the Bible bears out that it is Christ Jesus who accomplished the work for us.

Paul confirms this in Galatians 3:16 –

“Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ.”

Because the Bible allows both possibilities and because both are confirmed elsewhere in Scripture, both must be considered acceptable translations – He or she. However, only one can be used in a translation and so the preferable one is “He.” Although the Seed, Jesus came through the woman, it was He who did the work on our behalf at the cross. “He,” therefore, is by far the better choice.

This verse then not only points to Jesus as the One who would defeat the devil, but it also is the first hint of His incarnation. Throughout the Bible, it is always the man who is highlighted and the promises are made to men and to their seed. With a few exceptions where women are introduced into biblical narratives, the focus is almost entirely on men and their seed such as in Genesis 22:17, 18 –

...blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

This one verse, however, never speaks of the seed of man. The most wonderful event to occur in human history, the Christmas Story, is given right here, 4000 years before the coming of Christ.

In Isaiah 7:14, we read this parallel thought –

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

The Seed of the woman is defined and refined here. A virgin shall conceive and bear a Son. This Child has no earthly father, but His Father will be God Himself. Thus His name

will be *Immanuel* – “God with us.” Matthew uses this same verse in His gospel and assures us that Jesus is the One who fulfilled the prophecy.

Elsewhere in Jeremiah we read this most difficult of verses –

How long will you gad about,
O you backsliding daughter?
For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth—
A woman shall encompass a man.” Jeremiah 31:22

This verse has been used for the concept of the virgin birth while other scholars deny that. If we’re to take it plainly and in its literal sense, no other explanation seems plausible. Israel was lost in waywardness, not following the Lord or His commandments, but Jeremiah said the LORD would create a new thing. The term for “create” is *bara* and is used specifically for the creative effort in Genesis 1.

He would again do a miraculous work by bringing about the life of a man without using a man. The Holy Spirit would overshadow Mary. The Child who would come from her would be the Son of God. This coming One then would be the Seed of the woman.

When we arrive at the gospel accounts, the writers like Matthew as we already noted, state this is Jesus. But Jesus Himself uses terminology which certainly supports that He is the Seed of the woman prophesied so long ago.

Before performing His first miracle and while hanging on the cross, we have two separate statements of Jesus that reveal His fulfillment of God’s promise –

“¹ On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. ² Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. ³ And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.” ⁴ Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.” John 2:1-4

“²⁶When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” ²⁷ Then He said to the disciple, “Behold your mother!” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own *home*.” John 19:26, 27

In both cases, Jesus refers to Mary as “woman” even though this wasn’t the normal Semitic way of addressing His mother. Because of this, it is certainly His way of identifying Himself as the promised Seed of the woman.

How wonderful to read these verses as spoken from the Lord’s own mouth and to know with all certainty that He is the One to bring us out of the devil’s grasp and to restore us to our Creator, His Almighty Father.

On the cross, the serpent surely “bruised His heel” when the nails were driven into them. The lowly serpent attacked at the heel of the Man, but the Man was like none other. After a short sleep like death, He rose victorious from the grave and crushed the serpent’s head, meaning his authority.

Jesus Christ regained what had been lost many thousands of years earlier and today we can too stand victorious over the work of the devil if we will only, by faith, put our hope and our trust in His glorious work.

Albert Barnes relates his thoughts to us on the matter – “It is singular to find that this simple phrase, coming in naturally and incidentally in a sentence uttered four thousand years, and penned at least fifteen hundred years, before the Christian era, describes exactly and literally Him who was made of woman without the intervention of man, that He might destroy the works of the devil. This clause in the sentence of the tempter is the first dawn of hope for the human family after the fall. We cannot tell whether to admire more the simplicity of its terms, the breadth and comprehensiveness of its meaning, or the minuteness of its application to the far-distant event which it mainly contemplates.”

The most astonishing concept ever penned is that which tells of the work of Jesus Christ as revealed to us in the pages of the Holy Bible – God’s love letter of restoration, grace, and mercy.

From these earliest verses of Genesis, all the way through the book of Revelation, we see the wondrous works of an infinitely wise God telling us about the plan of the ages. In John Chapter 19, we see the highest point of that plan when Jesus died on the cross –

“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst!”²⁹ Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put *it* on hyssop, and put *it*

to His mouth.³⁰ So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit." John 19:28-30

"It is finished" – Paid in full. The victory promised in the Protoevangelium was consummated in the death of a Man in a backwater part of the Roman Empire on a Friday afternoon in the year AD32. The glories which came then and are yet to come will reach into eternity and forever we will sing the song of the Lamb.

The Promised One

In the garden the serpent received his curse
On your belly you shall go, licking up the dust
The words were direct and they were terse
But the sentence was completely fair and just

Cursed are you more than the cattle
And more than every beast of the field
Your existence will be as the heat of battle
But in the end it is you who will yield

Of the dust you shall eat
For all the days of your life
Never shall you taste the sweet
But only the fruits of death and strife

I shall put enmity between you and the woman
An on-going battle through lengths of ages
You seed, the unregenerate human
Who against me reviles and rages

But there shall come One, a Promised Seed
Who will crush your head for what you have done
Your days are numbered so take you heed
In my mind the battle is already won

Jesus is coming to make all things new
This word is faithful and it is true

In the cross, a victory you will assume

A victory – yes – but not for you
After His cross and after His tomb
He will arise and make all things new

Man's redemption will have been wrought
By the Seed of the woman, my own Son
With His blood He will have bought
The right to man's soul, the victory won.

For eternity my Son's redeemed will sing
They will walk in the glorious light of life
From the cross of Jesus He will bring
Out of the sea of troubles a radiant wife

All hail the splendid name of Jesus!
Our King sits at the right hand of God on high
Great and wondrous things He has done for us
And we will exalt Him as eternal years pass by

Hallelujah and amen!

Next week we will be talking about Genesis 3:16-24. I hope you'll take time to read those verses, think on them, and get ready for a delightfully delicious sermon entitled "Introducing Donuts – The End of the Garden of God."

GENESIS 3:16-24 **(INTRODUCING DONUTS, THE END OF THE GARDEN OF GOD)**

Introduction: Honey is mentioned 60 times in the Bible and it's used as the Bible's prime example of sweetness for comparison to other things. For example, in the book of Proverbs, we're warned about the sweetness of a seductress –

For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey,
And her mouth *is* smoother than oil;
But in the end she is bitter as wormwood,
Sharp as a two-edged sword. Proverbs 5:3, 4

And in the Song of Songs, King Solomon makes a similar comparison about the beauty of the voice and words of an upright woman, his beloved –

Your lips, *O my spouse,*
Drip as the honeycomb;
Honey and milk *are* under your tongue;
And the fragrance of your garments
is like the fragrance of Lebanon. -Song of Songs 4:11

Honey comes from the work of bees and bees come from the mind of God. The splendor and complexity of a single bumblebee far outweighs the possibility of evolution, and the work they do fills our lips with delight. Here are some of honey's amazing benefits –

It's nature's energy booster because it's a great natural source of carbohydrates which provide strength and energy to the body. It's known for its effectiveness in instantly boosting performance, endurance, and also reducing muscle fatigue.

It has glucose which gives an immediate energy boost, and it has fructose which is absorbed more slowly providing sustained energy.

Honey is an immunity system builder too. It has antioxidants and anti-bacterial properties which can help improve your digestive system and help you stay healthy and fight disease. Eating local honey can actually help a person develop immunities to pollen and hay fever caused by the surrounding spores. The bees produce ready-made inoculants for the pollen sufferer.

Honey can also help with cuts and burns, sore throats, sleeplessness and other things as well.

In contrast to honey, there is the donut. Honey comes from the mind of God through His agents of pollination – the bees. On the other hand, donuts are a product of man's devising and ingenuity.

Where honey is abundantly beneficial to us, donuts are obviously less so. But their sweet deliciousity can't be denied and their totally tempting titillating tastiness tries and tests our taste buds at the expense of our overall slim and trim appearance.

So what do donuts have to do with the Genesis account? Very little to a person who speaks only English, but if you understand Hebrew, there may be a moral to the story hidden in the donut.

Here are the ingredients for a simple glazed donut:

- * 3/4 cup scalded milk
- * 1/3 cup granulated sugar
- * 1/4 teaspoon salt
- * 1 envelope of active dry yeast
- * 1/4 cup warm water
- * 4 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- * 1 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg (optional)
- * 1/3 cup butter
- * 2 eggs, beaten
- * oil for deep frying
- * 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- * 6 tablespoons milk

Text Verse: *The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold,
Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
Moreover by them Your servant is warned,
And in keeping them there is great reward. Psalm 19:9-11*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Donuts, Woman's Second Desire

Donuts are pretty tempting to me and I could make a breakfast of them every day. Ladies aren't exempt from desiring their delightful yumminess either, but there is something else which the Bible says a lady desires –

¹⁶ To the woman He said:

**"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;
In pain you shall bring forth children;
Your desire *shall be* for your husband,
And he shall rule over you."**

There are several parts to the sentencing of the woman and they're given in the form of couplets. The first two apply to her mothering role and the second two concern her role as a wife. What we see here is that, just as in the curse of the serpent, the women will be the bearer of offspring and that offspring are sure to come.

The woman, having been present at the curse of the serpent, was certainly excited at the prospect of having a child. The serpent was told that her seed would crush his head and the woman would wait in anticipation for that to happen – probably expecting it right away. This isn't speculation, but something we'll see in Chapter 4.

Until then, she was sentenced to the multiplication of sorrows in and through her conception and all the way through the birthing process. Unfortunately, the woman finds out that the curse of the serpent and all of its promise of a coming Seed to crush his head will come at a cost to her.

It's been noted that women suffer more pain in the birthing process than any other creatures of the earth and this is certainly a result of the curse pronounced here. There is no other known reason for it.

During and after having a baby, women have mental troubles, sorrows, pain, nausea, food disorders, dizziness, head pains, teeth pains, some have fainting spells, and so on. And of course there is the constant worry about miscarriages, the health of the baby, will she be able to handle things, and on and on.

And all of this leads right up to the time that the baby is born with the birth pains growing in frequency and strength. Of course, there is a time, a short time, when that is forgotten, Jesus said –

“A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.” -John 16:21

After the joy of the moment though, reality comes back and the trials of conception and birth are replaced with the joys, and the trials of raising the child.

In addition to the trials, pains, and numbers of conception, the woman’s sentence includes that her desire will be for her husband and that he would rule over her. If you read commentaries on this, they go all over the place.

Some say it is speaking of the sexual desires a woman has for her husband and others deny this completely. But because the sentence is in the form of a couplet the text itself identifies which is correct.

Since the fall, in almost all less developed cultures, woman has been more or less a slave to her husband. The rule of selfishness prevails there and the weaker inevitably serves the stronger. Going as far as slavery is wholly unintended by God and cultures which follow this avenue divert from His overall original intent.

On the other hand, equality in marital decisions is also unintended by God. Cultures which follow this pattern, or those that reject marriage completely in order to avoid the rule of men, are also divergent from what God intended.

Rather, the rule of man over the woman is to be one who is responsible for the wife and the family. The woman is to defer to her husband’s decisions when they conflict with her own wishes.

In the New Testament, we see the proper order of this relationship carefully noted by the apostles –

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let the wives be* to their own

husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her... Ephesians 5:22-25

Living as husband and wife within the Christian context **should** restore each to their proper place and put them in line with God's intention for the husband and wife.

II. If You Want Donuts, You'll Have to Work for Them

As we noted earlier, honey is a gift of God to man...not of works. Donuts on the other hand require work. We have to get the ingredients, mix them properly, bake the dough, and all that stuff. In the same way, man would go from honey to donuts; from resting in the garden to tilling the soil. The end of the garden of God had come for the man...

¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it':

"Cursed *is* the ground for your sake;

In toil you shall eat *of* it

All the days of your life.

¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,

And you shall eat the herb of the field.

¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread

Till you return to the ground,

For out of it you were taken;

For dust you *are*,

And to dust you shall return."

²⁰ And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

After cursing the serpent and sentencing the woman, the Lord God now turns His attention and judgment upon the man. Yes, the end of the garden of God had come. Instead of supply an abundance to fill their every need and to provide them with endless delight, there would be something different.

In the woman's sentence was the multiplication of conception which is actually considered a blessing in the Bible. In the 127th Psalm we read this –

"Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,

So *are* the children of one's youth.

Happy *is* the man who has his quiver full of them;..." -Psalm 127:4, 5

More children are a part of the sentence and a part of the grace given by God at the same time. The earth would be less giving and more unforgiving, and so feeding more children would be an added burden. At the same time, if he could sustain the children until they were old enough, they would be a part of the man's help in fighting his war with the soil and taking care of him in his old age.

And the soil is the key thought not only of the man's sentencing, but one of the key thoughts throughout the rest of the Bible.

The ground is cursed and will no longer bear fruit from heaven. Instead it will bear fruit from the serpent's throne, from the spot where he breathes out his commands. And his throne is a hard rule. Man would have to toil, and he still does to this day, to get food to come up from it.

"All the days of your life" implies that it will always be this way for fallen man. Not just during the life of Adam, but all the days of man. Water, instead of coming up from the ground as a mist, flows from aquifers and needs to be channeled, carried, or pumped to where it's needed.

And not only would the soil bring forth fruit reluctantly, but in contrast it would willingly bring up thorns and thistles. If you don't actively take care of your garden or lawn, what is the first thing that happens? Up come weeds. Once weeds are established and they take away the water from the weaker plants, then thorns and thistles pop up because they can handle more arid conditions.

The Bible speaks of the blessing of harvests resulting in 30, 60, or a 100 fold crops for edible food like wheat, but this type of productivity takes work and care. On the other hand, there is a species of thistle known as the *Acanthum vulgare* which produces **more** than 100 heads and each contains from 3 to 400 seeds – without any tending or care by man.

Supposing they produce a medium of 80 heads and each contains only 300 seeds, then its first crop would equal 24,000. When these are sown, it could potentially be 576 million. A third time would result in almost 14 billion. Another harvest at this rate would be about 332 quadrillion. One more repetition would result in enough to sow every planet in the solar system with nothing else but this one type of thistle. Oh how easy do the curses afflict our labors!

This curse even resulted in the sandspurs which line coastlines around the world, even up to the ocean itself. The sandiest soil, which can't absorb any water at all, will still support these horrific little monsters.

Verse 18 also says "you shall eat of the herb of the field." This is a commentary that when the crops fail and the trees don't have fruit, we will look for food even as the animals do – from the herbs of the field. This is the state of fallen man because of the effects of one sin committed in ignorance.

In His final act of sentencing the man, the Lord says, "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."

In the sweat of your face or more directly "your nose" – the Hebrew word *beze-et appekha* indicates the conditions of labor for the laborer. Our heads sweat a lot and as we work in the field or at other jobs, our heads are most often pointed down.

Because of this the sweat runs around our head, onto our face, and down the nose and right into the place we're working. In other words, we're symbolically watering the very ground we're cultivating. "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread."

And finally in verse 19 we come to the sad words revealed in the loss of access to the Tree of Life –

"For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."

The Lord God formed man out of the dust and it's what we consist of. When the spark of life which animates us leaves our body, entropy takes over and we inevitably return to the very dust from which we came.

Before we leave the sentencing of the woman and Adam, we need to step back and look at their expected torments from a higher light. A Deliverer was promised in the curse of the serpent – one who would crush the serpent's head. This same Deliverer is referred to throughout their sentencing as well –

"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception..." Jesus was known as a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering and the one whose soul was in labor – all of this in order to bring about children for God.

“In pain you shall bring forth children...” Jesus suffered at the cross to bring “many sons to glory.” In pain He brought forth God’s children.

“Your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you...” The desire of the Bride of Christ is for her Husband and Jesus is the One who will rule over His bride, the church whom He purchased with His own blood.

“Cursed is the ground for your sake...” In Isaiah, Jesus is said to be a root out of dry ground and later in Galatians it says that He became a curse for us. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

“In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life.” In Isaiah it says, “He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied.” Jesus labored throughout His life in the harvest field of man.

“Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,...” Christ was given a crown of thorns. The very sentence of the man for his disobedience became the crown of the Lord who sentenced him.

“And you shall eat the herb of the field...” The instructions for the Passover say this – “Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread *and* with bitter *herbs* they shall eat it.” Jesus not only participated in the Passover each year, He prefigured it, leading a life in bitterness to redeem fallen man.

“In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread...” In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus sweat – as it were – great drops of blood falling to the ground thus earning His bread, that being the Bread of Affliction in order to redeem fallen man.

“Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken;...” The mortal part of the Lord Jesus died on Calvary’s cross and was interred for the sins committed by His own creation. Death came in as a result of sin and sin was dealt with by His obedient death.

The very sentence of man for his rebellion was carried out in the Person of Jesus Christ. The Lord God didn’t cause the man to receive anything that He Himself wasn’t willing to endure. Thus He is both Just and the Justifier of everyone who calls on Him.

There is one exception in the curse between Adam and Jesus “For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.” Jesus, because He prevailed over the devil was resurrected by the

power of God. The curse has been removed and now anyone who calls on Him will likewise be freed from the finality of death.

²⁰ And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

The name translated Eve in English is immensely unfortunate and removes all relevance to what is being relayed. Her name *Khavah* means "life." First we see in this verse that Adam named her.

This confirms what God told her in her sentencing "...he shall rule over you." Because Adam named her, he has dominion and authority over her, just as when Adam named the animals.

By choosing the name *Khavah*, or life, he is demonstrating faith in God's promise to provide a Redeemer. He knew this Redeemer would restore them to spiritual life and fellowship with God. But he had no idea that it would be 4000 years before this Redeemer would come.

All he knew at that moment was that there would be One who would restore their dead condition. It can even be inferred that he expected the first person born from them to be that One because of his naming her *Khavah*.

Even though they had come to the end of the Garden of God, they had hope of a better day ahead and they exhibited faith that what the Lord promised would come about.

III. Covered in Something Sweet

Donuts aren't just delicious bread products. They're often filled with good stuff and even more common and delightful is what they're covered in. There are all kinds of sweetness and delights which cover a donut. Here are a couple things to think about.

****Donuts don't make themselves and they don't get themselves out of the hot oil.**

****Donuts don't cover themselves in delightfully delicious goodness. Instead, someone else does.**

****And donuts have to meet the end of their donut-ness if they are to be enjoyed.**

Charlie, what are you talking about?

²¹ **Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.**

Only **after** naming his wife *Khavah*, does God clothe them. The symbolism in this verse follows through the whole Bible, even to the last book. What would be the reason for waiting to do this until after Adam named His wife? Well, let's look at the significance of the verse and then why it happened afterwards.

There are three things involved in the clothing of Adam and Eve and they all point to the work of the coming Redeemer –

First, God initiated the action. If you remember, Adam and the woman made fig leaves to cover themselves, but God rejected this. They chose the material, the fashion, and everything else involved in it. Despite this, they were still ashamed and hid when the Lord came looking for them.

The covering couldn't conceal their deeds. In the same way, all false religions choose the mode of salvation and they initiate the actions which are expected to please God and bring about restoration. They are man-centered, working back to God. But this has been, is, and always will be rejected by God.

Instead, God alone chooses the course of action and He initiates it. He decides the covering and everything else associated with it.

Secondly, something had to die, an innocent animal – probably a lamb or a ram. God didn't kill Adam or the woman, but rather chose an innocent animal in their place. In essence, He transferred their guilt to the animal and the animal suffered for their misdeeds.

This symbolizes God's choice of the only sacrifice which is truly acceptable to Him, the death of Jesus Christ – the Lamb of God. Later in the Bible we see in the book of Hebrews that an animal cannot take away sins, but only temporarily cover them until the final Sacrifice – the Lord Jesus, who died in place of fallen man.

And the third thing about this verse – God completed the action. He personally clothed them. It was His gift and it was unmerited. His animal died, His hands prepared the covering, and His hands clothed them. In the book of Revelation, we read this –

“Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white.” Revelation 3:4, 5

Later we see that the white garments stand for the righteousness of the saints. It is an imputed righteousness, meaning that it was undeserved, but is given to them based on the work of Christ.

The entire mode of restoration to God for fallen man is summed up then in this one verse – “Also for Adam and his wife the LORD God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.”

And this is the same pattern used time and again by God throughout the Bible. When the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt, He didn’t tell them to get out of the mess themselves. Instead, He led them out, He guided them in the flight, and when they were facing destruction by the Red Sea, He didn’t tell them to work their way out of it, instead He said, “Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today.”

And why was it that He clothed them only after Adam named his wife *Khavah*, or “life.” It’s because this name was a demonstration of faith. They lost access to the Garden **when** they lacked faith and it was only **by** faith that they could ever hope to be restored to it.

And so after demonstrating faith, God provided the clothing. In the same way, Jesus gives us His robes of righteousness only after we demonstrate faith in Him.

The Bible – from Genesis to Revelation notes that salvation of the human soul is based on faith and on faith alone. When God speaks, we are expected to take His word at face value, and only after demonstrating faith in His promise are we granted His covering – the righteousness of Christ.

And this righteousness is so very much sweeter than the glazing of a donut. It is perfect and it is whiter and purer than anything we can yet imagine.

IV. Something Better Than Donuts is on the Other Side

The Hebrew word for “donut” is pronounced “soofganiyah” and is a combination of three words, “end,” “garden,” and “God.” Donuts are literally, “The end of the garden

of God.” Maybe it’s because they’re so tasty and delicious that someone thought, “We lost paradise, but this is the next best thing!”

22 Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil.

The man became like the Triune God – he now knows good and evil. Not only is he responsible for his actions, but now he knows the difference between them and he bears the greater responsibility because of the knowledge.

But there could even be a touch of sarcasm in what’s said here. As Adam and Eve stood humiliated in their rough garments, the Creator told us to reflect on what happened. “Look at what their knowledge has got them. Let’s hope that in the future they will make right choices and be obedient to the call of the Master.”

22 Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” —

23 therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.

God knew that if they were to live forever in the fallen state they were in with clothing that only symbolically covered their shame, they would become infinitely bent on wickedness and evil. And so in a demonstration of both mercy and grace, He took away their access to eternal life.

The Lord drove them out of the Garden “to till the ground from which he was taken.” The purpose of being in the Garden wasn’t to tend and keep it, but to worship and serve the Creator. Now they would have to tend and keep the ground in order to survive. Worshiping and serving the Creator would be a voluntary task based on faith and not by sight.

The life of the faithful since then, even to this day is centered on worshipping and serving the Creator, but our deeds are not done to justify us. They are deeds of faith in an unseen God and they are based on promises which lie ahead of us in a world which mocks and ridicules us for our hope. If you don’t believe that, just ask Tim Tebow.

24 So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

Man was driven from the presence of God and the beauty of the Garden. A heavenly guard was placed east of the garden to keep him out so that he couldn't get to the tree of life. But a guard implies that access is possible. The very fact that this verse is here proves that a return to Eden is not only available, but is expected.

The rest of the Bible, from this point on, details the long adventure of restoring that which was lost. The tabernacle in the wilderness foreshadows access to Eden. The Most Holy Place where God dwelt above the Ark of the Covenant was separated from the outside by a veil on which was sewn cherubim. This veil pointed east, toward the rising sun.

Later, the temple in Jerusalem also faced west with the veil and its cherubim facing east. On a spring morning in the year AD32 a Man died on a cross within sight of that temple. Unlike Adam, who died in his own sin, this man had never sinned. Being sinless, He was destined to live forever, but He voluntarily gave up His precious life to replace what Adam had lost.

The moment He died, the veil to the temple, which was a handbreadth thick, was rent in two from top to bottom by the Creator. His wrath at the sins of Adam and Adam's seed was satisfied by the death of His own Son, thus fulfilling every type and picture prefigured in the holy and sacred writings.

Access past the cherubim was restored and the Tree of Life was again made available to all those who, by faith and by faith alone, are willing to receive the work of God in Jesus Christ and to bow in submission to Him, calling on Him as Lord.

Donuts may be the end of the garden of God, but they require work and they go bad if they're not eaten quickly. Oh but God saw our attempt at a sweet and tasty existence and said, "I can do even better. You've come to the end of the Garden of God, but I myself will bring you back into it. Listen to the words of Isaiah –

I delight greatly in the LORD;
my soul rejoices in my God.
For he has clothed me with garments of salvation
and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the soil makes the sprout come up
and a garden causes seeds to grow,

so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness
and praise spring up before all nations. Isaiah 61:10, 11

Fill me with You Lord, I can fill myself with donuts... ~C.G.

The End of the Garden of God

Your sentence is pronounced
In pain you shall give birth
Your husband will rule over you
And he shall till the unforgiving earth

Your pains in childbirth will be increased
Indeed your labor will be most severe
But when from your womb the child is released
Again the joy in your heart will appear

And Adam, because you listened to your wife
And from the forbidden fruit you did eat
I shall give you a burdensome life
I've cursed the ground beneath your feet

For your crops you will till and the soil will resist
From it thorns and thistles will readily grow
But the things on which you need to subsist
Will take careful work with a plow and hoe

Someday you'll return to that ground
As a seed planted in the soil
And if by faith you live your life
There shall be a reward for your time of toil

Now I will clothe you with garments of skin
And send you out of this garden of delight
Cherubs will faithfully guard the way back in
Until My Son makes all things right

And when He does you can come back in

Not because of anything you have done
But His blood alone will cover your sin
Such is the wondrous work of my Son.

Hallelujah and Amen!

GENESIS 4:1-16 (EAST OF EDEN)

Introduction: In 1952, John Steinbeck wrote the novel *East of Eden*. It's a book which wanders through the subjects of depravity, beneficence, and love. It details the human struggle for acceptance, greatness, and freedom and it also relates man's capacity for self-destruction.

East of Eden ties these themes together with a heap of references and parallels to the Bible, but especially Genesis Chapter 4. In the book, Steinbeck uses quite a few allusions to Cain and Abel. An interesting one is his use of the first letters of Cain and Abel – C & A – for the names of the main characters – Charles and Adam, Caleb and Aron, Cathy Ames, etc.

Throughout the book, there are all kinds of fun parallels and contrasts to the biblical account, some of which are so well concealed that you really need to pay attention to every detail. For example one of the characters, Charles, gets a dark scar on his forehead while trying to move a boulder from his fields.

In Genesis 4, as we'll see today, Cain is given a mark by God. If we compare other marks on people in the Bible, it's a good assumption this mark was on Cain's forehead as well. In another account in the book, a different "C" character, Caleb, is described as having a more dark and sinister appearance than the character Aron – again, a parallel we'll see today.

If you pay attention, you can see all kinds of little details that Steinbeck placed carefully in the book for the person who is studious enough to find them.

Despite being considered a great book, East of Eden hasn't come close to the total number of sales of the Bible, nor has it lasted through thousands of years like the Genesis account has.

In the end, it is the Bible which is the source of understanding human history, human nature, and the only highway we can take to return to that wondrous spot we left so long ago. Everything else is, after all, a knock off of the original and was printed east of Eden, outside the Garden of Delight.

Text Verse: *“Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. 1 Samuel 15:22, 23*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Great Expectations and Dashed Hopes – Verses 1 & 2

¹ Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.”

² Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

In these two simple verses, we see the hope of a woman looking for her return to paradise and then her dejection when she realizes that she must have misunderstood what God had previously said.

In His curse of the serpent, God said this to him –

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” Genesis 3:15

Eve was standing right there and heard it all. She had heard that her Seed would be the One to undo the treacherous works of the devil. When she named her first son Cain, or *Qayin*, she exclaimed, “I have acquired a man with the Lord.”

The word “acquired” is from the Hebrew word *qaniti* and it’s where *Qayin* comes from. As we travel through the Bible, you’ll see this pattern occur innumerable times. A sentence will give the name of a person and that name will usually be based on another word within the same sentence.

There’s a quite a bit involved in what Eve said here. She said, “I have acquired a man **with** the Lord.” The Hebrew word for “with” in this sentence is rather important. It is translated from the word *eth*. However, another word could have been used – *im*. The difference between these two words is immense and it signifies what she was thinking.

In saying she had acquired a man “with” the Lord, she was taking credit for what she thought would be the delivery of her Deliverer.

Think of it this way, if I say I’m writing a book with a typewriter, then the typewriter isn’t really doing anything. Instead I am doing the work and the typewriter is a passive participant in the process.

However, if I say I’m writing a book with my brother Ethan, then he is an active participant in the process and deserves more credit than just supplying the ink to the paper. We both put in the effort and we both deserve whatever benefits come from it.

This is exactly what Eve was claiming when she said, *eth* instead of *im*. It’s me... “I’ve acquired a man and I did it with the LORD. We are working together to bring in the Deliverer.”

There’s a lesson in this and it carries throughout the rest of the Bible. In the book of Jonah we read this right at the end of Chapter 2 – “Salvation is of the LORD.”

In Ephesians, Paul explains it this way –For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that **not of yourselves**; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Eve’s idea that she had something, anything at all in fact, to do with her salvation was completely misguided. The Lord is the One who works out our salvation and He did it and does it in His own timing. There will be no boasting when we stand before God and proclaim what He alone has done for us.

As Mary wisely said when she was told she would bear the Savior of the world – “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.”

There was no boasting and no claim of participation in the effort. In her song of praise at what would occur, she places all the credit on God alone –

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

“My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

⁴⁸ For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. ⁴⁹ For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy *is* His name. –Luke 1:46-49

Mary is mentioned only a few more times in the Bible and no note of attention is drawn to her. After Acts Chapter 1, she is never mentioned again.

Going back to Eve, we see that immediately after naming Cain the very next words are... words of dejection and hopelessness –

“Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel.” -Genesis 4:2

The Bible doesn't tell us how old Cain was when Abel was born, but he was old enough for Eve to see that he wasn't the one to restore her to Eden. We can know this simply by the meaning of Abel's name. Abel, or *Hevel*, means “breath.” This is the kind of breath that you watch disappear on a cold day – a mere mist.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, this same word, *hevel*, is translated as “vanity” in the King James Version and “meaningless” in the NIV.

By the time Abel arrived, her outlook on life had gone from being the boastful woman who had a part of her own salvation to the unhappy surrender of a dejected soul that would spend the rest of her days in life under the sun... never returning to the bliss she had known in the Garden of Eden. All was vanity... disappearing vapor in a cold and meaningless world.

To finish out verse 2, we read that Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. In this thought, we can't find any fault in the choice of profession for either of them. Moses, David, and a host of other noted biblical figures tended flocks like Abel, but numerous others tilled the ground or worked in agriculture.

Boaz, the great and heroic figure of the book of Ruth was a tiller of the ground and the prophet Amos was a both a sheep breeder and a tender of the sycamore fig tree. What is apparent is that they worked with their hands just as Adam's sentence in the Garden of Eden indicated they would.

Both of these professions, tending flocks and harvesting grain, are used symbolically throughout the Bible to give us insights into the workings of God in general and the work of Jesus in particular. If you follow the agricultural themes closely, you will better understand the Creator's dealings with man.

II. The Offering of Faith – Verses 3-6

³ And in the process of time it came to pass that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.

⁴ Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the LORD respected Abel and his offering,

⁵ but He did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.

⁶ So the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen?

⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it.”

The opinions on why God respected one offering and didn't respect the other are varied and are highly argued over. I reviewed some of the most noted commentators in Christian history, and many of them give note to Jewish sources going back to antiquity and there is no happy resolution to be found there.

The only proper way to determine why Abel's offering was accepted is to let the Bible interpret the Bible and unfortunately, none of the commentaries I read fully do this.

I'll note the two prevalent views that have been given so you can see how people look at what happened. The first is inferred from the terminology given in the verse – that “Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD” whereas “Abel also brought of the **firstborn** of his flock and of their fat.”

The terminology of Abel's offering being the “firstborn of his flock” has led to the thought that Cain's offering wasn't of the firstfruits of the harvest and therefore wasn't the first and best. Because of this, Abel's offering was accepted – it was a good offering, and Cain's wasn't because it wasn't a good offering.

This isn't a bad interpretation, but it must be inferred. It also needs to infer that this was the time of the firstfruit of the harvest, something we can't know from the account. If it wasn't, then there's no way we can assign this particular guilt to Cain.

For all we know, they made the offering in the middle of the harvest season. All that it says is that he “brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the LORD.” Anything else must be inferred.

The second opinion about why one offering was accepted and the other wasn't is that Abel's offering was a blood sacrifice – one for atonement of sins and therefore it was accepted by God, but Cain's wasn't and therefore it was unacceptable.

To substantiate this view, it's noted that God killed an animal to clothe Adam and Eve and therefore the precedent was made at that time. Unfortunately, this reads much more into the text than is given, and when the Hebrew is reviewed it becomes a view which **cannot** be substantiated.

God provided the atonement, or covering, for Adam and Eve, but nothing more is told us in that account. To state that this was to be the precedent for future generations is again, inserting our personal thoughts into the text.

Secondly, in **both** offerings, the Hebrew word *minchah* is used. In the Law of Moses, a *minchah* is only a non-blood sacrifice, but the offering of both Cain and Abel are called *minchah*.

It would be inappropriate to insert the Law of Moses into a date prior to the Law of Moses. And even if we could, because of the term used, **both** are to be considered equally acceptable offerings – they are both *minchah*. Grain offerings are not only acceptable under the Mosaic Law, they are mandated. If God accepted them, and they have the same term applied here, then one being a blood sacrifice and one not being a blood sacrifice is irrelevant.

And finally, each offering came from the livelihood of the individual. There is no other direction given in the account or before it to indicate that they had to cross the lines of their profession in order to make an offering. If this was the case, then something important would have, again, been left out of the story.

But we can know, with one hundred percent certainty why one offering was accepted and the other wasn't. All we need to do is look elsewhere in the Bible to get the answer.

Of all the commentaries I read, only one came close to the correct reason. It noted that in the other options, something extra has to be read into the text. When we do that, then interpretation is left completely up to us and so the Bible means whatever we decide.

This is an important lesson to remember. Unless something is painfully evident from the text, we need to state opinion as opinion and not jump to conclusions without evidence.

This commentary was right, but even it added in thoughts which aren't supported by the verse.

In the end, the Bible in Hebrews 11 answers why one offering was accepted and the other wasn't – "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks."

The offering was an offering of **faith** and it is the faith which made the offering more excellent. If you understand this you will understand the importance of faith in both testaments of the Bible.

It wasn't faith that made Abel bring a **more excellent sacrifice**. Instead it was faith that **made the sacrifice more excellent**. If you can understand this difference, then you're on the highway to the most complete and friendly walk possible with your Creator.

The rest of the Bible, in both testaments, bears this out. It isn't the **type** of offering and it isn't the **amount** of offering that God respects. It is the **faith behind the offering**. Here are two examples and we'll move on –

- 1) With what shall I come before the LORD, *And* bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn *for* my transgression, The fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul? ⁸ He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:6-8

The sacrifices mentioned are exactly what the law asked for. In fact, in Isaiah 1, these mandatory sacrifices are said to make the LORD weary. "I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams And the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, Or of lambs or goats. ¹²'When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, To trample My courts?'"

Who required these sacrifices? God did! And yet he rejected them because they lacked faith.

God couldn't care diddly about the type or amount of offering if the heart of the individual isn't right with Him.

2) Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many *who were* rich put in much. ⁴² Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. ⁴³ So He called His disciples to *Himself* and said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; ⁴⁴ for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood.” Mark 12:41-44

The Lord looks for faith in His faithless creatures, so even a little bit will do.

III. A Faithless Life, verses 8-12

Cain’s offering was lacking faith and the Bible bears out that the rest of his existence was one of lacking faith as well. His faithless deeds testified against him then, and they still testify today – 6000 years later.

⁸ Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, “Where *is* Abel your brother?” He said, “I do not know. *Am* I my brother’s keeper?”

¹⁰ And He said, “What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground.

¹¹ So now you *are* cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand.

¹² When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth.”

Cain was the first recorded male born in human history and if you want to reflect on how ingrained sin is in each of us, just look to this account and you can tell. This first recorded son of Adam was a murderer and a liar as we’ve seen right here.

Another thing these verses tell us is the confirmation of the premise that all human beings are born into sin, born spiritually dead, and born separated from God. We have inherited Adam’s death in at least three ways – legally, potentially, and seminally. How can we tell? Because the Bible teaches that it is so.

First, the very fact that Cain murdered and lied indicates he inherited Adam’s sin.

Second, Abel died when he was struck by his brother, but the Bible doesn't record Abel having committed any sin. But the wages of sin is death. Therefore, if Abel died and didn't resurrect, then he must have inherited Adam's sin or the Bible has left us without needed information concerning some other sin Abel committed.

Third, both sons – Cain and Abel – presented offerings to the Lord and there is no record of a command for them to have done so. Such offerings can't be related to either a command or to human invention. These first recorded offerings occurred after the fall and take separation from God as a given. They were design specifically to satisfy the innate desire to restore man's separation from God.

In other words, the entire account shows us, without any hint of a doubt, that these sons of Adam were born in sin and were separated from God by their spiritually dead state.

After the rejection of his offering, Cain set the terrible pattern of sin which has infected many souls since then – He became defiant in that sin. Adam and Eve were truly scared about what they'd done and tried to cover things up. And eventually they even tried to pass the buck about their deed.

But Cain, when he was confronted showed the hardness of his heart and his defiant attitude by first lying – “I don't know” he said, and then getting snippy at God, “Am I my brother's keeper?”

The question is actually a good one for all of us and should be addressed. Are we our brother's keeper? The answer by necessity is “yes and no.” So there is a slight taste of truth in Cain's answer.

He wasn't responsible for his brother in the ultimate sense. Abel could go wandering off with the flocks and Cain was under no obligation to watch over him at the expense of his own fields and his own harvest.

And we aren't responsible in any complete sense for anyone else who has right reason and a healthy body. They are their own keepers and their own problem. The things they do are from their own free will. To limit that in another person is to subject them to slavery and to deplete the very thing that allows them to be human.

On the other hand, we are our brother's keeper. We're under the obligation to keep from harming others maliciously and even taking care of what we harm unintentionally.

We're also under the obligation to not hinder others from determining their own paths and avenues of happiness.

And finally, we are to take care of those who can't take care of themselves. Both testaments bear these things out and so yes we are our brother's keeper and no, we aren't our brother's keeper. Everything in context, and everything to the glory of God.

The response Cain gave though is a cunning attempt to hide any culpability at all in the matter of his brother. It is the response of a selfish, brutal, and hate-filled soul. Unless God called him to account, his murderous attitude would truly become the only standard on which he or anyone else could develop.

In essence, this first recorded sin after the fall would become standard operating procedure for all humanity. "God doesn't see and it's all up to me."

But the LORD knew and acted, and the world was diverted, at least for a time, from turning to complete and absolute wickedness. Unfortunately, as we'll see by Chapter 6, wickedness is an ongoing problem and needs to be dealt with more than once.

After his less than kind response to the LORD, Cain was told that the blood of Abel cried out from the ground. The word "blood" is the Hebrew word *dame* or "bloods." Does this mean that the blood itself cried out, or is it as early Jewish writings understand the verse – that his posterity was crying out – a posterity that actually existed or would have existed if they had been born.

This same type of terminology is given in 2 King 9 when speaking of the death of Naboth, who was killed for a field that King Ahab wanted. There it says, "Surely I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons,' says the LORD..."

This actually makes a lot of sense because when Abel sacrificed, it may have been for him and his family; just as we see in the book of Job. This is even more validated in a few verses by what Cain said after his sentence is pronounced – a sentence which he brought on by his own actions.

We finish with, "The LORD said to him, "So now you *are* cursed from the earth..." and "When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you. A fugitive and a vagabond you shall be on the earth." This is the sentence of Cain for his actions and his response shows how truly hard his heart was.

IV. East of Eden, verses 13-16

¹³ And Cain said to the LORD, “My punishment *is* greater than I can bear! ¹⁴ Surely You have driven me out this day from the face of the ground; I shall be hidden from Your face; I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it will happen *that* anyone who finds me will kill me.”

¹⁵ And the LORD said to him, “Therefore, whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.

¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.

Cain was worried about his own punishment, which was less than it deserved, when his younger brother, who was better than he, lay dead in the ground. He was left to aimlessly wander the earth as a vagabond and even the ground wouldn't yield for him. Whatever he sowed would fail.

The Bible makes a contrast between the sowing of unrighteousness with the harvesting of faith. Cain sowed the ground with the blood of his brother because he was jealous of Abel. But as we saw, it was by Abel's faith that his offering was acceptable to God.

Cain's lack of faith, instead of being converted through that lesson, led to the murder of his brother and that would result in no harvest at all, even for the duration of his life.

We have exactly this same thing going on in the world today. Christians are killed in huge numbers for their faith by the modern spiritual successors to Cain – the “peaceful” religion of Islam. But in the end, those faithful Christians will stand in judgment over those who kill the body but who can't harm the soul. The way of Cain leads to death and the faith of Abel will last for eternity.

After his sentencing, Cain cried out “I shall be hidden from Your face.” The greatest honor that can be bestowed on a person is to have the face of God shine on them. For this reason, the High Priestly Prayer not only includes it, but it states it twice –

“The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;

The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace.” Numbers 6:24-26

In 1 Peter 3:12 it says the reciprocal is true for evildoers – “For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil.”

And in 1 Corinthians it says that because of Jesus we are receiving the reflection of the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces.

Cain understood this in his limited way and cried out at the loss – a loss which he had brought upon himself. Even to this day, Cain is the biblical example of the wicked son who remains forever out of the favor of the Lord.

A couple minutes ago I said that it’s possible the “blood of Abel crying out from the ground” may actually be referring to his offspring. Cain’s next response may validate that. After noting that he was hidden from the Lord’s face, he says that “it will happen *that* anyone who finds me will kill me.”

Obviously anyone alive on earth during Cain’s life would be a rather close relative to Abel, but it’s most likely that one of his own sons would try to repay Cain for what he did. Cain’s remark then very well could be his fear of this.

Despite his murder, we see a great demonstration of the LORD’s mercy. In order to protect him, the Lord said “... whoever kills Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.” And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest anyone finding him should kill him.”

The mark placed on Cain is different from other marks placed on people later in the Bible. The word for “mark” is *owth*, which means a “sign.”

This was a visible mark and a sign to anyone who would attempt to kill him. If they did, they would receive vengeance seven-fold, or “completely.” There would be no mercy given for the murderer of this murderer.

Once the sentence was pronounced, we finish off with the verse that says he “went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.” The word *Nod* means “wandering” and this fulfills the sentence given by the Lord – that he would be a vagabond and a wanderer.

We can look to the Bible for modern parallels too. Cain went “East of Eden” the place where the presence of the Lord is. On the east side of Eden is where the cherubim were placed to guard access to the garden. But in a symbolic parallel, Jerusalem is where the Temple stood; the place where God dwelt.

Babylon, where Iraq is today, is east of Jerusalem and it is the city which is biblically in spiritual opposition to Jerusalem. When the Israelites disobeyed God, they were sent eastward, to Babylon for the duration of their punishment. Today, this same area is a stronghold of the muslim empire, and is the key force against both the restored people of Israel and the people of God in Christ.

On a greater level though, Babylon is the symbol of all false religions and spiritual opposition to the truth of the gospel. There is a spiritual battle – the battle of ungodly Cain and godly Abel – going on even to this day in the unseen world around us.

The sad story we read in Genesis 4 will only be completely behind us when Satan is finally cast into the Lake of Fire. Until then, human wickedness and the forces of the devil will continue to fight against the truth of God and His word, which are received by faith and demonstrated in offerings of faith by the people of God.

Life East of Eden

Eve was elated – a son to undo this mess
Look at the deed that I have done!!!
It was me who did it... and the LORD too, I guess
With the Lord I have acquired a son

Life will be great and life will be fun
Back to life under the heavens, no more life under the sun

“Oh no” cried Eve, another boy to feed, life is just a breath
I guess I’m stuck here under the sun
His name is Abel, he’s no conquer of death
It’s all so meaningless... my hopes are undone

I’m Cain and from my tilling I’ll give God a slice
I’m going to buy His favor with my stuff
My name is Abel and I tend the flocks, they are so nice
But even the choicest and the best is not enough

I'm so pleased with your offering of faith young Abel
I will bless you with abundance at your table

But Cain what you've given wasn't from your heart
I think you'd better go and make a brand new start

Cain murdered his brother and was cursed from the earth
And set the example for an unrighteous soul
Instead of eternal hope from a new birth
His life ended under the devil's control

Cain spent his years as a vagabond in the land
Wandering aimlessly and without a hope
Instead of fruits and grains, he was left with barren sand
All because Cain was a faithless dope

But God had mercy even on that murderous wretch
He gave him a mark to protect his life
As he wandered for a very long stretch
A man cursed from the earth, a man of strife

Will you be like Cain and follow the devil?
Losing your soul, your most valuable part
Or like Abel will you be on the level
And in Jesus Christ, make a brand new start

Come to fountain and drink waters of life
Eat of the manna offered freely to all
Set aside your life of toil and strife
On the name of Jesus it's time for you to call

Just so you know before I finish, Cain was given a mark to protect his earthly life, but for those who call on Jesus, the last chapter of the Bible says we too will have a mark. This mark will be on our foreheads and it will be the very name of God – an eternal reminder that we have been purchased by the most precious substance in the universe – the blood of Jesus Christ.

And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. ⁴ They shall see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads. Revelation 22:3, 4

Next week we'll look at Genesis 4:17-26 – The line of Cain. Take a couple minutes tonight and read those verses and meditate on them throughout the week.

GENESIS 4:17-26 (THE LINE OF CAIN)

Introduction: Today, we'll look over the line of Cain which encompasses almost the entire second half of Chapter 4 of Genesis. While we're here, we should probably answer the age old question "Where did Cain get his wife?" If you ever saw the movie Inherit the Wind with Spencer Tracey, you know this question was brought up there. The movie is a take on the Scopes Monkey Trial. If you've never seen it, don't bother.

It's a pathetic attempt to make Christians looked stupid, bigoted, and close-minded. From the very first frames of the movie where the people are signing "Give me that old time religion – it's good enough for me..." all the way through to the end, it's an all out attack on Christianity.

During the trial, the defense attorney, played by Spencer Tracey, gets the prosecutor – a guy named Brady – on the stand. One commentary on the movie says, "Brady's confidence in his biblical knowledge is so great that he welcomes this challenge, but he becomes flustered under Drummond's cross-examination, unable to explain certain apparent contradictions, until Drummond hammers home his point -- that Cates, like any other man, demands the right to think for himself."

The questions that "fluster" Brady include the question, "Where did Cain get his wife." When he's asked this, he incompetently gasps and sweats at the immense difficulty of what he's been presented – as if it's too deep for the human mind to comprehend. The guy is portrayed as a completely bumbling, arrogant, close-minded, and self-deluded person.

And people ever since then have tried to appear smart by asking a this same question of Bible teachers – as if the movie set a precedent and that no one has been able to answer to since then.

In fact, whether you believe in evolution or creation, you come up with exactly the same problem. The only difference is that evolution can't properly identify the solution. Any evolutionary answer would lead to devolution, not further evolution.

The biblical answer is found in chapter 5 of Genesis – "And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot *a son* in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.⁴ After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and

daughters. ⁵ So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.”

We have no idea if Cain was the firstborn child of Adam or not and in fact some scholars believe the terminology at Cain’s birth indicates girls were born first.

Here’s what Albert Barnes says about it –

“If she had daughters before, and saw them growing up to maturity, this would explain her expectation, and at the same time give a new significance and emphasis to her exclamation, “I have gained a man (heretofore only women) from Yahweh.”

So girls could have been born first. No problem there...

And we have no idea if there were girls between Cain and Abel too. One thing we are sure of though is that Adam “had sons and daughters” besides them. In 930 years, he could have had a bunch. If there were twins, triplets, or quadruplets, there could have been a heap of them. Poor Eve!

And each of these children could have lots of children during those 930 years. By the time Adam died, there potentially could have been an immense population on the earth. There is no restriction levied on marrying brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, or anything else until the time of the Law of Moses.

In fact, Abraham, who was only 430 years before the law and about 1950 years after creation, married his own half sister. No negative comment is made on that and it was accepted as normal. The gene pool back then would have been whoppingly strong and intermarrying like this wouldn’t be any problem at all.

The great unanswerable question of “Where did Cain get his wife?” isn’t unanswerable at all. He got her from the daughters of Adam his father. Take that Spencer Tracey.

Text Verse: *Blessed be the name of the LORD
From this time forth and forevermore!
From the rising of the sun to its going down
The LORD’s name is to be praised. Psalm 113:2, 3*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Descent into Wickedness

¹⁷And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son—Enoch.

¹⁸To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methushael, and Methushael begot Lamech.

Although we don't see it yet, the genealogy we just read will lead to a division between the godly line of Seth and the wicked line of Cain. The godly line remains in the presence of the Lord and his plans and purposes are centered on the Creator, but eventually even this godly line corrupts to the point where only one man and his family would be saved in order to repopulate the world.

The line of wickedness, even from the beginning, is removed from the presence of the Lord – just as Cain was, and it is centered on worldly things and the love of those things. These things aren't explicitly stated, but they are to be inferred by the structure of the verses and their placement in the overall Genesis account, along with comments made later in the Bible.

In the last sermon we read – “Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden.” Believe it or not, this same area of the world, even 6000 years later is where the main opposition to God is and where the forces of evil are lined up against what is right and godly.

After Cain found his supposedly unfindable wife, she “conceived and bore Enoch. And he built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son – Enoch.”

The word used for “city” here is the word *Ir*. This is specifically a city with walls constructed as a defense or a barricade. The walls themselves are the city. Everything inside the walls was secondary to the protection they provided.

Cain had separated himself from anyone who could harm him and he had likewise separated himself from anything that could help him as well. In effect, he had shut himself off from the very presence of the Lord in his effort to secure himself. We can see a parallel in what occurred when the Chinese built their great wall.

The name of Cain's son *Enoch* means “dedicated,” but it also can have the meaning of “teaching.” In the context though, it's probable that Cain was thinking of dedication. His

son was born sometime around when he built his fortress city and he named or “dedicated” the city with the same name as his son.

He did this instead of naming it after himself. The cursed name of Cain wouldn’t have been an ideal name for starting out on a new life and so he deferred to the dedication of his son and his home. After Cain and Enoch the Bible records 4 more in this line –

¹⁸To Enoch was born Irad; and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methushael, and Methushael begot Lamech.

We should note that 2 of the names of Cain’s descendants are the same names as the descendants of Seth, the son who replaced Abel. These are Enoch and Lamech. But just as there are good people and bad people with the same names now, it was also the case then.

Just as there is a good Judas (or Jude) who wrote the 65th book of the Bible, there is also a corrupt and wicked Judas who was, as the Bible describes him the “son of perdition” – a term applied only one other time – to the anti-Christ.

When we get to chapter five, we’ll read the genealogy of Adam through Seth and down to Noah. But unlike that genealogy, this one is strikingly short. It lacks any commentary and it lacks any other ancestral information. Yes, these people existed, but their lives are unimportant to the greater plan of redemption. Instead, they are souls remembered without delight.

One thing we should ask about our own selves is, “How will we be remembered?” The Bible is written and there isn’t any room for details concerning us there, but even the Old Testament tells us that our lives won’t go unrecorded. In the last book of the Old Testament, Malachi relates to us what it is to be remembered by God for a faithful life –

“Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard *them*; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name. ¹⁷“They shall be Mine,” says the LORD of hosts, “On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them As a man spares his own son who serves him.” ¹⁸ Then you shall again discern Between the righteous and the wicked, Between one who serves God And one who does not serve Him.”-Malachi 3:16-18

While we're pondering the life of Cain and his generations that were swept away in the flood, we should take to heart that God remembers those who meditate on His name.

The only thing else that I can give you of any substance from the names of Cain's descendants is that two of them include the suffix "El" – Mehujael and Methushael. There was, even in the line of Cain, a remembrance or knowledge of God and it was denoted in these two names. *Mehujael* means "smitten by God" and *Methushael* means "who is of God."

For whatever its worth, man – even man who lives apart from God – has a sense and a knowledge of Him. Eventually though, even this disappears from thought as we move toward a humanistic or idol-centered approach to life.

In modern society, we're moving in that same direction as they did, paying lip service to the name of God but denying His character and His sovereign authority.

II. The Worldly Man

The Bible contrasts groups of people in various ways. Often what is commented on as notable, such as Abraham and the patriarchs living in tents is notable for the ideals they held in that context. There is nothing inherently wrong with living in cities.

In other words, here's what it says about them from Hebrews 11:8-10:

⁸ By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. ⁹ By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; ¹⁰ for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God."

These men were told that they would live as strangers in the land and that only later their descendants would inherit that land. In obedience to this, they continued living in tents. If they were never to possess the land and yet they hoped for a city with foundations, then it's obvious that what they hoped for was something eternal, not to be grasped in this life.

These verses are descriptive in nature. In other words they only describe what a situation was and why it was notable. They don't prescribe anything for us, such as living in tents.

Instead, they provide a moral lesson that what's important is not where we live, but how we conduct our lives. So please don't go selling your houses to buy a tent. Paul himself was a tentmaker, but that doesn't mean anything beyond the fact that he made tents.

It's important to know this and so I'm going to divert for just a minute and give a few rules for you to follow when you study your Bible. In fact, I'll give you five things to remember.

First, "does this merely describe something – is it descriptive." Second, "does this actually prescribe something – is it prescriptive." And lastly, "**what is the context?**"

If you can remember those five things, your understanding of whatever you're reading will be greatly enhanced. "But Charlie, you only gave us three things to think about. Have you been drinking too much mango juice again?"

The answer is that I gave you five things to think about and you didn't pay attention.

Is it descriptive, is it prescriptive, and what is the context? See, five things. I just didn't elaborate on the five points – descriptive, prescriptive and context, context, context. Never take a verse or a passage out of context.

Under these main points are some great things to ask yourself as you're reading –

- How does this point to Jesus?
- How does this relate to the overall picture of redemption? And,
- If the passage isn't prescriptive or descriptive, then what is it telling me? For example, how do I view the following passage –

⁹ Two *are* better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. ¹⁰ For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him *who is* alone when he falls, For *he has* no one to help him up. ¹¹ Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm *alone*? ¹² Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.
-Ecc 4:9-12

This isn't especially descriptive and this isn't especially prescriptive. How do I term what I just read? In this passage from Ecclesiastes, it is giving me wisdom. It's a general guide for living and it has a point for me to think on, and it includes a metaphor.

There are thousands of other things to know, and studying the Bible is a lifelong adventure. In addition to wisdom, some other types of formats used in the Bible are narratives, poetry, legal renderings, historical records, genealogies, prophetic utterances, apocalyptic writings, biographical entries, personal letters, drama, and so on. We have to understand all of these and properly apply them in context or we are going to get off on useless tangents. So pay attention as you read your Bible.

One more thing though – you can't apply these interpretation methods for reading your Bible unless you... unless you... unless you actually read your Bible.

So let's go on with the line of Cain and from what read in the next verse, you'll probably understand why I just gave you the previous lesson in Bible interpretation –

¹⁹ Then Lamech took for himself two wives: the name of one was Adah, and the name of the second was Zillah.

This is the first recorded case of polygamy in the Bible and every Bible commentary that I've read denounces it as unnatural and wicked. But the Bible doesn't make any such commentary, **ever**, and therefore every thing beyond the account is the personal opinion of the scholar and is left without biblical support.

The only thing we have thus far in the Bible to set the pattern for physical relationships is what it says in chapter 2 verse 24 – “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

I cannot tell you how many times I've heard people say, the Bible says marriage is between a man and a woman... “one man and one woman.” Do you know it never says that? Never.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul quotes the same verse, “the two shall become one flesh” to say that a man who lies with a prostitute is one with her. If he sleeps with fifty, they would still be “one flesh.”

Again, if we were to take that he shall “be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” as prescriptive, then we would have to say that the Bible **mandates** marriage for

every person. But it doesn't. In the same way, just because it says "joined to his wife" in no way negates more than one wife.

In the Law of Moses allowances are made for men with multiple wives and how they are to be handled. Throughout the Old Testament men had numerous wives. King Solomon had 700 and 300 concubines. David, the beloved of the Lord had lots of wives and, the Lord gave him many of them. In 2 Samuel 12:8, it says –

"I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if *that had been* too little, I also would have given you much more!"

And in the New Testament, Paul restricts only elders and deacons of a church to a single-wife relationship. In other words, he makes no other commentary on the matter for others which, by default, implicitly allows it.

Don't get me wrong here, I'm only making a point about how to interpret the Bible, I'm not condoning polygamy, but remember our short lesson on Bible study. Is it prescriptive, is it descriptive, and context, context, context. When taken as a whole, in the context of the Bible, what Lamech has done by taking two wives is not biblically unacceptable.

One more thing we need to do when evaluating the Bible may be the most important rule after evaluating the context, and it very well may be as important – We need to set aside our biases, likes, and dislikes, and our presuppositions. We need to come to the text as a blank slate and determine what the Lord is trying to tell us.

In the case of Lamech, it isn't telling us at all about the unsoundness of polygamy. In fact, we have no idea who else had more than one wife at that time. The Bible is completely silent on the matter. What it does tell is that his eyes were set on pleasure and worldly things.

Anyone looking to have two wives is looking at physical pleasure more than reasonable living. I have one and that is far, far more than reasonable.

The importance of mentioning the wives is based on their names, not specifically on them both being his wives. How do we know this? Because their names are mentioned – Adah and Zillah.

Throughout the Bible, when a name is mentioned, it's because it's relevant to the story. Only one daughter of Israel is mentioned by name and yet Genesis 45 twice mentions his "daughters," meaning he had more than one. His daughter Dinah is mentioned by name because she is relevant to the story.

The importance of these two women surrounds the meaning of their names as well as who their sons are and what they did. Their sons brought about the beginnings of a stable civilization that became a complete culture, even as we know one today.

²⁰ And Adah bore Jabal. He was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.

²¹ His brother's name *was* Jubal. He was the father of all those who play the harp and flute.

²² And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain *was* Naamah.

In the birth of sons to these two women, both wives of Lamech, we have every aspect of a material civilization. We have both the pastoral life for feeding people, we have music and culture, and we have industrialization.

Our modern thinking says the Iron Age occurred after the Bronze Age. The Early Iron Age began, according to archeologists, about 1200BC, but the Bible says that man was working with iron even before the flood. I'd never even considered this until a Bible study when Janice Alley pointed it out to me.

Early man wasn't the Neolithic Neanderthal that modern science makes them out to be. Instead, they were a highly civilized society which had formed a noteworthy culture.

Adah had a son named Jabal who is the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock. His brother was Jubal who was the first of those who play the harp and the flute. The other wife of Lamech was named Zillah and she had a son named Tubal-Cain who was an instructor in bronze and iron. Finally in these verses it says that Tubal-Cain had a sister named Naamah.

Out of the many people who surely came from Cain, these are the only ones given by name – and of them all, the one that may seem most puzzling is Naamah who is mentioned by name, but who isn't recorded as having done anything else; her name means *loveliness*.

What we can determine is that the people mentioned in the line of Cain after Enoch – Irad, Mehujael, and Methushael – each of these is intended to lead us to these names in these few verses – Lamech, Adah, Zillah, Jabal, Jubal, Tubal-Cain, and Naamah.

As I said, Mehujael and Methushael maintain the name of God even if it is only the unknown God, El, and not the specific LORD. After them the names go down a different path. Here are the translations: *Adah* means “pleasure;” *Zillah* means to “shadow” or “hide;” *Lamech* means “captive;” *Jabal* means “stream of water;” *Jubal* means “river;” *Tubal-Cain* means “you will be brought of Cain;” and *Naamah* means “loveliness.”

These names are innocuous by themselves, but taken together, they show a worldly outlook. The name Naamah in particular will only come to full meaning when we get to Genesis 6 and God’s intent to destroy the world by flood.

The Scofield reference notes say: This “...civilization may have been as splendid as that of Greece or Rome, but the divine judgment is according to the moral state, not the material.”

The line of Cain and their names reflect people in love with the world rather than God. This is the lesson that we need to take away from these verses and I can’t think of anything more appropriate for us to consider in the world today.

We have music at our fingertips, every convenience we could ever desire, and our eyes can gaze on the physical attractiveness of the opposite sex in ways that weren’t even imagined just a few short years ago. All of these things follow the pattern of the line of Cain.

The Jewish historian Josephus wrote about the line of Cain and tells us that they were exceedingly wicked, intolerable in war, and vehement in robberies. He says that they acted unjustly and were quick to murder.

We’ll see in Chapter 6 how these things brought the world to judgment and unless things turn around soon, which doesn’t seem likely, we’re going to be heading into the time of tribulation prophesied throughout the Bible. The Day of the Lord is at hand.

III. The Sins of the Father

²³ Then Lamech said to his wives: “Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech! For I have killed a man for wounding me, Even a young man for hurting me

²⁴ If Cain shall be avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”

Cain was a murderer and it’s easy to see that children normally follow the pattern of life they see in their parents. There are always exceptions, but the line of Cain isn’t one of them.

These two verses which make up Lamech’s ode form what is considered perfect Hebrew styled poetry. It is broken up into pairs of lines and each contains parallelism, or the repetition of a thought. Nothing else is recorded like it earlier in the Bible and therefore it is certainly the oldest poem ever recorded.

Now we can add poetry to the magnificent list of achievements of Cain’s descendents. However, unlike much of the poetry recorded elsewhere in the Bible which talk about a relationship with God, internal struggles of sin, and other higher thoughts, this poem shows us the worldly outlook of Lamech.

He addresses his two wives. He demands their attention. He took the life of someone who had only wounded him. He implicitly boasts of his strength because he was older than the person he killed. And he justifies himself by claiming he would be avenged.

True to the Bible’s symmetry, there’s a pattern between this murder and the destruction of Babylon in Revelation 19:2 –

“For true and righteous *are* His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants *shed* by her.”

Vengeance is marked out for Cain and Lamech claims the right to it for shedding blood in the 4th chapter of the Bible. This was in the land east of Eden. And in the 4th chapter from the end of the Bible, God avenges the blood of the saints shed by Babylon, the land east of God’s land, Israel. What the devil and his seed work in iniquity, God judges and triumphs over in righteousness.

IV. The Name of the LORD

In our text verse today, I read from the psalms –

“Blessed be the name of the LORD From this time forth and forevermore! From the rising of the sun to its going down The LORD’s name *is* to be praised.”

-Psalm 113:2, 3

Quoting this seems to have little to do with the line of Cain. However, the last verses of Chapter 4 return to the godly line of Adam through Seth and the notion that there is still hope in the world and that the Lord is still in control of the ages –

²⁵ And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, “For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.”

After the diversion into the line of Cain, the Bible returns in this verse to the hope of the woman and for all godly people since her. Some time after the death of Abel, Eve has another son. Instead of boastfully claiming that she had acquired a man with the help of the LORD (or Jehovah), she calmly acknowledges that God (or Elohim) has appointed another son for her.

His name Seth means “appointed” and his selection was necessitated because of the death of Abel. As the Bible notes though, Seth was appointed not by Eve, but by God. God is the one who did the selection and chose the person.

She said, he is “instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.” If you see what’s going on, Eve is saying that God – the Creator, has replaced what human wickedness took away. It is a veiled reference to the work of Christ who would overrule the wickedness of the devil.

And she uses the term *zera* or “seed” for the child. Unlike Cain, she knew that the promised seed of the woman that would crush the serpent’s head would come through Seth.

Even in this early chapter of Genesis, we can see the concept of divine election being hinted at. The work is from God, the work is of God, and the work is at God’s prerogative. Man’s choices and works are left out of the equation. Seth is God’s son by election.

Seth's selection by God and that fact that he is God's son by election needs to be remembered because it will clear up some very difficult and misunderstood issues in Chapter 6.

²⁶ And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then *men* began to call on the name of the LORD.

Here we are at the last verse of chapter 4. A son of the godly line of the Messiah has been born and the line continues on through one of his own sons, Enosh, which means "man" in the mortal sense; someone who can die, or a miserable man. I'm telling you this in hopes that you'll pay attention to these names as they have an amazing significance in the sermon ahead...You may be surprised.

At the time of Enosh's birth it says that men "began to call on the name of the LORD." This then is given in direct contrast to the preceding verses of Cain's line which was following worldly pursuit – The name of the LORD is never mentioned in that account.

Everything about them is centered on what they did and shows their worldly outlook, but the line of Seth is contrasted. To call on the name of the LORD is to invoke His name in worship, praise, thanksgiving, and prayer.

And who is this veiled Lord, or Jehovah, of the Old Testament? Paul tells us in the book of Philippians –

⁹ Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
Philippians 2:9-11

The Line of Cain

Cain wandered off and built a fortified town
He named it Enoch after his own son
After Enoch, came more men of worldly renown
They knew how to work and also how to have fun

Lamech, the seventh man down that wicked line
Had two wives to keep him happy all the time

For Mr. Lamech they bore three sons and a girl
Who became a settled culture in the eastern land
Jabal had livestock and Jubal gave music a whirl
Tubal-Cain worked in metals and his sister's looks were grand

Lamech wrote a poem to comfort his two wives
After he killed a young man for merely wounding him
This is the first poem ever written in human's lives
And it shows the wicked effects of the ungodly's sin

"If Cain is avenged sevenfold then me even more"
But what about the poor guy lying dead at your door

If this were the way things would always be
Then let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die
But God had something else going on, you see
He had another line of godly men, so don't you cry

God replaced Abel, whom Cain slew in the field
With another son, by the name of Seth
Through this son the Holy Seed would yield
The One to conquer evil and triumph over death

Again this godly line brought a son named Enosh
And more would follow until would come the King
By His precious blood all men could wash
And be cleansed from sin and every wicked thing

When men called on the name Jehovah the eternal Lord
They were only looking forward to that great King
And now we call on Jesus the bearer of the sword
The fullness of time has come and to His name we do sing

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus – the great and awesome Rock
The One who reveals to us the Father we cannot see
And now we wait as the moments tick and tock
Until He returns for His church and blissful eternity
Until that time of renewal we earnestly wait
Yes until the time we pass through heaven's pearly gate

When we behold the glory of the King
And to the praise of Jesus we shall ever sing
Hallelujah and Amen...

For next week please read Genesis 5:1-32 (The Generations of Adam)

GENESIS 5:1-32 (THE GENERATIONS OF ADAM)

Introduction: I suppose most of you have heard of the rapture. Has anyone here not heard of it? I would guess that some of you know without even looking that the rapture is described in 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4, and Revelation 4:1. I bet fewer of you know that the rapture is actually prefigured several times in the Old Testament. One of those times is in Chapter 5 of the book of Genesis, right in a line of names and ages of some of Adam's descendants.

After the fall and the record of Abel and Cain, the first nine generations of Adam are recorded in Genesis 5 and end with the 10th generation – that of Noah. The flood of Noah came in the year 1656 Anno Mundi and other than Genesis 1-5, nothing is recorded for that entire period of time.

Believe it or not though, there could have been a billion or more people alive by the time of the flood. That's actually a pretty sad commentary on how things went. Out of maybe 1 billion or more people we have a record of only 27 people given by name. All the rest were lost in the ever consuming flame of time.

We looked at the line of Cain in Genesis 4, and in Genesis 5 we have the line of Seth, the godly line which will eventually lead to the Messiah. These people were selected by God and for His reasons alone and very little is said about them, but today we'll look for some hints as to who they were and what they mean in the overall picture of the Bible concerning the coming Christ.

Text Verse: *And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:*

"I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." 2 Corinthians 6:16

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. In the Image of God

¹ This is the book of the genealogy of Adam. In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God.

The genealogy, or *toledot*, of Adam. One of the most interesting studies I've ever done is on this word *toledot* or "generations." The first time the word is used is in Genesis 2:4 where it says "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,..."

The word *toledot* in Genesis 2:4 is speaking of man while in the Garden of Eden. Its spelling is tav, vav dalet, lamed, vav, tav. In other words, there are 2 vavs in the spelling. The next time the word is used is here in Genesis 5:1, after the fall of man, and its spelled with only one vav. The second vav fell out of the word just as man fell in the garden.

Vav is the sixth letter of the Hebrew aleph-bet and it is pictured by a tent peg and the number 6 in the Bible represents "man" such as man being created on the 6th day. So you see "fallen man" is what's being relayed here.

The word *toledot* is used 39 times throughout the Old Testament at various times when referring to different groups of people, but it is never spelled with two vavs again until the end of the book of Ruth. In every occurrence between Genesis and Ruth one or both of the vavs is missing. So why is it that not until the end of Ruth that it's spelled with two vavs again?

The reason is that in Ruth, the lineage of King David is given. Up until that time, God was working through various people and had made various covenants with them. These were to Noah, Abraham, and Moses. The final covenant was to David.

At this time, the second vav was reintroduced to the word *toledot* to indicate that the restoration of fallen man would come through the line of David and this was the final peg in the tent of God's covenants before the coming Christ.

As I mentioned, there are 39 *toledots* in the Bible which correlates to the 39 books of the Old Testament.

God never forgets the work of His hands and He will never forget you. If you are born again through Christ, you are no longer fallen, but complete and alive forevermore. The likeness of God that was given at the creation was lost, but that likeness is restored in us when we call on Jesus as our Savior.

That's what these little hidden things in the Bible are telling us. Paul explains this mystery in 1 Corinthians 15:48-49 –

“As was the earthly man (that’s the fallen man, the man without the vav), so are those who are of the earth (there is something missing); and as is the man from heaven (full and complete), so also are those who are of heaven.⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man (fallen and earthly), so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven (restored and complete).”

I don’t know if that excites you, but to me it is sweeter than honey to my taste.

² He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them Mankind in the day they were created.

This verse and the one before are echoes, if you remember, from the creation account and have been repeated here to remind us of our fallen state. We were created in original perfection, but the death and trials which came about at the fall were caused by our own violation of God’s command and didn’t happen accidentally.

Man *wasn’t* – and then he was. Adam had no earthly parents, but He was created by God on the sixth day and with his woman they were blessed by God. Because they were created in God’s image they had no natural or moral evil. These came about at the fall.

The next verses will give a record of the names, years, and deaths of the sons of Adam, and so before those are given, we’re reminded of the way things originally were in order to show us the justice and sovereignty of God in His dealings with man.

³ And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot *a son* in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

⁴ After he begot Seth, the days of Adam were eight hundred years; and he had sons and daughters.

⁵ So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.

These three verses tell us lots of things. It begins the record of the age of the earth. Adam was created on the 6th day which is a literal day. In other words, the world was 6 days old when Adam was created. His son Seth is born at his 130th year and as we follow the years in the Bible we can determine the age of the world.

During those 130 years, Adam had Cain, Abel, and at least one daughter. We know this because Cain had a wife. It’s likely that they had lots more children by the time Seth came around, but Seth is the focus of the story – no one else bears on the coming Christ.

These verses also tell us that Adam had a son in his own image. In other words, the son born to Adam is a fallen man. We didn't revert back to a sinless state, but instead we bear the fallen image of Adam. There is no such thing as the inner divine spark which other religions speak of. We are earthly, we are mortal, and we are sold under sin – which means we are obliged to die.

This fallen state then is in each human since Adam. We know this from these three verses. We can also tell that all Adam's sons are destined to die just as Adam died. He died in the 930th year of his life and in the 930th year from creation.

⁶ Seth lived one hundred and five years, and begot Enosh.

⁷ After he begot Enosh, Seth lived eight hundred and seven years, and had sons and daughters.

⁸ So all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years; and he died.

⁹ Enosh lived ninety years, and begot Cainan.

¹⁰ After he begot Cainan, Enosh lived eight hundred and fifteen years, and had sons and daughters.

¹¹ So all the days of Enosh were nine hundred and five years; and he died.

¹² Cainan lived seventy years, and begot Mahalalel.

¹³ After he begot Mahalalel, Cainan lived eight hundred and forty years, and had sons and daughters.

¹⁴ So all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years; and he died.

¹⁵ Mahalalel lived sixty-five years, and begot Jared.

¹⁶ After he begot Jared, Mahalalel lived eight hundred and thirty years, and had sons and daughters.

¹⁷ So all the days of Mahalalel were eight hundred and ninety-five years; and he died.

We just read through 12 verses. This is more combined verses at one time than at any point since we started our tour of Genesis. If we keep up this pace, we can be done with Revelation Chapter 22 verse 21 by the year 2097. Be here each week until then.

Here are a few facts about these men –

Seth died 1042

Enosh 235/1140

Cainan 325/1235

Mahalalel 395/1290

Jared born 460

Appointed

Mortal

Possession

Praise of God

Going Down

The age old skepticism about the accuracy of the Bible finds no greater place to begin than right in these verses. Who lives to 900 years of age? It's simply incredible for us to imagine. And yet we can't insert our current situation into what it might have been like at some other time.

The heaviest reptiles on earth, Komodo Dragons, only get to be about 300 pounds now. The longest – the Australian Saltwater Crocodiles – get to be about 23 feet long. If we used Bible skeptic's logic about the age of man in the same way as we do about dinosaurs then we'd never believe they existed.

But we have all the assurance of the archaeological record to support dinosaurs that were a little bit bigger than reptiles now. The *Bruhathkayosaurus* which lived in the area of Tamil Nadu, India grew to 145 feet in length and weighed 220 tons. Yes, that is 440,000 pounds – the weight of a 747. If we had no bones to prove this, it would be far more incomprehensible than a man living to 900 years of age.

The only difference is that age doesn't leave any archaeological footprint, like dinosaur bones. But man does leave his stories in writing. This chapter of Genesis mentions the book of the genealogy of Adam. The Hebrew term *sepher* indicates that this written document served as a basis for the writings of Moses.

There really is no problem with the long lives recorded here. If reptiles grew as big as they did, then the world was obviously a completely different ecosystem before the flood. The world was probably smaller in size which led to higher atmospheric pressure.

Plus there was a canopy known as a *raqia* above the earth which was probably crystalline in nature. This would have kept out any harmful radiation. All things considered and taken in context, there is no reason at all to dismiss the accounts and every reason to believe them. Yes men lived 900 years.

It's even more certain that the account is true because the ages of men after the flood continued to get progressively shorter as the generations came and went. This occurred right up until the average lifespan of people today which has remained basically the same ever since.

The Jewish historian Josephus says this about the sons of Adam from Seth to Noah at the time of the flood –

“But let no one, upon comparing the lives of the ancients with our lives, and with the few years which we now live, think that what we have said of them is false; or make the shortness of our lives at present an argument, ...”

Josephus claims that the astronomical calculations and discoveries used at his time came from men who lived long enough to accurately understand the greater cycles of the universe. If this is true, then the highly advanced star charts, such as the Mayans used can be attributed to the careful work of these pre-flood people.

Whether any of this is true or not is hard to say, but the Bible does bear out right in Genesis 1 that the stars and other heavenly lights are meant for our knowledge in “signs and seasons.”

II. Walking with God

¹⁸ Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begot Enoch.

¹⁹ After he begot Enoch, Jared lived eight hundred years, and had sons and daughters.

²⁰ So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; and he died.

²¹ Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah.

²² After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters.

²³ So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years.

²⁴ And Enoch walked with God; and he *was not*, for God took him.

Jared died 1422

Going Down

Enoch 622/translated 987

Teaching

Methuselah born 687

His death shall bring (Man of the dart)

Of the ten men mentioned from Adam to Noah, only four have any particular information beyond their birth, years of life, and age at death. These four are Adam, Enoch, Lamech, and Noah. In the case of Enoch, this almost strange verse is all we have, “And Enoch walked with God; and he *was not*, for God took him.”

If this is all we had about the life of Enoch, we’d certainly be left scratching our heads and wondering what this meant. But fortunately, this particular person named Enoch is mentioned 10 times in the Bible.

He’s mentioned 6 times here in Genesis 5 and he’s mentioned in 1 Chronicles in the historical records of man from Adam all the way through to the Jewish society of the

day. He's also mentioned in Luke 3 in the genealogy of Jesus. And there are two more times he's mentioned – once in Hebrews and once in Jude.

⁵ By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, *“and was not found, because God had taken him”*; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. ⁶ But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” Hebrews 11:5, 6

Here in Hebrews we learn details about Enoch that were withheld from the Old Testament. Enoch was “taken away.” He was translated from the earthly realm directly to the heavenly realm without seeing death. This makes Enoch one of only two people who never died, the other being Elijah the prophet.

Both of these men are even now serving the Lord and I believe it is they who have appeared many times in Bible history, such as in Daniel chapter 12, Acts chapter 1, and elsewhere. I personally believe they will return again during the tribulation period as the two witnesses mentioned in Revelation 11.

The Bible asks this rhetorical question in the book of Amos – “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” The answer is, “Of course not.” In order to walk with God as Enoch did, God must agree to the walk. In Malachi 2 when speaking of Levi it says –

⁵ “My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, And I gave them to him that he might fear Me; So he feared Me And was reverent before My name. ⁶ The law of truth was in his mouth, And injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and equity, And turned many away from iniquity.” Malachi 2:5-6

Enoch walked with God because he was truthful, just, and he walked in peace and equity, and above all, he was a man of faith.

Like bookends on the Hebrew Scriptures, the person who walks properly with God is mentioned in the first and last books of the Old Testament. It is such a person that God loves.

If you ever want to do a wonderful study about being right with God, simply do an internet Bible search on the word “walk” and read all 384 times it is mentioned. There you will find vast treasure concerning how to live and move in the presence of God – walking in His way and in His statutes.

Something interesting about Enoch walking with God – in the Hebrew it doesn't just say he "walked with God" but that he "walked with **the** God" or *ha-elohim*. This is the first of about 400 times the Bible uses this term.

This statement separates Enoch as a man who walked rightly with the One true God. It implies that others had forsaken the God that they couldn't see and didn't want to believe in, but Enoch held fast by faith to the teachings of his ancestors and to his personal convictions about this unseen God.

He was translated because of this. The Bible promises a similar event for faithful believers now when we put our hope in Jesus. Do I really believe there will be a rapture – people just disappearing? Of course I do. Whether one person or millions, God is fully capable of keeping every promise just as His word declares.

The last time Enoch is mentioned is in the book of Jude –

“Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” Jude vs 14

Jude added in another important detail about Enoch – he was a prophet. Within a few hundred years after the creation, men of God spoke the word of God to a people who were very quickly going astray in a world run by the devil.

²⁵ Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and begot Lamech.

²⁶ After he begot Lamech, Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years, and had sons and daughters.

²⁷ So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years; and he died.

Methuselah died 1656 (the year of the flood)

Lamech born 874 Captive

You've probably heard the saying about some old codger, "He's as old as Methuselah." Well, here's where the saying comes from. Methuselah lived to be 969 years old – the oldest person ever recorded in the annals of the world.

His name was a prophecy of the coming destruction on the world. “His death shall bring” or another translation of it is “When he is dead, it shall be sent.” However his parents knew, they knew something was coming at the time of his death. The year he died, the waters came and destroyed the world by flood.

There is another saying about an old person, “He’s as old as dirt.” In Methuselah’s case, this would be true as well. Unlike his father Enoch who was translated so that he never saw death, Methuselah died. When he did, he returned to the dust he came from.

Death for Methuselah came slowly, but it still came. Jewish writers say that he died 7 days before the flood of Noah. By just one week he was spared from the wrath which came on the whole world.

Methuselah though is looking forward to the same bright future as the faithful of all the ages – that great day of hope when Jesus Christ translates us to eternal glory.

After Methuselah, the last person to have been born before the death of Adam in this godly line was Lamech. He was born in the year 874 Anno Mundi and was the ninth man from Adam. Imagine sitting on your great-great-great-great-great grandpa’s lap (that’s 6 greats, a grandpa, and a dad all sitting in the same room adoring the baby!)

“Grandggggggpa, can you tell me again about the day you were put together? Did God really take out one of your ribs to make “Grandggggggg-ma Eve? Is that scar really the spot where the rib came from? Did you ask for chrome bumpers or fishing pole attachments?”

Questions like this surely brought back to Adam the painful memories of paradise lost. Life under the sun wasn’t like life under the heavens. He was the one who broke the rules. All he could do was live on, waiting to receive the final execution of his sentence given so long ago.

He was promised the dust and he knew it was where he would end. By the time he got there, death was probably a welcome guest.

²⁸ Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years, and had a son.

²⁹ And he called his name Noah, saying, “This *one* will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed.”

³⁰ After he begot Noah, Lamech lived five hundred and ninety-five years, and had sons and daughters.

³¹ So all the days of Lamech were seven hundred and seventy-seven years; and he died.

Lamech died 1651

Captive

Noah 1056

Comfort or Rest

Eight times in this chapter the words “and he died” are recorded. Other than Enoch who went straight to glory and Noah who would continue on in the next chapter, all of these men of the godly line of Seth met their end and returned to the soil.

Lamech lived to be 777 years old and he died in the year 1651, or in the 5th year before the flood came. Other than his grandpa Enoch who was translated, he had the shortest life span in this account. The 777 years of his life though are a testament to the divine grace of being taken home before the coming destruction.

Isaiah has this to say about the death of those who live for God –

The righteous perishes,
And no man takes *it* to heart;
Merciful men *are* taken away,
While no one considers
That the righteous is taken away from evil.
² He shall enter into peace;
They shall rest in their beds,
Each one walking in his uprightness. –Isa 57:1-2

Sometimes we don't understand why a child dies, or we lose a close friend at the prime of life, but God does. It's possible that God looked into the future and saw some evil that otherwise would have happened to them and so He called them home.

As with all things, if we can truly trust in God and accept that He is sovereign, then we can rest easy that His plan is being perfectly executed for the people He has created and called.

In the case of the rapture, many sons will come to glory in the twinkling of an eye. Whether they have gone before us waiting to be wakened from their grave, or whether they will still be walking the highway of life at that moment, when the trumpet sounds, we will be forever in His glorious presence, perfectly content and forever praising the God who rescued us from ourselves.

In this account it tells us why Lamech named his son Noah, “This *one* will comfort us concerning our work and the toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD has cursed.”

The name Noah means specifically “rest” or “comfort.” Lamech was **only** 182 years old when he had Noah, but he was already worn out from the toilsome existence of life. The curse which came at the beginning continued on year after long year and generation after generation.

More especially though, it’s likely that the name Noah is an anticipation of what he would be, just like the name of Methuselah was a prophecy. As we saw, Methuselah means “His death will bring.” Because of the timing of Noah’s life in conjunction with Methuselah’s, his parents may have thought he would be the promised Messiah who would give the rest they had waited for.

Man was promised a Deliverer who would destroy the devil and return him to God’s rest and the naming of Noah may have anticipated that hope.

III. God with Man

³² And Noah was five hundred years old, and Noah begot Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Shem – Name / Fame

Ham – Passion / Hot

Japheth – Enlargement / Widely Extending

This is the final verse of chapter 5 and it sets the tone for the coming account. Noah had three sons starting in his 500th year. Shem is listed first, but he wasn’t the firstborn. It says in Genesis 11 that he was 102 years old after the flood and if Noah had his first son at 500, then the firstborn was Japheth because Ham is called the youngest of the brothers in Genesis 9.

Already we’ve seen one favored second son – Abel who was killed by his brother. He was replaced by Seth who became the head of the line of God’s chosen people. This is the second favored son – Shem, who is put ahead of Japheth his older brother. It is Shem who was an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

This pattern will continue on through the Bible right to the very end and pictures both the work of Jesus and sets the tone for the doctrine known as Divine Election. God

sovereignly chooses all things for His purposes and these purposes are often met in the most curious of ways. When you're reading your Bible ...

WHEN YOU'RE READING YOUR BIBLE

... pay attention to these type of patterns and you'll be able to more clearly see the workings of God in human life.

How certain are we of the doctrine of Divine Election? Let's read what Paul says in Acts 17 –

“²⁶ From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.” Acts 17:26 (NIV)

God chooses the exact time and the exact place where each human being will live in order to give them the most perfect opportunity to seek Him out and bring Him glory. And why does he do this, the verse continues, -

“²⁷ God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.” Acts 17:27 (NIV)

This is how God works with His wayward children. He is ever-present and working in the most effective way to reach out to us and bring us to the glorious rest that these ancients so patiently waited for. Let us not fail to respond to His call in our own lives.

The Generations of Adam

When Adam was 130 he had a son named Seth
A son in his own likeness and in his image too
It was another 800 years until he reached his death
But before he died his great-great-great-great-great grandson Lamech had come along too

Seth continued on for a spell and then he had Enosh
This was when he was a babe of just one-O-five
At 912 years of age he kicked the can, by gosh
But by then there were seven more generations alive

Enosh whose name means “Mortal” had a son named Cainan
This happened when Enosh was only 90, oh my!
Enosh finally bit the dust in the year 1140
After 905 long years of life passed by

Cainan was just seventy when along came Mahalalel
This special name means Praise of God
In the year 1235 they were ringing Cainan’s funeral bell
While Mahalalel continued on the earth to trod

Mahalalel was younger still when he had Jared his son
He was only 65... some might say “a scandal”
His ticker kept on a ticking till 895 years were done
And then the pall bearer grabbed Mahalalel’s casket handle

His son Jared was a much more patient guy
He didn’t have a son until 162 years passed by

But then Enoch came along, “Teaching” means his name
And Jared taught him well because Enoch walked with God
Even before Jared died, Enoch received great fame
When he was translated to glory, heavenly streets to trod

Before he got raptured up, Enoch had Methuselah
This guy lasted right up to the flooding year
He got to watch Noah build his ark – Hallelujah!
And know that the future of man was still secure

Methuselah waited until the age of one-eighty-seven
Then he had a son, Lamech was his name
At years of 969, Methuselah was bound for heaven
And his record age has brought him eons of fame
Lamech’s name means the “Captive”
Something that resembles us all
It’s a trait that everyone carries
Ever since the fall

And a son came to Lamech, a son to ease the toil
He was 182 when Noah finally came around

A son to help work the stubborn angry soil
A son to help till the clods of the ground

Lamech breathed his last at the age of 777
Five years before the flood would destroy the earth
Someday we'll meet him on the streets of heaven
If we first receive the promised new birth

God has plan, and it's written in these names
A plan that tells of the coming of His Son
Even the wildest heart Jesus readily tames
The gospel story tells us that the victory is won

I want to see how many of you have paid attention to this sermon. I've given you the 10 names from Adam down to Noah and what their meaning is? I want to see if any of you can give me those ten names, in order? I'll throw in 10 dollars if you can give me the translation into English that I gave you. I'll throw in 100 dollars if you will give me the year they were born, and I'll throw in a thousand if you can tell me the year they died. Anyone?

*Adam	Man
Seth	Appointed
*Enosh	Mortal
Cainan	Possession
Mahalalel	Praise of God
Jared	Descent (Going Down)
Enoch	Teaching
Methuselah	His death shall bring
Lamech	Captive
Noah	Rest

Jesus Christ, the Son of Man was Appointed by God to become a Mortal, a Man who could die so that we would become the recipients of the promised Possession of eternal life to the Praise of God. He Descended from heaven for the purpose of Teaching. His death is what released the Captives and has given them the Rest promised since the fall of Man.

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 6:1-4 (THE NEPHILIM)

Today's sermon is on four highly debated verses that have led to lots of anger and bitterness between opposing views. Unless you're aware of what different people think, you might wonder what the hubbub is all about because the verses probably seem intriguing but may be a little difficult to follow. Let's read them first and then we'll break them down into major areas of review –

¹ Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, ² that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they *were* beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. ³ And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he *is* indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” ⁴ There were giants (NEPHILIM) on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore *children* to them. Those *were* the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown.

Today we'll look at the two most prevalent views on these verses and which one is right and why. I don't want to sound condescending, nor do I want to malign another Christian, Chuck Missler, who puts out articles I read from time to time, but he is the one who's chosen his side of this argument and so I'm going to stick to what he's written because it pretty much sums up the view.

Please don't just believe what I believe without thinking the issue through, but like all things in the Bible, there is only one truth about any relevant issue. In the end, opinions don't matter – only what God is telling us does.

Introduction: What is the Bible about? Well, there's no single answer to that question. It tells us the mind of God. It reveals to us the Person and work of Jesus Christ. It's about the state of man. It shows us the way of salvation and the path to destruction. It details all kinds of things, one of them being the redemption of man.

The Bible isn't about angels. Angels are mentioned in the Bible, but they are a secondary subject area. Rather they are participants in the overall drama. The Bible isn't about Babylon. Again, Babylon is mentioned and is an important concept, but it's not about Babylon. In other words, we need to keep our major and minor subject areas from getting out of sync.

One major subject area – the redemption of man – is often and unfortunately inappropriately mixed with another minor subject area which comes from the first four verses of Genesis 6. Because of this, really strange concepts are derived from here. Let's be careful today about how we evaluate these verses and let's keep everything in the context intended by God.

Text Verse: *Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?*
-2 Corinthians 6:14, 15

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Sons of God, the Daughters of Men, verses 1 & 2

Before we start looking through today's verses, we would be showing **immense wisdom** by going back and reviewing the previous 5 chapters to look for the progression of things. If we don't, we'll immediately violate the third, fourth, and fifth of our top five Bible interpretation rules – context, context, and context.

Chapter 1 gives an overall view of the six days of creation. On the sixth day, man is created, at which time God proclaimed everything "very good" or *tov meod*. Let's note right here that angels are not mentioned at all in this creation account – the focus is on God, the visible creation, and man.

After noting God's rest as being established on the seventh day, Chapter 2 becomes a detailed insert into the sixth day of creation – the creation of man, the Garden of Eden, the creation of woman and other details. As with Chapter 1, God and man are the focus.

Chapter 3 details the temptation and fall of man, the curse of the serpent, the sentencing of man and woman, and man's exile from Eden – a ghastly business, but one which mainly focuses on man.

Chapter 4 provides insights into the birth of Cain and Abel and the murder of Abel. It then jumps directly into the account of Cain and his lineage reaching to the eighth generation from Adam. During this account, one particular name seems to appear for almost no reason at all. In verse 22, it abruptly and without explanation, says this – "And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah."

At the end of the Cain account, it suddenly shifts again – “And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and named him Seth, ‘For God has appointed another seed for me instead of Abel, whom Cain killed.’²⁶ And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then *men* began to call on the name of the LORD.”

All of this details the history of man on earth and it is the focus of what we’ve read. All of it included types of the coming Christ.

Chapter 5 gives the record of the first 10 people in Jesus’ lineage, from Adam, through Seth, to Noah. This is about the history of man on earth and it is being set in direct contrast to the preceding chapter which detailed the line of Adam through Cain.

These records, genealogies, and generations have been carefully recorded for us and then strategically placed in the Bible. We’ve evaluated them in the past months and we have been shown a direct contrast between the two groups who have been highlighted.

Any attempt to insert something beyond this into Chapter 6 then would be to completely misuse the Bible. The Bible progressively reveals God’s workings in and through His creation for the good of man and towards the redemption of man. As we saw, the gospel is recorded in the names of the first 10 people from Adam to Noah. We’ve also seen the doctrine of Divine Election begin in the Bible where God chooses the second of something over the first of something. This pattern will continue throughout the Bible and will become as clear as crystal even before we leave Genesis.

We’ve been introduced to the concept of acceptance by God being based on faith and not works. We’ve also seen God’s mode of salvation – it is initiated by Him and it is completed by Him and everything in between is a gift from Him. All of these concepts and many more have been pulled out of just the first five chapters.

¹ Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them,

² that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they *were* beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

As I said, the only way to properly analyze these two verses is to look to the preceding chapters. If we attempt to insert anything except what has been presented by God, and very detailing at that, then the rest of the Bible will be completely up to our own whims and desires. We have departed the presence of the Lord and have gone into the Land of

Nod with Cain – wandering aimlessly in a book without a solid and sound foundation to support us.

As time progressed, and as we've seen in Chapters 4 & 5, men began to multiply on the earth. The only names recorded so far are the only ones relevant to the big picture, but there were many more born. Remember what each account in Genesis 5 said, "...and this person had sons and daughters."

Based on the number of years recorded and the age to which people lived, there could have been hundreds of millions or even billions of people on earth and yet only 27 are mentioned.

In what is also obvious and in repetition of other verses, it says, "...and daughters were born to them." Yes! Men and women, being born, living, marrying, and dying. All the things that continue even to this day.

None of verse 1 has provided any difficulty to scholars of the Bible, but all of a sudden, we enter verse 2 and the over-excited mind and the unclear thinking of sensationalism steps in to divide the sea of reason.

On the right are the waters of drawing out from context to interpret the Bible and on the left is the sea of insertion usually in the deep waters of the extra-ordinary. We've come to the dividing chasm and we have to decide which sea we will dive into.

...that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they *were* beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

We've arrived and we need to decide. Now is the time! How we perceive the rest of the Bible concerning the redemption of man, prophecy, the classes of species God has made, whether the Bible stands alone or not, and a host of other issues revolves around the four words – "the sons of God." Who are the sons of God?

Remember what I already said – "Inserting anything beyond what is given in the first 5 chapters would be to completely misuse the Bible. The Bible is a progressive revelation of God's workings in and through His creation for the good of man and towards the redemption of man."

"The sons of God" must, by default, have been mentioned in the preceding 5 chapters,

or explained in detail **right here**, or we are inserting presuppositions and not drawing out conclusions. Who are the “sons of God?”

We’ll stop pursuing the correct answer for now and go to a completely different view than the right one and then refute what is presented. I personally don’t believe this is necessary based on the concept of full and progressive revelation, but if you knew how many people believe the wrong thing based on the term “the sons of God,” you would agree that we need to pursue this.

As I said, probably the most noted and vocal proponent of the wrong view is Chuck Missler whose ministry is known as Koinonia House. Here is what he says about the term –

The term translated “the Sons of God” is, in the Hebrew, B'nai HaElohim, “Sons of Elohim,” which is a term consistently used in the Old Testament for angels, and it is never used of believers in the Old Testament. It was so understood by the ancient rabbinical sources, by the Septuagint translators in the 3rd century before Christ, and by the early church fathers. Attempts to apply this term to “godly leadership” is without Scriptural foundation.

His footnote cites – Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7 Then speaking of angels he says “where they are in existence before the creation of the earth.” And... “Jesus also implies the same term in Luke 20:36.”

If you went to this particular article and read this, you might be convinced that Genesis 6 must be talking about angels. I mean, the term (as he says) is used “consistently” in the Old Testament for angels... it must be that then. This is, unfortunately rather dishonest, particularly when one refers to the footnote. There he cites the New Testament Greek, but only when it fits his purpose.

What he fails to note is that the New Testament uses the same term “sons of God” four more times and it is **always** referring faithful believers. Even in Jesus’ own words –

“Blessed *are* the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.” Matthew 5:9

Throw in the term “children of God” and you have 10 more times. Throw in variations of “children of God” and you have even more.

Even the very verse which Missler cites from the New Testament doesn't at all agree with his own presentation. He cited Luke 20:36. Let's read it, "But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; ³⁶ nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection."

His inclusion of this verse has two errors. First, it never says we will be angels. It says we will be "equal to the angels." But the text explains what that means – they won't marry, nor can they die anymore. Being like the angels simply means that we won't marry and we will be aeternal – having a beginning, but no end.

Secondly, being a son of God from a human perspective means that we are "sons of the resurrection." This means that any human – ever – who is saved is, by default, a son of God – just as Paul and John speak of in their letters. Missler has made a category mistake by equating sons of God with angels in this passage from Luke.

Going back to Genesis 6, I said earlier that we should analyze this based on what has already been presented, unless something new is fully explained **when presented**.

The term "sons of God" is given only three other times in the Old Testament – as Missler noted, all in the book of Job. When you read this, you can easily infer that is speaking of angels.

Missler says that "sons of God" is "a term **consistently** used in the Old Testament for angels," but it is really mentioned in only one other context – Job. This is sly because he is elevating one context – that of Job – above another, that of Genesis. And Job comes after Genesis – it is not progressive revelation if one cites Job first.

One word can have a zillion meanings and its meaning and translation must always be based on the context. There is no way we could get "angels" out of the context of Genesis 1 through 5.

And finally, let's go to Deuteronomy 32:8 which Missler speaks of when he cites the Greek translation, the Septuagint – "When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, When He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples According to the number of the children of Israel."

When I teach a Bible class, I bring up the same points time and again. One of them is to either skip over commentaries completely or to take them with a complete grain of salt.

We don't establish doctrine on what other people say. Another thing I tell them is to always read the footnotes. Footnotes aren't commentaries, but they provide important insights into a variety of things.

In the case of Deuteronomy 32:8, other versions say "angels of God" instead of "children of Israel" and some others say "sons of God." In all, there are differences across the board from ancient Hebrew and Greek versions and even to the oldest Latin versions.

That's a big mess...what does that mean? Well, one thing is for certain, the term "sons of Israel" was believed by someone to mean the same thing as "sons of God." And it's most likely that others took the term "sons of God" to mean "angels of God." Which is it?

When you're looking at a poem like the one in Deuteronomy 32, you can't take just a single verse and come to a conclusion, but when you look at the whole thing, it's apparent that it is speaking about men, not angels. And in fact, in verse 3, when speaking to Israel, it says "*Is He not your Father, who bought you? Has He not made you and established you?*"

As you can see, even in Deuteronomy, the concept of the Father/son relationship is based on God's people whom He has sovereignly chosen and redeemed. These are the sons of God, just as they are throughout the **entire** New Testament, without exception, as well.

Missler has done a lot of typing to convince people of his position, but none of what he says makes sense based on the overall premise of the Bible. In one of his papers he says this – "It should also be pointed out that most conservative Bible scholars accept the "angel" view. Among those supporting the "angel" view are..."

He then cites a bunch of names who agree with him. Does anyone know what's wrong with that? This is known as the Fallacy of *Ad Populum*. In other words, just because someone notable or a large group of people believe something, it doesn't make it right. It just means that there are a lot of people, including some of famous people, who are wrong. We don't base truth on polls.

In fact, Missler makes so many fallacies, that if you know how to detect them, you can pare down his article to a few incoherent sentences. We could go on for hours with the breakdown in his argument, but we'd be here all night.

There are only two options for who the sons of God are based the **preceding** chapters – either the line of Cain or the line of Seth, not angels. And the Bible has already shown us which, the line of Seth.

The main focus of Chapter 4 is the line of Cain, but then at the very end, it moves to the line of Seth. And immediately it says, “Then *men* began to call on the name of the LORD.” It should be painfully clear, that calling on the name of the Lord is being equated with the line of Seth in contrast to that of Cain.

So let’s finish the verse before we move on –

“...the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they *were* beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.”

The sons of God, meaning the line of Seth, “saw the daughters of men...” We are one species with two genders. Genesis has already taught that. The problem isn’t that angels are intermarrying with humans. The problem is that “the sons of God” are marrying women based on their beauty, regardless of who they marry.

Let’s go back to Genesis 4 and that most peculiar verse – “And the sister of Tubal-Cain *was* Naamah.” If you can reach back into your memory, I told you that Naamah means “loveliness.” The meaning of her name explains the seemingly purposeless addition of her into the account. Out of the countless people who lived on earth, only 27 were mentioned in 1656 years before the flood.

The “sons of God” saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful and they intermarried.

In Chapter 4 we saw in the line of Cain, Naamah’s father was named Lamech and in Chapter 5 from the line of Seth, Methuselah’s son was named Lamech. Both Naamah and Methuselah are the 8th generation from Adam and, although the Bible doesn’t say this, the implication is that Methuselah could have named his son Lamech after the name of his father in-law.

Throughout the Bible, the subject of inappropriate intermarrying is brought time and time again. Abraham sends for a wife for Isaac from his kin. Esau displeases his parents by marrying Canaanite women. Later the Israelites are forbidden from intermarrying with the Canaanites and several other surrounding nations.

Solomon intermarried with women from many nations and it says “that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God.” The great prayer of humiliation given by Nehemiah is **based** on intermarrying with pagans. And as if we needed any more proof that this is what the Bible is trying to teach us, all we need to do is go to Malachi and read the reason given as explicitly as it can be –

“...Because the LORD has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant. ¹⁵ But did He not make *them* one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks **godly offspring**. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.” Malachi 2:14-15

This is the lesson of the Bible for faithful believers. Like bookends on the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, God expects his people to remain within the godly line he has ordained. And this applies to the New Testament too. Twice Paul tells us so –

A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, **only in the Lord**. 1 Corinthians 7:39

And we read this from Paul’s hand as well –

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? 2 Corinthians 6:14-15

In fact, this was our text verse and it perfectly resembles what was going on in Genesis 6. Paul even uses the same thought process here. The sons of Christ and the sons of Belial, or the devil – which is the line of Cain as is born out even to the last books of the Bible.

II. A Shorter Existence, verse 3

³ And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he *is* indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”

In verse 3, we see a sad commentary (like we need anymore...) on the existence of man. Before the flood, men really did live to great ages. If you don’t believe this, then you have no reason to believe the promises about the future from Isaiah’s own pen –

²⁰“ No more shall an infant from there *live but a few days*, Nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; For the child shall die one hundred years old, But the sinner *being* one hundred years old shall be accursed. ²¹ They shall build houses and inhabit *them*; They shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. ²² They shall not build and another inhabit; They shall not plant and another eat; For as the days of a tree, *so shall be* the days of My people, And My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. -Isaiah 65:20-22

Because man shunned God’s will, He promised to cut their years approximately 8-fold, to only 120 years. Eventually, this was cut by about another 3rd, so that the psalms record our years are 70 and if we’re strong enough, even to 80. Nothing has changed since Moses wrote that Psalm 3500 years ago.

The reason our years were cut is because even in 70 or 80 years we can accomplish immense wickedness. Imagine people in their hundreds, closing in on their thousands.

III. The Nephilim, verse 4

⁴ There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore *children* to them. Those *were* the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown.

The term translated “giants” is actually *Nephilim* and is often simply transliterated that way, such as in the NIV. Nephilim is almost exclusively used by people who believe in angels sleeping with men because it sounds so much cooler.

The term *Nephilim* isn’t some extra special word, it’s just a word. It means “fallen ones” and they were giants. This is explained in the only other occurrence used in the Bible, which is Numbers 13:33 –

“The land through which we have gone as spies *is* a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it *are* men of *great* stature. ³³ There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

We need not search for any other explanation than “giants” as so many people try to do. The description is given right here. There are other accounts of giants in the Bible as well and descend from other groups. Each is titled by the group it descended from –

Anakim, Emim, Zamzummim, Rephaim, and even the Philistim, or Philistines, who Goliath belonged to.

So who were these giants and where did they come from. I hate to tell the sensationalists, but this isn't a hard nut to crack. Even in modern times, we've had exceptionally large people around us. Many are genetic defects, but many are the result of purposeful breeding. The verse back in 6:2 gives us the answer –

...that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they *were* beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.

Things are absolutely no different now than they were then. How many times do two good looking people get married and those around them say, "they will have beautiful children" or "their son will be a basketball player." I've heard it a million times. Why? People know what the results of two good sets of genes will be.

We can do the same with plants, trees, and animals. Through advances in DNA, we have identified 14 original known breeds of dogs in past history. Go back a little earlier and there is one set of dogs, created by God. Now, there are over 400 breeds and we pop out new ones every year. We breed them into the massive Mastiffs that can reach almost 300 pounds and we breed them into tea cup Chihuahuas that weigh only ounces.

When people lived to 900 and more years of age, they could – within only a couple generations – produce immensely large humans. Even now, when we live to only 70 or so, world records in athletics are broken all the time because people are being engineered for physical greatness.

The Nephilim are large because they were bred large, at the expense of faith. Even to this day, families choose the road of success and exceptional gene development over godly husbands and wives. This then, is the explanation of these giants.

It is the only avenue which rightly handles the Bible based on the first five chapters of progressively revealed thought from God and it simply takes proper handling of what has been presented.

When it says, "these were the mighty men of old, men of renown" it is a statement that could be said of any of our finest military personnel, our greatest basketball players, or any other person the world idolizes for their high breeding and superior abilities. The

commentary then matches the commentary of today – a godless world which looks to the flesh rather than to God.

Here is Missler’s misguided thoughts on this matter – “The most fatal flaw in the specious “Sethite” view is the emergence of the Nephilim as a result of the unions. (Bending the translation to “giants” does not resolve the difficulties.) [*of course it does, Chuck, because Nephilim are explained as “giants” helloooo*] It is the offspring of these peculiar unions in Genesis 6:4 which seems to be cited as a primary cause for the Flood. [*This is absolutely false. The Bible says exactly why the flood came, “the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”*] Procreation by parents of differing religious views do not produce unnatural offspring. [*No, but selective breeding does.*] Believers marrying unbelievers may produce “monsters,” but hardly superhuman, or unnatural, children! [*Nothing – not a word in the Bible says they were either superhuman, or unnatural.*] It was this unnatural procreation and the resulting abnormal creatures that were designated as a principal reason for the judgment of the Flood. [*Another complete falsity and one which fails to take into account Nephilim after the flood.*]

In other words, if the Nephilim appeared after the flood and destroying them was the purpose of the flood, then the purpose wasn’t met by God at all.

Seeing as how we’re looking over this issue, I’d like to cite a few other references from the Bible which Missler uses. We can’t go over them all, but each one of them has two possibilities. The first option would be to take the Bible as the account of fallen man and God’s plan of redemption for him.

The second is to get into the mystical, irrational, and sensational in an attempt to seem authoritative on matters which require higher thought and deeper understanding than others can somehow attain.

Daniel 2:43 speaks about the intermingling of certain groups and is used as a source text for inter-class breeding – either with angels or aliens. However, you will never see the NIV translation used here because it completely destroys their case –

As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, **they will mingle with the seed of men;** but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. Daniel 2:43 (NKJV)

And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, **so the people will be a mixture** and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay. (NIV)

The book of Jude has these verses, which must be misapplied in order to come to meet their conclusions, “But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶ And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; ⁷ as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

Missler will take verse 6 which is speaking about angels leaving their proper domain, and ties it with verse 7 which speaks of the sexual sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. But, these are two examples in a litany of examples and comingling them would be no different than comingling the angels with verse 5 which concerns the disobedient Israelites in the desert. It is bad handling of the Bible – plain and simple.

The entire premise of what Jude is saying is that disobedience by mingling believers with non-believers is what brings God’s wrath.

I could go on all day with Missler’s misguided missives, but let me give one more quote from him and then end –

If one takes an integrated view of the Scripture, then everything in it should “tie together.” [*As if his view ties anything together. It is convoluted and unreasonable, especially when we consider the natural progression of the first five chapters, which is all that is thus far given by God.*] It is the author’s view that the “Angel View,” however disturbing, [*I would say “however goofy”*] is the clear, direct presentation of the Biblical text, corroborated by multiple New Testament references [*it is completely, 100%, unsubstantiated from the NT references and only taking things completely out of context and leaving out what is relevant can this view hold any water at all*] and was so understood by both early Jewish and Christian scholarship; [*never mind discussing the fact that **other** early Jewish and Christian scholars have said your view is wrong*] the “Sethite View” is a contrivance of convenience from a network of unjustified assumptions antagonistic to the remainder of the Biblical record.

*In fact, there is nothing contrived about following the natural progression of the revelation given up to chapter 6 and then seeing that it is completely supported by the

rest of the Bible. We don't introduce presuppositions into the Bible and then look for ways to justify them. Instead, we allow the Bible to progressively reveal itself and then we look to the rest of the Bible to support what has naturally and obviously been revealed.

Ok, so I've been flapping my gums for the past 35 or 40 minutes about something that most people could give diddly about. The question is then, "How do these verses point to Jesus?"

Well, let's remember that Jesus is the God/Man. He was born of a virgin and the Holy Spirit. God is the Creator and He designated that things reproduce after their own kind. We don't have dats, because dogs don't breed with cats. We don't have Melephants, because mice don't breed with elephants. We don't have Zales because zebras don't breed with whales. This is how God created things – to produce after their own kinds.

There is one exception to this – the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. He is the God/Man.

There is nothing mentioned concerning the reproduction of angels, and in fact the Bible supports the notion that they don't reproduce. The account today is given to us to show that God expects us to keep ourselves pure and free from defiling ourselves by marrying outside of the community of believers.

When men began to reproduce for the sake of breeding larger, stronger, or more beautiful people, it led to wickedness, idolatry of the flesh, and a rejection of God. God wants us to remain dependent on Him, not on man. He wants our devotion and obedience and not the worship of sports heroes.

The incarnation of Jesus was to show us the immense love God has for us and that we can trust in His Son. While our sports stars die and return to the dust, Jesus remains on His throne, having been resurrected after His cross to an everlasting and indestructible life.

This is the message of Jesus Christ and the love of God which is found in Him. Let us be faithful to our spouses, marry within the community of believers, and trust that Jesus alone has something better for us at the end of our trail.

The Nephilim

Man has multiplied on the earth
And daughters were born to them too
We look to their size and strength to evaluate their worth
And to the ladies curvy shapes,,, whoo hoo

We give our sons, raised in the godly home
To women who will give us baseball heroes
Never do their eyes to the Bible roam
Instead in Bible quizzes, we have to hand out zeroes

The boys choose any girl they like
It doesn't matter if she worships beelzebub
As long as she can run, jump, and ride a bike
He is happy to buy her dinner, maybe an Italian sub

But the Lord isn't pleased with this type of mingling
And He won't always strive with the rebellious man
Chasing after what gives physical tingling
Is as worthless as an empty tin can
Our days are limited to less than before
Because with many years comes the multiplication of sin
But even now in years ten and threescore
We can still really do ourselves in

We produce giants for the courts and the field
And we look for super-models, our children to yield

They will be mighty men and super women you see
In another generation, we'll have super bowl heroes
Never mind their soul that lasts for eternity
Never mind their Bible scores, which are all zeros

I would suggest, before you decide
To give your children an unholy bride

That you would consider what displeases God
And keep away from banishment to Nod

Instead, be faithful as His Son was to You
He gave His life – Yes, He is faithful and True
Cling to the cross and your average wife
Or your bushy bearded husband, for all of your life

Handsome or beautiful, or not, they reflect God's Son
And are worth more than a million super bowl heroes
Eternity waits for you to have fun
So keep yourself from the Bible test zeroes

Hallelujah and Amen.

Next week we'll look over Genesis 6:5-13 – To Build an Ark

GENESIS 6:5-13 **(GRACE IN THE EYES OF THE LORD)**

Grace. What is grace? It's getting what you don't deserve. Today we'll see that in a world full of evil, one man was given grace. Just like Adam, every person on earth descends from this man - Noah. His story is an amazing one on many levels and hidden within the text itself is a pattern which centers on the fact that we are not forgotten by God. Even when the world is collapsing around us, He is there.

God's eyes are always on His people and He has a plan for each of us. The hard part is to trust Him when everything else seems to be falling apart around us. The story of Noah is something we can cling to in today's world. As the forces of the wicked seem to be winning, God has secured His faithful in an Ark which will protect them through every trial.

Introduction: Today's verses, Genesis 6:5-13, show us God's great displeasure at the wickedness of man and His judgment on their sins. Unfortunately, in order to see and understand God's grace, there has to be a context in which that grace can be viewed.

This account about the pre-flood world, and many others in the Bible after the flood, are given not to depress us, but to show us that even in the midst of a world full of desperately confusing tragedies, like earthquakes or a war, God is in control and is working out a wonderful plan.

If you are just willing to stick with it, there is a ton of happy and uplifting stuff in the Bible and the beautiful grace of God is continuously evident. But the Bible is a book of truth and truth often includes painful downers.

Among Christian scholars, there's a term known as Total Depravity which attempts to describe our state as it's revealed in the Bible. Depravity is described and viewed differently by different scholars. And bringing this up isn't meant to be a killjoy, but it will help you understand what the Bible teaches.

In the book of Acts, Paul explains why these things are so important – "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God." In other words, we need to look at the Bible from every perspective and not only on what makes us feel happy.

If you present just a little bit of error to an uninformed person, you have them in your grasp. Do you think even one of the people who started out with Jim Jones thought that in a few years they'd be drinking cyanide in a foreign county? Of course not. No one goes out looking for destruction. Instead, it creeps in and finds its place in the uneducated.

So here we go... let's review four different views on Depravity –

The first is known as Pelagianism, named after the 4th century heretic Pelagius. It looks at human beings as innocent at birth and that they can obey God. This is unbiblical and it's a heresy.

The second is Arminianism and is named after Jacob Arminius. It says humans are somewhat depraved but they can cooperate with God. Arminianism is also called semi-Pelagianism.

The third is Moderate Calvinism – a term I don't like, so I'll call it "biblical depravity." This view says humans are totally depraved and that the image of God in humans is or marred. This view teaches that humans can cooperate with God.

The fourth is known as Strong Calvinism. This says humans are totally depraved and that the image of God in humans is significantly marred or even destroyed in man. It says that humans cannot cooperate with God.

Only one is right and I believe it's the third – "biblical depravity." There's no use arguing with people who believe differently. People love to be wrong for a host of reasons and that's their prerogative, but let me give you some points on the right view so we can understand what it means to be totally depraved.

Total Depravity in fallen man is extensive but not intensive. Sin extends to every dimension of our being, including the body (we age, wrinkle up, and die because of it), the soul (our nature is sinful – we don't need to teach children to do wrong, they already know), and also the will (we often do things we don't really want to do because sin pulls us to the wrong option – even when we know it's wrong.) These things are self-evident and very few would deny that this is the way things are.

Having said this, depravity doesn't mean we are as sinful as we could be. In other words, people all around the world do good things, like helping old ladies across the road and petting puppies. We can strive for excellence and we possess dignity.

But apart from Jesus Christ we are not as good as we should be and we are not in any way able to please God with our works – the works we do are good, but because sin infects us, they are unacceptable to God – the sin must be dealt with first.

Another thing about this fallen state is that although sin does infect us and permeate us, we aren't completely destroyed by it. In other words, we still bear God's image. If you take Total Depravity too far, it actually eliminates the ability to be depraved at all – the very definition no longer has any relevance.

Why am I'm telling you this? Because it's important. If you misunderstand what God is like, your interpretation about the things of God will be wrong. If you misunderstand what man is like, then your interpretation about the things of man will be wrong. And this includes our relationship with God.

The more wrong you are, the less right you are
This is just the way things are
Will your walk with God be one that's close?
Or will your only view Him from afar?

The Italian actress Asia Argento said this about depravity – “What you might see as depravity is, to me, just another aspect of the human condition.” I had to laugh when I read that because she's confirming what she's trying to deny. Helloooo –

Depravity is so obvious that we can't get away from it even when we try to get away from it.

What you might see as an apple is, to me,
Just a type of fruit that grows on a tree.

Text Verse: *The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance; He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, ¹¹ So that men will say, “Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely He is God who judges in the earth.” Psalm 58:10, 11*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. When Judgment Falls

Last week we talked about the Nephilim – those who came from the union between the sons of God and the daughters of men. The last thought we looked at said, “Those *were* the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown.” The world went after hero worship rather than God worship.

The men of renown were probably little different than our movie stars of today. Although I’m not as political as some here, it’s no secret which political party most of the Hollywood elite belong to. Politics isn’t religion, but there’s a progression of both which follows inevitably when power, fame, or money is introduced into the equation. It is away from God and to that which is against God.

The more we idolize these people, the more our views about the things of God become skewed. For example, the value of human life is reduced. And also, it becomes more important to protect nature than humanity. And the concept of personal responsibility is subordinated to the collective whole.

True religion is shunned and belittled and tolerance is elevated above truth. This is just the way it is. And this is the way it has been throughout history. What is wicked is called good and what is good is called intolerant and wicked.

⁵ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה, כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם בְּאֶרֶץ וְכָל-יֵצֵר מַחְשְׁבֹת לִבּוֹ, רַק רַע כָּל-הַיּוֹם:

Va’yar adonai ki raba ra’at ha’adam ba’aretz, vekhol yetser makhshebot libo ra’a khol hayiom (in 48 seconds)

When the church tries too hard to identify itself with the secular world, eventually only the secular world is left. When the sons of God had intermarried with those outside the chosen line, they incorporated their ungodly practices in with their own.

Today, instead of Sunday worship, we have Sunday football gatherings. Instead of mission work, we go jogging. There’s nothing wrong with football and there’s nothing wrong with jogging, but when they replace our devotion to God, then God is left out of the picture. When we leave God out, the vacuum needs to be filled with something. Jesus tells us this in a parable –

“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’²⁵ And when he comes, he finds *it* swept and put in order.²⁶ Then he goes and takes with *him* seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first.” –Luke 11:24-25

After only 1550 years of man on earth, things had degraded to such an extent that “the wickedness of man was great in the earth.” But even more terrible than the actual state of things was that “every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.” In other words, not only the imagination of the people was wicked, but the purposes and desires of them were too. In the Hebrew word which is used to describe this state, the object of the thought is being distinguished from the thought itself.

This might not be too easy to grasp, but a thought might have a real output or it might not but it is really evil either way. This leads to complete condemnation of the state of man and the actions of man as well. And it’s painfully evident why.

When noble and right things are set aside, like truth, dedication to God, and so on, it doesn’t matter how great are the achievements or how praiseworthy are the deeds, they are void of moral good.

If you remember, the line of Cain in Chapter 4 developed into an entire culture. It had food production, arts, and industry, and yet it was devoid of God and therefore it was only evil continually. Let’s compare it to America.

We have arts, like movies and music – in fact we export those to the world. We produce enough food to feed the world. We have industry – again, we export it to the world. All the things that the world had at this period in Genesis we have in America today and we even have enough to export beyond our borders. But just because we have a praiseworthy culture, doesn’t mean that it’s properly directed toward a relationship with God.

When the intent of our actors is to promote a secular agenda, it is evil – even though their acting may be extraordinary. When the intent of our musicians is to increase perversion, it is evil – even though their music may be complex, stimulating, relaxing, or notable in some other way.

When the intent of our government in food distribution is to promote an evil political agenda, then the fact that people are fed becomes irrelevant to the greater moral issue.

This is the state of the pre-flood world where every intent of the thoughts of the heart was only evil continually, and this is the state that America is rushing headlong into – even as we boast of the great culture we live in.

The reasons behind our actions are as important as the result of them. And God knows both intimately. As Matthew Henry wisely said it, “Wickedness is then great when great men are wicked.” Or as the ancient Proverb David quoted “Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.”

This was the state of the world before the flood, but even after the flood, in Chapter 8, we’ll read this – “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.”

There was no expected improvement in man. However, a new interaction between God and man would exist after the flood. There are seven different ways that God is shown to interact with man in the Bible. Each is given in a logical progression to lead us to Jesus Christ.

In the end, what we have is a dichotomy between God’s longsuffering patience – a cup which is very deep – and man’s ability and perseverance in filling up that cup until it eventually needs to be poured out in wrath.

In Ecclesiastes 8, Solomon explains this, “Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

Because God is patient and merciful and man is bent on evil, sin heaps up in a land until there is no remedy. Let stop and look at a few times this happened since the flood –

“The He [God] said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete.” -Genesis 15:13-16

And here is the recorded fall of Jerusalem from 2 Chronicles 36 –

¹⁴ Moreover all the leaders of the priests and the people transgressed more and more, *according* to all the abominations of the nations, and defiled the house of the LORD which He had consecrated in Jerusalem. ¹⁵ And the LORD God of their fathers sent *warnings* to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending *them*, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. ¹⁶ But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till *there was* no remedy.

Yes, God judges sin. When the cup of His indignation is full, the only option left is for man to drink the fruit of the vine he has cultivated. Anyone who thinks God loves us more than He hates our sin, probably doesn't realize that the road we're heading down is one which intersects with the avenues of Judgment and Destruction. And both of these lead directly to the Hall of Justice, which is His great throne.

⁶ And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

This is the first time the Bible records that God was sorry about something, or that He regretted something and the terminology leads most people immediately to think that God somehow changes either mentally or relationally toward us.

In fact, very few people can see it any other way. But the force of the statement “the Lord was sorry” needs to be drawn together from the explanation “He was grieved in His heart.”

In other words, God being sorry doesn't presume any change in Him or in His intent. The Bible uses a human term and applies it to God so that we can understand His feeling toward sin. It's not a changing feeling. It is His very nature being expressed in a way we can comprehend.

⁷ So the LORD said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.”

When God says, “I will destroy man” the Bible uses a term which is comparable to wiping a dish clean or erasing a chalk board. It's a complete removal of what was so that

nothing is left. God created man and He gave man dominion over the earth and its creatures and they would share in its destruction.

If you love puppies, this might sound cruel, but animals are not moral creatures. The animals were given to man and when man changed relationally to God, they fell under that relational change.

Think of it this way. Man and all of what he was given is on the positive side of God. When man's sins heaped up, he moved to the negative side, or the judgment side, and the life over which he exercised dominion (meaning the animals) moved with him.

It might help to explain what happened with the nation of Israel in AD 70. The Jewish people were a part of the Roman Empire. When they rebelled against the Romans, the Romans came in and destroyed not only the people, but everything in the land as well.

It wasn't Rome which changed in relation to Israel, it was Israel which changed in relation to Rome and every part of the land was affected. The emperor wasn't affected by what happened even though he might say that he was sorry Israel was allowed to become a part of the Roman state. The change was in Israel, not Rome and likewise in the Bible, the change is in man, not God.

Man was no longer worthy of the beautiful house that was built for him and so both man and house were removed simultaneously.

II. Grace is to be Found

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

Throughout the Bible, there are simple sentences inserted into long narratives which are the pivots for the narrative. This verse is one such pivot – “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”

Destruction is promised and destruction is coming, but in the midst of it, God remembers His faithful children. And this isn't just a story about the past. It's relevant to us, right now, today.

The world is sliding into moral degradation and destruction is coming. We don't need the Bible to tell us its coming, all we need to do is think it through. And we personally may not be spared the troubles and trials of all of it. But Jesus is that Ark in which we

are secure, even in the most violent storms.

The Bible never promises us freedom from disaster, but we are promised that the Lord never forgets us and He is abundantly faithful in His promises. This veil of tears in which we walk is only that, a veil which must be passed through. On the other side, streets of gold and the light of glory is waiting.

Albert Barnes says “Whither grace comes there merit cannot be.” Noah didn’t earn God’s grace and neither can we. But we can receive it in advance of the time it is needed. When the whirlpool starts pulling, when the wind begins to blow, or when the tide starts to rise, those who have received God’s grace will be safely delivered beyond what is an impassible calamity for those who wouldn’t heed the word of the Master.

⁹ This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God. ¹⁰ And Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

This marks the third genealogy mentioned in the Bible. The first was “the heavens” in Genesis 2:4 when God created man. The second was the line of Adam in Genesis 5. And now we come to the genealogy of Noah. God is working, right in human history, developing an amazing plan that began 6000 years ago and which He has carefully sculpted to show us his heart.

Noah’s genealogy is given here because he is now the central figure in the biblical story. And why? It’s because Noah “was a just man.” Of all the people on the earth, he alone was found righteous. So what made him righteous? Was it something he did?

In this case, the answer would be “No and Yes.” There’s nothing we can do outwardly to earn God’s favor. At the same time, the Bible says that righteousness comes from faith – something that springs up in the inward man.

Noah was a man of faith. He was waiting for the Messiah who would come and he believed this despite the wicked state of the world around him.

And this faith led to the second description of him, “He was perfect in his generations.” Of all the people on the earth at that time, he was the only man of faith. His perfection was granted to him by God **because** of his faith.

Just as we saw in Adam’s naming of Eve; just as we saw in Abel’s offering; and just as we’ll see throughout the Bible, it is faith which brings us into a close walk with God. And

faith is an act of free will. Noah possessed this faith and the very next recorded thought is that Noah walked with God.

Like his great-grandfather Enoch, Noah walked with God. And you might remember that Enoch's walk of faith is what resulted in his being translated directly to heaven without ever seeing death.

III. Yes, Even in Judgment

I know, I already said that speaking about judgment and wickedness might be a downer, but the Bible tells us to consider the whole counsel of God. Today's verses simply include the fact that God hates sin, he hates wickedness, and he hates violence, and that these things don't escape His notice.

There's no way to sugar coat this without getting a coating of sugar all over it – so why bother. We'll leave the sugar off.

¹¹ The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

¹² So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.

In contrast to Noah of the previous three verses, the corrupt state of the rest of the world was evident. It says "the earth was corrupt before God." This isn't the state of the literal ground, but man who represents it. The earth, or all men, was corrupt before God, and his corruption is acted on outwardly in violence.

And this certainly included the worshipping God. They no longer "called on the name of the LORD." Instead they worshiped the creation or false gods, rather than the Creator. And their actions spilled out into contempt of Him. They were actively and openly defying Him to His face.

As a challenge over the next seven days, go to any news site which simply links articles from other news services, like the Drudge Report, and just read the headlines. See if what you read there isn't represented completely and perfectly in these two verses.

Paying lip service to God in general has nothing to do with true faith. Women laying on abortion tables will go home and say how much they love God moments after murdering a child. Any politician will be glad to stand up and say "God bless America" or

“I am a Christian” on the same day he votes in a bill condoning open homosexuality in the military.

And any leader can tickle the ears of the people with charming remarks about God while enacting legislation which deprives Christians of the very rights they proclaim to defend. None of this is pleasing to God.

What is stated here in Genesis 6 simply reflects the world in which we live. And the result...

¹³ And God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

Destruction – that is the inevitable result. This verse records, “the end of all flesh has come before me.” This end isn’t speaking of the destruction to come. Instead, it’s speaking of God’s tolerance of man’s actions which will lead to the destruction. A good way to understand it is to think of a rebellious teen.

When they come home late, you take away their car keys. When they do it again, you take away their car keys. The third time, you say, “This is the end.” And you take sell the car. God’s buttons had been pushed far enough and He would now act.

The entire world was to be destroyed. If Noah didn’t find grace in the eyes of the Lord, there would have been no you or me. And when the world rushes into the coming tribulation period the Bible speaks of, very few will come out at the other end.

Isaiah writes about what’s coming – “I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. I will make man scarcer than pure gold...”

The Jewish historian Josephus tells us something not recorded in the Bible about God’s judgment. He says that Adam predicted that the world would be destroyed twice – once by water and once by fire. The water is coming in the next chapters of Genesis. The fire may very well be coming soon to a cataclysm near you.

IV. The Grace of our Lord is to be Found

Noah's great-grandfather Enoch walked by faith and was translated directly to heaven. In 1 Thessalonians 2:12, Paul tells us that we should also "walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory."

Two chapters later, Paul gives us immensely exciting news for those who will be alive at some unknown point in the future –

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. ¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." -1 Thess 4:14-17

Noah was carried through the flood in an ark. Enoch was taken directly to heaven. And the other eight people from Adam to Noah died before the flood. All of them were saved from God's judgment of the flood.

The parallel for us is this – Some Christians, the majority, will die naturally before the Lord comes. But there will be some alive before the tribulation who will be translated at the rapture just as Enoch was. After that moment, the time of tribulation will come. But Israel, like Noah, will be carried through that time just as Noah was carried through the flood.

You see, even in today's wicked world, grace is to be found. Some people say we shouldn't hope for the rapture because there are so many unsaved people on earth. But this is incorrect thinking. There will always be "so many unsaved people on earth."

Until the Lord comes, we need to be about His business telling people about God's offer of pardon. But when that trumpet sounds – and may it be soon – I will be jumping to have a head start on the rest of you. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

Grace is to be found, but better you find it now, before the time of trouble comes. Looking for grace while you're looking for enough food to feed yourself inevitably leads to hard choices that most people will fail at.

Well, I'm done with today's notes, but I'd like to ask you to think over one of the points I gave you earlier. I said that God's longsuffering patience is a cup which is deep, but that man's ability and perseverance in filling up that cup necessitates that it eventually needs to be poured out in wrath.

In the Bible, there was a garden called Gethsemane. In that garden, which mean "oil press," the sins of the world were pressed into a cup and a Man was asked to drink it. Not just a sip, but down to the dregs. He cried out "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

The cup of God's wrath which is filled to overflowing with the sins of our lives, was drained by an innocent Lamb so that we could have eternal life. Now we have only one of two choices. The first is to accept the payment He accomplished on our behalf, or the second is to meet God face to face on our own merits. The choice is ours and the choice is an eternal one.

The cup is an angry mixture of judgment and condemnation. Choose wisely.

Grace In the Eyes of the Lord

Ten generations is all it took
Until evil encompassed the entire earth
The Lord came down and He gave a look
And saw only one man of worth

The intent of the rest was evil always
And their wickedness was immensely great
So the Lord determined to end their days
Destruction would come; it would no longer wait

He was sorry that He had made man on the earth
And He was grieved in His heart that it was so
Man's own actions are what diminished his worth
He acted out in evil as if God didn't know

But the Lord spoke the word "I will destroy it all"
"I will utterly annihilate my beautiful blue ball"

But – But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD
Only this one man had cherished His word

Noah found grace and he would be secure
Because he had faith and he was just
The destruction was coming, this was for sure
The rest of men would return to the dust

Noah walked with God while evil did abound
The world was corrupt and violence filled the earth
It's happening again, just take a look around
We're rejecting the God of infinite worth

Stand fast like Noah, and have faith through it all
Your faith will deliver you when the Lord makes His call

Will you be ready to go at the rapture
Or left behind when the Lord makes that call
Jesus is coming that much is sure
Then on the world, destruction will fall

For those of us who will be gone away
In the presence of the Lord we will eternally be
I for one can't wait for that day
All I want is Jesus to see

Just as Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, the last words of the Bible offer us the same blessing – “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.”

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 6:14-22 (TO BUILD AN ARK)

The Bible is full of great and wonderful stories which excite our imagination, but very few of them are as memorable as that of Noah and the ark. There is almost no one who can't repeat at least a portion of the story. At the same time as being exciting and memorable, it's one of the first stories people discount as myth.

Mark Isaak, on his website talkorigins.org has compiled individual flood stories from Europe, the Near East, Africa, Asia, Australia, the Pacific Islands, North America, Central America, and South America. In all and to date, he has 264 individual stories right there for you to read about a great flood from our past

The million dollar question is "Did all of these stories originate from a real account and devolve into various myths," or "Did one myth evolve into many?" Which is more likely and why? Obviously, even the answer to that will be based on personal biases, but the chances of 264 individual cultures possessing a similar historical account must be more than mere chance.

In addition to direct stories, there are lots of other hints that a flood really occurred in history. The Chinese alphabet includes references to the flood as well as other accounts from Genesis even though they weren't discovered until modern times.

In the end, we are left with hope and faith. Hope in the promises of our great and awesome Creator, and faith that His word and that these promises are true. As the psalmist said so long ago –

"My soul faints for Your salvation, But I hope in Your word. ⁸² My eyes fail *from searching* Your word, Saying, "When will You comfort me?" ⁸³ For I have become like a wineskin in smoke, *Yet* I do not forget Your statutes" Psalm 119:81-83

Introduction: Whether we believe that the story of Noah and the flood is true or not is irrelevant if the story is true. One thing is sure, both Jesus and the apostles believed it was true and they spoke of Noah as a real person and the flood as a real occurrence.

Our faith in what **they** say is only as strong as our faith in the story they attest to. If we don't believe in the flood, then we have no reason to believe anything else that Jesus says, nor should we believe anything else the apostles say. Peter wrote this to us –

“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,¹⁹ by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,²⁰ who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.” 1 Peter 3:18-20

Not only does Peter speak of Noah as real, but he speaks of the flood as real. And not just any flood, but a global flood which left only eight survivors. In the same passage, he says that Christ died for our sins and that He was resurrected by the power of God. If the flood of Noah isn't true, then everything else Peter says is equally unreliable, including the resurrection, and we are left in a world... without hope.

The Bible is a unified whole and to disregard any part of it is to relegate the entire book to both a waste of time and an unnecessary dust collection device. So when you sit in a church with a female pastor, you alone have to justify why you're there. When you decide to have an intimate relationship with someone you're not married to, it's up to you to face the Lord and explain why.

Text Verse: *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.³⁷ But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Matthew 24:36-40*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Building the Ark

It's not known **how** Noah was told to build his ark, only that he was told to do so. But two things we know, and which are clarified in the New Testament, is that he built the ark by faith and that his instructions were because of a divine warning. Let's read what the author of Hebrews says about it in Hebrews 11:7 –

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

A guy closing in on 500 years of age is told that the entire world would be destroyed by flood and that he needed to get ready for it. The author of Hebrews said that he was “moved with godly fear.” In other words, God had spoken and he’d best not dither in getting ready for what he was told was coming.

And today, there are jillions of people in the world today who have been told exactly the same thing – that judgment is coming. We have the same divine warning, the Word of God, and we have exactly the same choice – godly fear or dithering and denial. Either the Bible is true or it’s not... who will become the heir of righteousness in this generation?

Noah’s divine warning had arrived, alerting him to what was coming and the divine instructions are as follows –

¹⁴ Make yourself an ark of gopherwood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch.

¹⁵ And this is how you shall make it: The length of the ark *shall be* three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits.

¹⁶ You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it to a cubit from above; and set the door of the ark in its side. You shall make it *with* lower, second, and third decks.

So how big was the ark according to modern measurements? We have a historically reliable estimate that a cubit was from about 18 to 21 inches in length. This means that the ark was from 450 to 540 feet long, 75 to 90 feet wide, and from 45 to 55 feet high. This then would be a ship of 1.5 to 2.7 million cubit feet of space.

Anything this large would have required immense carpentry skills, even if it wasn’t lavishly fashioned. If it was only used to protect the life in it and not for any other reason, it could have been constructed as just a big box and it wouldn’t have needed sails, a rudder, or anything else. But no matter what, it would have needed to be seaworthy in construction.

The word for ark here is used 28 times in 25 verses of the Bible. It’s used in only two accounts and for two reasons – Noah’s Ark and the ark which held Moses when he was placed in the Nile River. The word is *tebah* and implies a vessel of indeterminate shape, unlike the Ark of the Covenant which resembled a coffin.

In other words, it was a hollow ship made and used for people, animals, goods, etc. Beyond that, we can't assign any particular shape to it. The shape itself is left up to the imagination of whoever is reading the story... a nice mental present from our God.

No matter what it looked like, the sizes given mean that it would have been perfectly capable of holding all of the people and animals that it was asked to hold and it would have had enough room for a year's worth of food as well. In all, it would have been approximately 81062 tons in displacement.

This ship then would have been the largest ship built for the next 4100 years. Not until the giant metal ships of the late 19th century would there again have been ships this large on the ocean's waters.

Along with getting the size instructions, Noah was told to build it of gopher wood. Unfortunately, this word predates the Hebrew language and nobody is really sure what gopher wood is. A good guess though is cypress.

The word for cypress in Greek is *kuparissos*, or in its shortened form *kupar* which sounds a whole heap like gopher. This would be reasonable because cypress is a non-corruptible wood which is impervious to bugs and worms. Lots of other suggestions have been made though and just like the shape of the ark, we don't have anything more to go on.

Noah was told to build a window for the ark. Again, there are several possibilities as to what this looked like. He was told "to finish it from a cubit from above." Some drawings show a long raised window going down the middle of the ark, some show a raised window going along on top of the deck of the ark, and some show it being an open window along the sides of the ark.

No matter which is correct, it allowed in light, kept out the rain, and vented the entire ark of the lovely smells of life which surely wafted from its individual compartments. Also, we'll see later that he opens the window, so we know that at least some of it was a fixed material that could open and close like we would open or close a window today.

Noah was told to cover the ark with pitch. This word in Hebrew is *kaphar* and gets its meaning from being a covering. Another use of this same word is when it's used as the price of redemption. I don't mean to stretch the meaning of the word too far, but isn't this exactly what Noah is doing.

He was using a covering to save his life from destruction. This then might be a veiled reference to the work of Jesus, who covers us with His blood and grants us His garments of righteousness.

Finally, in the construction, Noah was told to make it with lower, second, and third decks. Some believe this is a picture of the Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but this is stretching things.

Each of the members of the Trinity are fully God, but each of the decks on the ship are only fully parts of the ship, not fully the ship. In other words, just as an egg is a bad example of the trinity, so is the concept of a ship with three decks.

A triangle isn't a triangle if you take away one of its sides, but the ship would still be a ship if you took away one of its decks. The three decks then aren't a picture of the trinity, but they show a wise use of the immense size of the ship. They would also have added to the structural integrity of it, and they would also allow for a logical division of the cargo she was carrying.

Looking at the construction of the ark, we can make some pertinent connections to our own lives. Noah was given some very explicit instructions about the size of the ark, the number of levels in it, the type of wood to be used, and so on. In the same way, God has given us very specific instructions for our own lives in the Bible.

We'll see a bit later that Noah followed the instructions he was given exactly as they were received. However, there were lots of things that weren't included in the instructions. They don't tell what he couldn't do, only the things he was to do. It doesn't say that Noah couldn't bring any personal items onto the ark, and this therefore allowed him to do it.

If Noah wanted to bring along a board game, he could have done so. If he wanted to bring his favorite orchids, then he could have brought them along too. And if Noah wanted to bring along his favorite horse drawn buggy, there was nothing to stop him.

In the same way, the Bible gives us explicit instructions for our life. There are some things we can do and some things we can't do. Christians are supposed to marry Christians, but it doesn't say we have to stick to any certain race, color, or hair style.

The Bible tells us that all foods are acceptable for us, but it doesn't mandate that we eat any particular foods. In other words, I'm not forced to eat tomatoes if I don't like them and I'm not restricted from eating alligator tail if I like that.

What we need to do then is to be obedient to do what God mandates, stay away from what God forbids, and enjoy the freedom of what is left unstated. If we can do these things, then we're walking by faith in a world lovingly given to us to enjoy and participate in as long as it is in line with His will.

While we're looking at the verses which detail how the ark was built, we can see that it resembles a type or picture of how God has ordained worship throughout the ages.

The ark was made of a non-corruptible wood. In the same way, the tabernacle furniture, such as the Ark of the Covenant, was made of incorruptible wood. Both of these represent the incorruptible body of Jesus Christ and they also anticipate the incorruptible nature of the church who will bear the image of Christ when He comes.

There was only one door into the ark just as there was only one door leading into the tabernacle. And in the church, which is the dwelling of the living God, there is only one way of access – Jesus Christ. He calls Himself “the door” in the Gospel of John. Our worship then is directed to Jesus Christ as the Lord of the church and the One who brings us close to our Creator.

On the ark were many types of animals and in the church there are people of every race and color and culture. There are Jews and there are gentiles – all of which are sanctified by the same Lord. In the book of Acts, Peter had a vision where he was shown a sheet coming down from heaven with all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

He was told to eat what he saw and being a Jew he said “no,” but God told him that he shouldn't call anything unclean which God has cleansed. This symbolism was given as a reference to the gentile people of the world – all cleansed by the same perfect Savior. All prepared to worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth.

On the ark there were three decks with a single window on the top deck. In the tabernacle there were three divisions. The first was outer court where the sacrifices of sin were offered. The second is where the bread, menorah, and incense were offered, and the third was where God met with man.

In the same way, in our worship we start at the first deck and come to the final sacrifice – which is the cross of Jesus. It is also where we wash and are sanctified as we progress in our lives.

On the second deck we commune with God through the Bread of His Body, live in the Power of His Holy Spirit, and offering prayers to and through Him as our Mediator.

And on the third deck, we enter the most Holy Place where we commune directly with God in His presence – there the window is opened and our new lives begin in earnest. We unite directly with God through the Person of Jesus Christ in the perfect worship of purity and holiness. That day is coming for all believers who will simply, by faith, allow Jesus Christ to come in to them.

II. The Lord Has Spoken

¹⁷ And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which *is* the breath of life; everything that *is* on the earth shall die.

¹⁸ But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

The floodwaters were coming because of the wickedness of man. There's no other way to interpret this and it implies that God is behind it as a judgment. As disturbing as it may sound, nothing else can be interpreted from the disasters which happen today too – each of them is a result of and a judgment upon sin.

This doesn't mean that good people are immune from them either, but that what happens is a result of man's overall disobedience – whether you're talking about hurricanes, earthquakes, or any other calamity. Let me give you one example which may help us look at disasters a little differently in the future.

The Lord has spoken in history in very specific ways and in one of them is that He has given the land of Israel to the people of Israel. America has long been Israel's ally and defender. Many times, when we have worked to harm Israel's rights to the land, disasters have resulted because of those policies. Here a just a few –
October 30, 1991: President Bush opened the Madrid Conference with an initiative for a Middle East peace plan involving Israel's land. That same day, the Perfect storm hit America's coast.

August 23, 1992: The Madrid Conference moved to Washington D.C. and the peace talks resumed. On that same day, Hurricane Andrew produced \$30 billion in damages and left 180,000 homeless in Florida.

January 16, 1994: President Clinton met with Syria's President in Geneva. They talked about a peace agreement with Israel that included giving up the Golan Heights. Less than 24 hours later the Northridge earthquake hit California and became America's second most destructive natural disaster behind Hurricane Andrew.

March to April 1997: The combination of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat touring America, and Clinton rebuking Israel for not giving away her land for peace, coincided with some of the worst tornadoes and flooding in US history. The day Arafat landed in America, powerful tornadoes devastated huge sections of the nation, ripping across Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Kentucky and Tennessee. Arafat's American tour also coincided with storms in the Dakotas resulting in the worst flooding of the century. When Arafat finished his tour and left the US, the storms stopped.

September 27-28, 1998: Secretary of State Madeleine Albright worked on the final details of an agreement in which Israel would give up 13 percent of Yesha and the same day Hurricane Georges hit the Gulf Coast with 110 mph winds and gusts up to 175; it stalled over the coast adding to the disaster.

On September 28, Clinton met with Arafat and Prime Minister Netanyahu at the White House to finalize that land deal. Later, Arafat addressed the United Nations about declaring an independent Palestinian state by May 1999, while Hurricane Georges pounded the Gulf Coast causing \$1 billion in damage. The exact time Arafat departed the US, the storm begins to dissipate.

October 15-22, 1998: Arafat and PM Netanyahu met at the Wye River Plantation in Maryland to continue talks. On October 17, rains and tornadoes hit southern Texas. The San Antonio area was deluged with 20 inches of rain in one day. The rains and floods in Texas continued until October 22 and then subsided. 25 percent of Texas was ravaged and it had over one billion dollars in damage.

May 3, 1999: Clinton wrote to Arafat and encouraged him about "aspirations for his own land" and that the Palestinians had a right to "determine their own future on their own land," and that they deserved to "live free, today, tomorrow and forever." That same day, the most powerful tornado storm system ever to hit the United States swept across Oklahoma and Kansas.

August 29, 2005: Exactly one week after Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon completed the forcible eviction of Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip, done at America's behest, hurricane Katrina struck the states of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama causing immense destruction. 80% of the entire city of New Orleans was left under water. This may have been the worst natural disaster ever to hit the country.

Each of these disasters cost America an immense amount of money and many lives were lost because individual foreign policy decisions that were directed against Israel's best intentions. However, in the past three years, we have seen it become the overall policy of America to work against Israel.

Instead of individual disasters costing billions of dollars, our nation has gone into economic decline and has cost us trillions of dollars. The only way to reverse what is happening is to restore leadership to America which will support and defend Israel's right to exist without applying pressure on them to establish a Palestinian state.

Such is the case with every disaster and calamity. They are, in the end, a result of man working against God and relentlessly rejecting Him and His offer of peace which comes by the marvelously simple demonstration of faith in Him and His work.

Going back to the Noah account, God clearly indicated that He was bringing the destruction upon the world because of man's wickedness. It is His world and every form of life on it belongs to Him. But despite the calamity to come, God promised to establish His covenant with Noah.

This is the first time the term covenant is used in the Bible. God was going to destroy the world, but He would save Noah through the flood. Noah then was expected to obey the command and build the ark. When it was finished, he was to enter the ark with his wife, his sons, and their wives. These are the terms set out for Noah.

In other words, this covenant was binding and it was a covenant of life. But it was also a covenant of death. Noah wasn't allowed to bring anyone else – brothers, friends, his doctor, or his lawyer. God's covenant was established and obedience was expected.

And how does this apply to us today? Jesus established the New Covenant in His blood and it is just as binding as what God did for Noah. He has set down the conditions and all who obey it will be saved. The obvious question is, "Saved from what?" When someone comes up to you and asks, "Are you saved?" They usually don't even know what their asking.

The impression is that “being saved” means you’re going to heaven. But that isn’t at all what being “saved” means. The term “saved” is used 106 times in the Bible and it is always used to indicate being rescued “out of something” or “from something.” Not for something.

What then does it mean to be saved? Exactly what it meant for Noah – that we won’t perish when God judges. Paul explains salvation in Chapter 5 of the book of Romans –

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. ¹⁰ For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

-Romans 5:6-10

Salvation is a work of God, it is a work accomplished by God, and it is done for God’s people and no one else. The salvation is, as Paul says, **from** His wrath. The Bible says we are enemies of God and yet He accomplishes the work necessary to restore us to Him and then asks us to believe that what He has done will work out.

Getting saved isn’t going to heaven. Going to heaven is only a result of getting saved.

III. Two by Two

It never ceases to amaze me what hang ups people have with the Bible. One strong Christian, who is very close to me, struggles with – or at least struggled with, the notion that Samson killed 1000 men by himself with the jawbone of a donkey. Another family member says he simply can’t believe in the virgin birth.

I’ve heard people doubt that the Nile really turned to blood and others can’t believe in a literal 6-day creation. There are all kinds of things that people find too hard to stomach in the Bible.

Believers may accept the overall premise, but struggle with the details. Non-believers may reject the Bible because of the details **or** because of the overall premise. Jesus being the “only way” to God is a big stumbling block to many.

Recently, I had lunch with someone who was asked to talk with me about Jesus. The first thing he asked was about evolution. The next thing he brought up was that he simply couldn't believe that Noah could bring two of every type of animal into the ark. This was the starting of his doubts... Doubts begin in all kinds of places.

¹⁹ And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every *sort* into the ark, to keep *them* alive with you; they shall be male and female. ²⁰ Of the birds after their kind, of animals after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every *kind* will come to you to keep *them* alive.

²¹ And you shall take for yourself of all food that is eaten, and you shall gather *it* to yourself; and it shall be food for you and for them."

While destroying the world, God was going to save the world. And Noah's Ark was how he was going to do it. If you find it a clumsy way of doing the job, then think about it from God's perspective. What would be the best way of accomplishing the task while maintaining faith as the overall premise of being right with Him?

If you think about it from that perspective, the ark is the perfect tool of employing His saving grace while at the same time demonstrating His righteous judgment. Just imagine the sight of Noah, working day after day in the sight of the people of the world – building a ship where there was no ocean.

And as nutty as it seemed to those around him, he was gathering animals into one location like a zoo. God directed them to him and Noah made things ready for them. Because it says the animals "will come to you" we can assume that any animals that didn't come weren't meant to be a part of the new order.

In other words, if there are species which became extinct at the flood, it was because they weren't meant to continue on – possibly because they would be incompatible with the new ecosystem.

And what would prompt a person to store up food when everything went along in its normal fashion? According to Jesus' own words, in the days before the flood people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark. But Noah, by faith, built an ark and prepared for what was yet unseen and unimaginable.

One of my close friends has all kinds of food stored up in case things go south. I know another person who has spare fish nets, guns and ammunition, tools, and other things

set aside just in case the ball drops. Why are they doing this? Are they nutty survivalists anticipating the overthrow of the country? No.

They are faithful believers in God's word who have looked around at the world today, read the prophecies from thousands of years ago, and see clearly that the time is short. Israel is back in the land and the nations are lining up against her. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see what's happening... it takes a believer in God's word – one who lives by faith. As the Bible says –

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for. Hebrews 11:1-2 (NIV)

And so we too will be commended for hearing and believing God's word; taking to heart by faith the very things that seem incredible.

When the ball does drop, they will cry for relief, but relief won't come. Such are the workings of our righteous, just, and holy God.

IV. Noah's Obedience

²² Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.

This is our final verse today and the final verse of chapter 6. It is a verse of obedience to the Master's word and in fact it repeats the word "did" twice in order to emphasize Noah's obedience. God gave the instructions and Noah obeyed.

And not only did he build the ark, gather the animals, and store up the food, but he was also a preacher of righteousness during this time. We find this out in the book of 2 Peter 2:4-5 –

“For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly;”

During the entire time that Noah built the ark, he preached to the people of the world about righteousness and the judgment to come. And he did it by the Spirit of Christ.

However long it took to build the ark, Noah continued with his preaching. Some of the people on the earth may have responded and died before the flood just like Methuselah and Lamech, but out of everyone else, not one person was found worthy to join Noah.

And the call has been ringing out ever since – yes, there is a God, yes, He is there and has offered you forgiveness. But the call has been rejected far more than accepted. Instead of understanding the purpose of the nation of Israel and calling on Jehovah like Ruth did, most people waged war against her. And finally, even the people of Israel left behind the truth.

When Jesus came and walked among them, fewer believed and more rejected. Thirty eight years after His cross, they were overthrown and dispersed. Since that time, the church has faltered and failed to properly proclaim the word, but each generation has renewed the battle and time has progressed onward. But the world is moving further away from the gospel, not closer to it.

Enoch was taken before the flood and the church will be taken before the Day of the Lord. Noah was carried through the flood and Israel will be carried through the tribulation until Jesus reigns in her midst, leading the nations in the Kingdom Age.

Next week, we'll look over Genesis 7:1-24, The Flood of Noah. Take time to read those verses and ponder what they have to say in anticipation of another Church on the Beach.

Noah Builds an Ark

Noah was a prophet speaking the word of the Lord
In righteousness he plead with the world's people
But they were having fun and his message made them bored
They were all going astray, wayward little sheeple

Noah was a carpenter building an ark to keep him secure
He fashioned it from gopher wood where no ocean was found
The people thought he was nuts, oh but he was so sure
And unlike all the people, Noah wasn't drowned

He built the ark bigger than a football field
300 by 50 by 30 was the ark's size
Against the strongest waves this ship wouldn't yield

And safety from the flood was his obedient prize

The ark had three decks, a window, and a door
All that hammering and cutting, must have made him sore

Noah was a farmer gathering lots of food
He stored it up for years getting ready for the flood
And while he built the ark the animals came his way
He had twos of every kind getting ready for that day

Birds and animals and creeping things to be kept alive
Each came two by two after their own kind
What about the bees? Two don't make a hive
Maybe he brought more because he had honey on his mind

Noah did everything, just as he was supposed to do
He prepared every detail getting ready for the big day
But as he did, people mocked him and said "You're kookoo"
But Noah kept on preaching and gathering in the hay

Noah was a man of faith living not by sight
His life is recorded as a righteous soul
Everything he was asked to do, he did just right
And so his deeds are recorded in God's eternal scroll

It's faith that God loves in the people of the earth
But the faith must be directed to Him and His word
It is Jesus who alone will grant you the new birth
So just like Noah, please believe the message you have heard

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 7:1-24 (THE FLOOD OF NOAH)

Introduction: Here we are... 7th chapter into the Bible and another seemingly incredulous story. We've come across others though. The six days of creation presented a problem with today's thinking about evolution and things being billions of years old.

We talked about man being created from the dust instead of evolving from slime, and then woman being created from a rib of man. We've peered into the account of men who lived almost a thousand years and we've seen people grow to be immense in size.

All of these things have been coming at us so quickly in the book of beginnings. And now we're going to look into the Flood of Noah. It's a story most people know about and yet it's so hard for us to accept. Is the story true?

The Bible is the foundation of our lives and Genesis is the foundation of the Bible. It would be incredulous for God's word to start a bunch of myths, exaggerations, or lies.

Last week we looked at verses which confirmed that the New Testament writers believed that this story was 100% true. And this includes Jesus our Lord as well. He spoke of Noah as a real person and the account as literal. And so we are left with only 2 possibilities – either He was merely accommodating His audience, or He was telling us that the account is truth.

If you believe, as I do, that Jesus is God incarnate and the basis of our faith, then you cannot say He was accommodating His audience; the Lord doesn't lie. We, as believers in the word of God, are left with the only possible answer concerning the question as to whether the flood really occurred or not. It did.

And it is a story of immense love and faithfulness in the midst of judgment – love for the work of the Creator's hands and faithfulness to those who have been likewise just, righteous, and above all faithful.

Text Verse: *"For a mere moment I have forsaken you,
But with great mercies I will gather you.*

*⁸ With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment;
But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,"
Says the LORD, your Redeemer.*

⁹ *“For this is like the waters of Noah to Me;
For as I have sworn
That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth,
So have I sworn
That I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you. Isaiah 54:7-9*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Noah was a Righteous Man

¹ Then the LORD said to Noah, “Come into the ark, you and all your household, because I have seen *that you are* righteous before Me in this generation.

² You shall take with you seven each of every clean animal, a male and his female; two each of animals that *are* unclean, a male and his female;

³ also seven each of birds of the air, male and female, to keep the species alive on the face of all the earth.

⁴ For after seven more days I will cause it to rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy from the face of the earth all living things that I have made.”

⁵ And Noah did according to all that the LORD commanded him.

⁶ Noah *was* six hundred years old when the floodwaters were on the earth.

Noah was righteous before God in his generations. What does this mean in the context of the Bible and what are we to learn from it?

The free on-line dictionary, which means I didn’t have to pay a penny to get you this, defines “righteous” this way – “moral. concerned with principles of right and wrong or conforming to standards of behavior and character based on those principles; “moral sense”; “a moral scrutiny”; “a moral lesson”; “a moral quandary”; “moral convictions”; “a moral life.”

There are lots of other definitions out there which would suffice, but this one is particularly good because it continuously repeats the word “moral.” If Noah was righteous before God in his generation, then that righteousness deals with Noah’s morality being aligned with God’s morality. How can you know this?

Morality must stem from somewhere. If I love my wife, that didn’t come out of an apple tree. Instead, it came from somewhere else and is defined based on a perfect standard. Love doesn’t simply occur by chance. And it’s true for all other moral virtues.

If someone bumps into my car with their car through negligence, I will get upset. Why? Because there is a sense of justice and righteousness in me. And that is based on a perfect standard of these things. If this wasn't the case, then we would bounce off each other like bumper cars and it wouldn't matter...but it does.

I argue against abortion; someone else argues for it. The very fact that we are concerned about the issue at all is because there is a standard on which we are arguing. One is closer to this standard and one is further from it, but it most certainly exists.

If an objective law, such as truth, justice, or Noah's righteousness exists independent of our individual minds – and it does – then it must come from a perfect Mind.

Someone might say, "I disagree, everything is meaningless." What's the problem with that? It's self-defeating, because the statement is assumed to be meaningful. Even when we try to get away from meaning, we only demonstrate more meaning.

This isn't meant to be an exercise in philosophy, but an explanation of why Noah was righteous in his generation. It was because his moral code and his moral standard which was aligned with that of the Creator. This is what we need to know about the account to understand it in the context in which it is given.

Remember what it said in Genesis 6. There we had three important verses –

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually.

Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations.

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

This is what God wants us to know at this point in the story. But maybe there's more God wants us to infer if we're looking at things with open eyes.

What was it that Adam needed in order to be clothed by God after the fall? What was it that made Abel's offering more acceptable than Cain's? What was it that led to men calling on the Lord at the end of Chapter 4? What was it that made Methuselah's parents give him a prophetic name about the flood to come?

All of these were based on faith. So in the three verses we just read from chapter 6, we can infer that the wickedness of man on the earth was from a lack of faith. We can also infer that Noah was considered righteous by faith. And we can infer that the grace he received was **because** of this faith.

Noah's morality came from faith and therefore it was properly directed morality. Not everyone who opposes abortion does it because they believe that it is God's standard. It **is** based on God's standard, we already saw that, but it is the faith in the fact that it's God's standard that makes the decision righteous with God. Not that fact that the standard is held.

If an atheist doesn't believe in abortion, it means nothing to God. He might as well eat children for breakfast. Only when faith and deeds are working together are they acceptable to God. In other words, the deeds are – by definition – deeds of faith. As Paul says, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" Of all the people on earth at his time, Noah was this man.

Last week, Noah built an ark. Was that based on faith or sight? It was faith. God said the flood was coming and Noah could have said, "Flood, flood, what flood? Get out of my head you voice about the flood." Instead, without ever having seen such a flood, he began to build an ark.

Remember Hebrews 11 – "By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith."

So Noah was faithful in his life and he responded faithfully to the divine warning with more faith. After responding by building an ark, we saw in verses 2-6 that Noah was told to fill the ark with the animals sent to him by God and that he was 600 years old at that time. This was 1656AM and the flood was coming in just 7 days

II. Noah was an Obedient Man

⁷ So Noah, with his sons, his wife, and his sons' wives, went into the ark because of the waters of the flood.

⁸ Of clean animals, of animals that *are* unclean, of birds, and of everything that creeps on the earth,

⁹ two by two they went into the ark to Noah, male and female, as God had commanded Noah.

In obedience to the divine command, Noah entered the ark. And with him went the animals and birds and everything that creeps on the earth. Every creeping thing that creeps on the earth doesn't mean that politicians were carried along. Instead, it's speaking of reptiles.

¹⁰ And it came to pass after seven days that the waters of the flood were on the earth.

¹¹ In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

¹² And the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights.

¹³ On the very same day Noah and Noah's sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark—

¹⁴ they and every beast after its kind, all cattle after their kind, every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind, and every bird after its kind, every bird of every sort.

¹⁵ And they went into the ark to Noah, two by two, of all flesh in which *is* the breath of life.

¹⁶ So those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him; and the LORD shut him in.

Again and again in these 9 verses, Noah's obedience is brought up. Noah was an obedient man. He was told to build the ark and he built it. It would have taken a long time, a lot of effort, and more than probably a lot of verbal abuse. I can see the conversations around the morning coffee table. But through it all, Noah obeyed.

"Noah you crazy nut, with all the wood you've used for that box, you could have built a tower to heaven. Saaaaay, now that I mention it, that might be a good project sometime. Flood, Noah you are a loony toon extraordinaire..."

*Noah, you're nuts wasting all those trees
And spending your time doing crazy stuff
There ain't no such thing as riding the high seas
And all the water in the world wouldn't be enough*

*To float that big box even an inch off the ground
Hmmm, what's that rumbling Noah, what is that sound?*

*As I was saying, your work is all in vain
And those animals are going to eat you poor
There's no such thing as what you're calling "rain"
But those clouds are looking strange outside the door*

*Anyway Noah, stop being such a fool and preaching to me
I love you, but your plains old nuts you see*

*Judgment and punishment what are you talking about?
What is this "living holy" stuff you're speaking in my ear?
Just a minute, I'm going to the door to shut the weather out
Them big old clouds are starting to come near.*

*Where you going Noah? To that ark over there?
Well, have fun and I'll see you when you come out again
Hmmm what's this wet stuff coming from the air?
This can't be what Noah's been calling "rain"*

*Hooo Noah, let me into your box
I'm getting awful spooked out here
The water is getting up to my sox
And it's quickly getting higher I fear...*

I can't even begin to express to you how important the concept of obedience is to God. Obedience is what leads to life, happiness, and a close and personal walk with God. On the other hand, there is disobedience. It leads to loss, sadness, punishment, death, and condemnation.

This is the reality of the situation. When we aren't obedient, we only bring troubles on ourselves. When we're obedient, then barring time and chance, things will always be better off.

How important is obeying the word of God? The Bible is replete with the results of disobedience. Saul, the first king of Israel, lost the right to the kingship because of it. And he, his sons, and his progeny after them died because of it. Samuel laid it out to Saul after his act of disobedience:

So Samuel said:

“Has the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices,
As in obeying the voice of the LORD?
Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice,
And to heed than the fat of rams.
²³ For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft,
And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
He also has rejected you from *being* king.” -1 Sam 15:22-23

Disobedience is unrighteousness because it's demonstrating a lack of faith. There's that word again. It doesn't matter what biblical passage or issue we look at, the word faith will inevitably appear.

Even in what animals are brought on, we see faith. Noah was told to bring two of every animal onto the ark, but 7 of every clean animal onto the ark. But the Bible to this point hasn't stated which were clean and which weren't.

This has lead modern scholars to claim that those verses were inserted later by the priests of Israel. But there is no reason at all to come to this conclusion. Here's what one commentary has to say –

“For the distinction between clean and unclean animals did not originate with Moses, but was confirmed by him as a long established custom, in harmony with the law. It reached back to the very earliest times, and arose from a certain innate feeling of the human mind...”

Because no divine command has yet been given about which animals were clean, the commentary correctly states that there was an innate understanding in man of what was and wasn't appropriate for sacrifice. The Law of Moses was a direct command from God and built upon already established customs. We can't read more into it than that.

It was now the six hundredth year of Noah's life, and it says the flood waters came in the second month on the seventeenth day of the month. This would have been the October/November time frame around the autumnal equinox.

While the world was sowing its next harvest, Noah was preparing for something different. While the world was probably worshipping the alignment of the heavenly bodies, Noah was worshipping the Lord. While the world was anticipating its next harvest, Noah was anticipating a flood.

On that very day, all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And it says that the rain was on the earth forty days and forty nights.

The world was a probably a bit smaller than it is now. And the Bible says, it originally had a large amount of water in underground cavities and it also had a frozen canopy above it. When these things broke open, a global flood was the result.

If you ever look at a geologic map of the earth, it looks a lot like a baseball. At one time, it didn't, but when the earth burst its seams, it fractured the plates at the points where the water pressure had built up. Since that time, these plates have continued to move and the world has increased in circumference.

The frozen canopy would have come under this pressure as well, and along with the water being spewed into the atmosphere, the rains coming down for forty days is entirely plausible. The larger earth and the lack of a canopy over the earth would certainly account for many of the changes in how things are after the flood.

Noah was setting out on the world's greatest seagoing adventure because Noah was an obedient man.

III. Noah was a Patient Man

¹⁷ Now the flood was on the earth forty days. The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.

¹⁸ The waters prevailed and greatly increased on the earth, and the ark moved about on the surface of the waters.

¹⁹ And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered.

²⁰ The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered.

²¹ And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man.

²² All in whose nostrils *was* the breath of the spirit of life, all that *was* on the dry *land*, died.

²³ So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who *were* with him in the ark remained *alive*.

²⁴ And the waters prevailed on the earth one hundred and fifty days.

I've read through these verses probably 50 or more times and until I read them again before typing these very words, I'd never thought about the people as they were. It was always distant.

The flood was coming to save Noah and destroy the wicked. But it became personal when I thought about those people from the perspective of the people around me and the people I love who aren't believers.

These were real human beings – probably billions of them, just like the people we pass on the streets every day. They were just like the old boyfriend or girlfriend we used to date and to whom we still think about when our minds are still.

They were just like the people who are so dear to us at work and those we see in our neighborhoods. I have friends all around the world from my life's travels and I've made so many more since the electronic age. They are all humans, with real beating hearts, real hopes, desires, and aspirations. And every one of them is either in Adam or in Christ. Those are the only two choices.

Noah was a patient man. He certainly preached to those he loved right up until the flood. He did it through words and he did it by his actions. And even today he is preaching by those actions to the people who will listen. He was patient in waiting on the Lord's timing and his patience must have included immense sadness.

If I were to consign the world to destruction while being saved out of that destruction, my heart would be breaking for these people. I'd be telling them about God, about His love for the world, about living righteously, and about His Son, Jesus Christ. This is what I'd be doing if those I loved so much were on the highway to eternal separation from God and consignment to hell.

Wait a minute... the world is consigned to destruction and some people are going to be saved out of it. And I am one of them. I need to start telling people about God, about His love for the world, about living righteously, and about His Son, Jesus Christ.

This is what I need to be doing if I really love those people. Oh God, give me a heart for the lost again. Give me the desire to tell what You have done by granting us pardon from sin through the blood of Jesus. Break my heart once again, O God.

When the waters came, Noah had to be patient again. Whether or not he heard the people outside the boat he knew what was happening and he had to patiently endure

the loss of every one of the people he knew – certainly many in his immediate family of brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts, and cousins.

People he played with as children and people he grew up with. He probably patiently waited through many painful memories. Imagine our own lives and the people we've loved and lost. How crushed we were at the time.

The pains fade, but the memories never do. Noah was probably thinking about the many thousands of people who had come into his life – memory after memory as the waters rose.

And he had to be patient at sea too. The rains came for 40 days and the waters prevailed for 150. All this time, he and his seven family members had to wait in the quiet solitude within the raging waters.

We read that the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered. ²⁰The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered.

This wasn't a localized flood as skeptics try to claim. This was a global flood and every high hill and every higher mountain was covered and even submerged. Fifteen cubits is almost 25 feet. Even the tallest of the Nephilim standing on the top of the highest mountain couldn't prevail over the waters which flooded the earth.

And so everything died. Listen again to the terminology the Bible uses, "And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. ²²All in whose nostrils *was* the breath of the spirit of life, all that *was* on the dry *land*, died."

The Bible said it this way to remind us of the creation account – "birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man." In other words, in Genesis 1, these were all created by God and it means that He has every right to do as He directs with them. The air in their nostrils which is the breath of the spirit of life was given by God and now it was being taken away.

Only a perverse and disconnected heart would find fault with the Creator concerning how he handles His own creation. Yes, but we do. Each of us does in one way or another. Our friend dies and we find fault. Our husband or wife or child gets a disease or

in an accident and becomes an invalid and we find fault. Our favorite pet dies and we find fault.

All things have an end and mixed with joy is sadness and loss. This is the world we live in and we're asked to lift our eyes at those times and react in a way which acknowledges God's sovereignty.

After losing everything but a nagging wife the Bible says,

Job arose, tore his robe, and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. ²¹ And he said:

“Naked I came from my mother's womb,
And naked shall I return there.

The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away;
Blessed be the name of the LORD.” –Job 1:20-21

Like Job, Noah was a patient man. Noah waited and he was rewarded with inheriting a new world and a new start.

And waiting on the Lord isn't a concept unique to Noah. Rather it is something that the Bible refers to dozens of times and in many contexts. There are examples of people who do wait on the Lord and of those who don't wait on the Lord. You know where the reward is though.

The psalms especially are filled with people waiting on the Lord – people in distress, people undergoing trials, people hemmed in from all sides. But you'll always find the end of the waiting to be in the secure and loving arms of the Lord. In the 27th Psalm David says that there is no other place like those arms –

*I would have lost heart, unless I had believed
That I would see the goodness of the LORD
In the land of the living.*

¹⁴ Wait on the LORD;
Be of good courage,
And He shall strengthen your heart;
Wait, I say, on the LORD! Psalm 27:13, 14

And Jeremiah the prophet doesn't just wait on the Lord as if He's some type of cosmic candy giver like so many expect. Instead, he hearkens back to Him being the Creator and sustainer. It is this loving God who Jeremiah calls out to –

Are there any among the idols of the nations that can cause rain?
Or can the heavens give showers?
Are You not He, O LORD our God?
Therefore we will wait for You,
Since You have made all these. Jeremiah 14:22

And in the New Testament, there is the calm assurance of the coming of Jesus to set things right in what I believe is one of the few truly prophetic verses of the New Testament outside of the gospels and Revelation –

⁷ Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. ⁸ You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. James 5:7, 8

James asks us to be patient and to wait on the coming of the Lord and then he cites the farmer waiting patiently for the early and latter rains. Israel has lacked the latter rains for the past 2000 years. When the Romans when into the land and destroyed it and exiled the people, they cut down all of the trees for their siege works.

Because of this, it changed the seasonal climate so that the rain cycle stopped. But since the return of Israel to her land, they have planted millions of trees and brought back both the early and the latter rains. James says that this is the time to establish our hearts because the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Noah was a righteous man, he was an obedient man, and he was a patient man, but the Bible says that he has yet to receive the promise he waited for. Hebrews tells us so. There we see that he and the other saints of old...

“...died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. ¹⁵ And truly if they had called to mind that *country* from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But now

they desire a better, that is, a heavenly *country*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.” Hebrews 11:13-16

A city has been prepared for the people of God. Take a look around you at the world with all its beauty. Look at the magnificence of the universe and the splendor of what God has done. Six days. He did it all in just six days. When Jesus left us 2000 years ago, He said this to the apostles –

In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also.

-John 14:2-3

God did all of this in six days. Jesus has been preparing a house with many mansions for 2000 years. Just imagine what He’s put together for us.

And how do we receive our mansion. He tells us in the same book of John in the very same chapter –

⁴ And where I go you know, and the way you know.” ⁵ Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” ⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” John 14:4-6

The Flood of Noah

Get into the ark Noah, you and your household too
Because I have seen you righteous before Me
The waters are coming and the ark will protect you
And I will remember you as you float upon the sea

You are righteous in this wicked generation
Of all the people on the earth, you’re the only one
But you O Noah are not an aberration
In fact you and the ark prefigure my own Son

Bring in the animals, bring them in two by two
Except the clean ones, of those seven you shall bring
They will keep the species alive just as you will do

And the contents of the ark will start a whole new thing

Seven days more and will come the flood upon the earth
And every living thing outside, I will destroy
Right now they're laughing and making noises of mirth
But in just a week, there will be no more joy

Noah was 600 when the rains finally came
Along with him were his wife, sons, and daughters-in-law
And for 4000 years we have remembered his name
Because God in Noah, righteousness He saw

On the 17th of the second month, the waters were on the earth
The fountains of the great deep were broken apart
And the windows of heaven opened, ceasing all the mirth
That's the day God's great judgment had its start

For 40 days and 40 nights, the rains continued to fall
But not until the Lord had shut the ark's door
All because Noah on the name of the LORD did call
He and his kin were safe from the torrential downpour

Every thing with breath in its nostrils died
Out of them went the precious spark of life
I'm sure Noah inside the ark often sadly sighed
Along with his children and along with his wife

The water prevailed on the earth 150 days
And even the highest mountains were covered in the deep
Even to 15 cubits, they were hidden so are God's ways
When His judgment is aroused as if woken from a sleep

There is a true Ark pictured by the one Noah made
It's the safety of Jesus, our great and awesome Lord
Trust in Him and His security will never fade
He will protect you by the power of His eternal word

Oh I love You Lord Jesus, saving one such as me
And so I come before you, humbled heart and on bended knee

Use me, please, as a tool in your unfolding plan
Of the love of God and the blessed redemption of man

Hallelujah and amen.

Next week we'll look over, Genesis 8:1-19 - Then God Remembered Noah. Take time to read those verses before we meet again.

GENESIS 8:1-19 **(THEN GOD REMEMBERED NOAH)**

Did you know that Noah was the most successful investor who ever lived? He floated stock while everything around him went into liquidation.

I remember when the Twin Towers were attacked on 9/11. When I saw all the people in the buildings and heard how many may have been stuck inside when they came down, I remember thinking about the people who were crushed, “How is God going to sort this all out.” Kind of a stupid thought, but the immensity of what we saw that day was hard to grasp.

When the Indonesian earthquake happened and the tsunami went from Indonesia to India and destroyed so many islands and people, it was the same thought, “How can God sort all this out.” Hundreds of thousands of people just ceased to exist.

And then there is us... living in our own anxieties, troubles, and trials. “Where is God in all of this?” It’s a question people ask all the time. “Don’t you remember me Lord?”

Introduction: The number 8 in the Bible is the number of “new beginnings.” We’re starting the 8th chapter of the book and there are 8 people on the ark total, inclusive of Noah. They may have been scared or troubled by the events going on around them, but four of the most comforting words of the Bible start off our talk today – “Then God remembered Noah.” These words form the key to understanding many things, both in the Bible itself and in our own lives.

There’s a type of pattern which is found throughout the Bible which is hidden in plain site. When you see these patterns laid out on paper, they can help you understand more clearly what God is doing and why.

The pattern makes certain points and then turns around and says the exact same thing in reverse. Because of the shape the pattern makes, they’re called chiasms. The Greek letter chi looks like an x. While we’re talking, I’ll pass around the chiasm on which the Flood of Noah is centered and you’ll see that the pivot is right in these four words – “Then God remembered Noah.” “v’yitskor elohim eth Noakh”

It explains why so many things seem to be repeated for no apparent reason in the flood account. Hopefully, Sergio can figure out how to include the chiasm on the video too so that others can see it.

Its details like these that don't just show us the wisdom and intricacy of the Bible, but also the mind of God as He reveals Himself to the people of the world. I hope you enjoy this pattern, but I'm not the one who found it.

There are many, many more of them in the Bible and I have a large list of them on my own website. It's a great feeling to find something hidden in plain sight and to think that you're the first person in 3500 years to see what God tucked away for us to find. If anyone watching wants to see more of these chiasms, just email me and I'll send you the link to them.

Text Verse: *But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, And did not destroy them.*

*Yes, many a time He turned His anger away,
And did not stir up all His wrath;
For He remembered that they were but flesh,
A breath that passes away and does not come again. Ps 78:38, 39*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Did God Ever Forget?

¹Then God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the animals that were with him in the ark.

The beautiful words, "Then God remembered Noah" are set here for our benefit, not God's. God never forgets the work of His hands, but Noah may have thought He did as the ark floated on the surface of an endless ocean.

But safe and secure within the ark was a man and his family and the pairs of animals which would again cover the face of the earth. It's amazing to look around at the number and variety of animals on the earth now and imagine that a little more than 4000 years ago, every living thing on earth fit inside a single ship on the sea.

God remembered every one of them then, and as difficult as that may be for us to comprehend, He knows every one of them now. Jesus told us this when He walked among us –

“Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.”

-Matthew 10:29-31

God knows and remembers every sparrow. And He knows the numbers of the hair on your head. Don’t worry if He’s forgotten you, He hasn’t. He certainly has His eye on you. As you walk through your trials and struggles, He is right there with you.

While they floated on the ocean, I wonder what Noah thought. “Where would all the water go? If there was no land left, then how could the water ever go down?” It does seem like an impossible dilemma.

Think of it this way – if you have a cup that’s half filled with sand, and then you pour in water, the sand can never come up to the top. If the waters of the flood covered the entire world, then where would all that water go?

Part of the answer is given in the second half of verse 1 –

1(cont) And God made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters subsided.

A wind passed over the earth. Wind is an immensely effective way of licking up the moisture. You’ve probably heard of the Chinook winds of the Pacific Northwest. The term “Chinook” means “eater” and a strong Chinook can eat away snow an entire foot deep in a single day.

The snow partly melts and partly evaporates in the dry wind. At the same time these winds have been observed to raise the temperature, often from below 0 to about 70° and then the temperatures plummet to their base levels.

The greatest recorded temperature change in a single 24 hour period happened on January 15, 1972, in Loma, Montana. It went from -54 to 48° in a single day – over 100° in difference.

In the same way, the Khamsin winds of the Middle East blow so hot and so dry that you can walk outside completely wet – clothes and all – and be dried in mere seconds.

The evaporation of water from a water surface, such as during the flood, depends on the temperature in the water, the temperature in the air, the actual humidity of the air, and the velocity of the air above the surface.

If the winds were on a global scale and the earth's poles were no longer under the protective layer of the pre-flood world, the water being picked up by the winds would gather at the poles and freeze.

In addition, the land which was probably much more even before the flood now has huge variations in elevation. We don't only have mountain ranges above the sea level, but we have even larger ones below it.

The caverns of the great deep which were filled with water before the flood probably collapsed once they were empty and now form the sea floor. The 104th Psalm then fills in the blanks –

⁵ *You who* laid the foundations of the earth,
So *that* it should not be moved forever,

⁶ You covered it with the deep as *with* a garment;
The waters stood above the mountains.

⁷ At Your rebuke they fled;
At the voice of Your thunder they hastened away.

⁸ They went up over the mountains;
They went down into the valleys,
To the place which You founded for them.

⁹ You have set a boundary that they may not pass over,
That they may not return to cover the earth.

And to this day, the boundary holds true. With the exception of tsunamis and other rare occurrences, the water stays put. And even after a tsunami, the water returns to where it belongs.

² The fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were also stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained.

³ And the waters receded continually from the earth. At the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters decreased.

The wind and the draining of the water began to stabilize and subside and after 5 months, the waters began to decrease. We have here a logical progression of four things – the winds blowing, the fountains of the deep finishing their release of water, the end of the waters falling from the pre-flood canopy, and the rains stopping.

If you stand back and look at the account, it is exactly as you would expect it to be after a global cataclysm like this. There is no reason at all why we shouldn't take this account seriously.

After all the rain and the 150 days where the waters prevailed, you'd think that the ordeal was mostly over, but you'd be wrong –

⁴ Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat.

⁵ And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month.

The seventeenth day of the seventh month is the 150th day that's already been mentioned twice – once in the last verse of chapter 7 and then in verse 3 of this chapter. It might seem strange that this 150th day is mentioned twice and then it mentions the ark resting on the mountains of Ararat, which is the exact same day.

In other words, unless you do the calculation, you would never know that this was the 150th day and you'd assume that this was a later date. But it isn't. It's the exact same day and so the account isn't really following a completely chronological path.

This makes sense for several reasons though. First, the chiasm which I mentioned earlier is hidden in these verses to show the wisdom of God in the account. And secondly, if the ark was as big as it was, then it would have a pretty deep draft.

In chapter 7 it said that the waters covered the earth to a depth of 15 cubits. Think about it... if the waters reached their highest point on the 150th day and only then started to recede, and the ark stuck on Ararat on the 150th day, then the chiasm isn't just on the pages of the Bible in ink. It was also literally lived out by Noah.

The exact depth of the ark was the exact height of the water over the mountain God intended Noah to land on. Other mountains could have been pushed higher during the flood, but this particular mountain is the one where God wanted Noah to rest.

God didn't just remember Noah, He preplanned before the creation of the world for the

exact amount of water to be in the canopy above and the great deep below. He had to plan the exact spot that Noah would build the ark. He had to plan the exact waves that would lap the side of the ark as it floated month after month.

He had to know exactly what winds would push its beams to take it to the exact spot where it would get stuck on a particular mountaintop at a specific moment in world history. The execution of the plan had to be accomplished to the very finest detail.

And there's no reason to believe this wasn't the case. The entire account shows a minute perfection of detail that is beautiful to contemplate.

But there is one more point about this particular day which is even more beautiful than anything you may have ever considered about the Flood of Noah and how it points to Jesus Christ and His amazing work.

You see, this day – the 17th day of the seventh month is the same day that Jesus Christ came out of the grave almost 2400 years later. This might be a little hard to follow, but the Bible uses two calendars, the creation calendar and the redemption calendar. Until the time of the Exodus, the calendar started in the fall, but at the Exodus, the first month was changed to the spring.

The 17th day of the seventh month in the creation calendar is the 17th day of the first month of the redemption calendar. The Passover occurs on the 14th day of the first month and the resurrection happened, according to the Bible, on the Sunday after the Passover – the 17th day of the first month.

And just as astonishing is the meaning that the Bible scholar James Strong assigns to the name of Ararat. Ararat means "the curse is reversed." On the same day that the ark struck the ground and held fast, the waters began to subside. The curse of the waters was now being reversed at the exact same moment that Noah was brought to the safety of the land called Ararat – "the curse is reversed."

Noah and his ark then is a picture of the true reversal of the curse which began at the fall of man in Chapter 3 of Genesis. Only 5 chapters after the fall, Noah is given as a sign of what was to come.

Paul tells us that we were redeemed from the curse at the cross. The resurrection proves it to us and thus the curse is reversed.

Verse 5 continues...

^{5(cont)} **In the tenth *month*, on the first *day* of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen.**

This is the 223rd day from the beginning of the flood and 73 days after the ark set fast on the mountains of Ararat. It's been almost 7 ½ months and the waters are slowly finding their new homes around the world.

They would be gathered in the Polar Regions; in the mountaintop glaciers; in the seas, lakes, ponds, lagoons, and rivers of the earth, and also in the great caverns of the seas. Noah and his family have more time to wait and play chess before they can leave the ark.

II. Patience in a World of Hurry

⁶ **So it came to pass, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made.**

Every commentary that I read said that this forty day period was from the last comment which talked about the first day of the tenth month when the mountains were seen, but I have to disagree. The reason is that if the mountains were seen, then Noah must have already opened the window.

So this must be 40 days after getting lodged on the mountain top. In other words, this would be day 190 – 43 days before the previous verse. Although it may not make immediate sense to us that the account is flipping back and forth and not in chronological order, if you stand back and look at the overall picture and the purpose of the chiasm in the Bible, then it all becomes much clearer and much easier to understand.

So why would Noah wait 40 days from the ark getting stuck on Ararat before opening the window? Remember, the Ark draws a draft of about 15 cubits. What would be the point of opening the window when everything was 15 cubits below water? The noise of the splashing on the sides of the ark would be all Noah needed to know. There would be absolutely no need to open the window.

⁷ **Then he sent out a raven, which kept going to and fro until the waters had dried up from the earth.**

⁸ He also sent out from himself a dove, to see if the waters had receded from the face of the ground.

⁹ But the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, and she returned into the ark to him, for the waters *were* on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her, and drew her into the ark to himself.

And this confirms what I said a moment ago. The 40 days was from the time of the ark getting lodged on the mountain and not from the next comment about the mountain tops being visible.

The raven kept going to and fro until the waters dried up, implying that they still covered the mountain tops. So, I'm sure you're asking, "Why would Noah send out a dove at the same time 'to see if the waters had receded from the face of the ground?'"

Why wouldn't the raven tell him this? It's because the raven is a scavenger bird and would have been perfectly content to land on any surface, even the dead body of an animal or a person. Plus, it would be perfectly happy to snack on something like this too.

The dove wouldn't do this. Instead, it would return to the safety of the ark and to a clean, dry source of food. The raven is a symbol then of the unclean world, like a person who lives apart from the grace of God, living only on the world of death. The dove returns to Noah, just as a gentle and repentant heart returns to Christ.

Such a person can truly say just as the Psalmist did –

Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous;

Yes, our God *is* merciful.

⁶The LORD preserves the simple;

I was brought low, and He saved me.

⁷Return to your rest, O my soul,

For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

⁸For You have delivered my soul from death,

My eyes from tears,

And my feet from falling.

⁹I will walk before the LORD

In the land of the living. –Psalm 116:5-9

¹⁰ And he waited yet another seven days, and again he sent the dove out from the ark.

¹¹ Then the dove came to him in the evening, and behold, a freshly plucked olive leaf *was* in her mouth; and Noah knew that the waters had receded from the earth.

¹² So he waited yet another seven days and sent out the dove, which did not return again to him anymore.

Noah knew that things were drying out finally. But unlike many other plants, the olive tree can strike leaves even under water. And God specifically chose an olive for the dove. Throughout the Bible, the olive, and the oil it produces gives us beautiful symbolism of the work of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

What this verse is showing us is a picture of the resurrection of Christ. Just as the olive can grow out from under water, so Christ came out of the grave as a victor over death. And even to this day we celebrate this in the rite of baptism.

Tied up in the olive is also the symbolism of peace when God granted His favor upon the new world. This is seen in this fresh new life – the olive leaf. When we receive Jesus Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we are like that olive. Again, let's go to the psalms –

But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God;
I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.
⁹ I will praise You forever,
Because You have done *it*;
And in the presence of Your saints
I will wait on Your name, for *it is* good. –Psalm 52:8-9

And in the dove we have the symbol of the Holy Spirit descending upon us when we call on the name Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the Messenger of God telling us that all is well with our soul.

The symbolism of the dove and the olive is first truly realized at Jesus' own baptism in Matthew 3, where all three members of the Godhead are present –

“When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’”

–Matt 3:16-17

Because of Jesus, we now have the hope of the same beautiful words of commendation from the eternal God – “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased.”

III. O Brave New World

“They had mocked him through his misery and remorse, mocked him with how hideous a note of cynical derision! Fiendishly laughing, they had insisted on the low squalor, the nauseous ugliness of the nightmare. Now, suddenly, they trumpeted a call to arms. “O brave new world!” Miranda was proclaiming the possibility of loveliness, the possibility of transforming even the nightmare into something fine and noble. ‘O brave new world!’ It was a challenge, a command.” *A Brave New World*

¹³ And it came to pass in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, that the waters were dried up from the earth; and Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of the ground was dry.

The 601st year here means the 601st year of Noah’s life. This was the first day of the first month of that year, which is the month of Tishri.

It was the exact same day 1657 years earlier that Adam was created and it was the same day that about 2400 years later, the Savior of the world would be born in a little town called Bethlehem.

Noah opened the covering of the ark and looked, and indeed the surface of the ground was dry. “O brave new world, I’ve come forth to meet thee.”

¹⁴ And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dried.

This was 57 days after Noah opened the covering of the ark and it was the 370th day after Noah and his family entered the ark. One biblical year is 360 days, so they had spent 1 year and 10 days waiting and watching as the world was destroyed by water, the waters rose, the waters receded, and the waters fled to their new home revealing a completely different world. It was 370 days waiting to hear the wonderful words from God...

¹⁵ Then God spoke to Noah, saying,

¹⁶ “Go out of the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you.

¹⁷ Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that *is* with you: birds and cattle and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, so that they may abound on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”

Just imagine the excitement that the family must have felt as they got word it was time to leave the ark. We don't know how God spoke to Noah – whether in a dream, or whether directly, or whether in some other way, but he was given divine guidance that he and his family could leave the ark – just as he received divine guidance to enter it.

And just as they filled the ark with animals, they're told now to empty it out. The three categories which serve as a statement of all animal life are given – “birds and cattle and every creeping thing that creeps.”

As we noted when the ark was filled, the term “every creeping thing that creeps” doesn't indicate that politicians were carried on the ark. Yes, these were reptiles.

And as these animals departed, God also gave them a divine command – that they should be fruitful and multiply on the earth. This is the exact same command that was given back in Genesis 1. God created all of the animals at the beginning and the same spark of life that was put into them carried through to the time of Noah and it carries though even until today.

If you stop and think about what life is and where it came from, it should amaze each and every one of us at how stupid the concepts of spontaneous generation and evolution are. There is a spark of life in us and that spark **transmits** from us to the next generation. There is no new spark occurring, nor is there any evidence that any has occurred since creation.

But every moment is a new moment and it has an equally possible chance of producing spontaneous generation. If this were even remotely possible, then every moment new life should occur. In essence, every moment of time is a new nail in the coffin of the concept of spontaneous generation.

Were it not for the Ark of Noah, then there would be no life on earth apart from the oceans. And any animal which wasn't on the ark is extinct because its life spark died with the flood.

And finally, if the world is billions of years old like evolutionists claim, then the problem is only exacerbated. From the trillions of moments which have happened since the first

life of spontaneous generation supposedly occurred, their only explanation for development is evolution, not more generation. Both are stupid and corrupt systems which have absolutely no basis in reality at all.

¹⁸ So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him.

¹⁹ Every animal, every creeping thing, every bird, *and* whatever creeps on the earth, according to their families, went out of the ark.

Probably in a state of awe and wonder, the family obeys the divine command and leaves the ark, taking off the animals as they went. The earth was certainly completely different than it was when they entered.

The canopy was gone and the skies would have been different. The landscape would have been totally reformed from what they had known. The climate would have been different. Everything was new; everything would have been an adventure.

In the same way, Peter tells us in the New Testament that it will happen again, just as it did to Noah. Let's take a few minutes and read 2 Peter Chapter 3 in its entirety and see the parallels to the flood of Noah – both before and after the flood –

¹ Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), ² that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior, ³ knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, ⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of creation." ⁵ For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, ⁶ by which the world *that* then existed perished, being flooded with water. ⁷ But the heavens and the earth *which* are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

⁸ But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹ Therefore, since

all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; ¹⁵ and consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, ¹⁶ as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures.

¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, since you know *this* beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; ¹⁸ but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen. -2 Peter 3:1-18

Then God Remembered Noah

God remembered Noah out there on the sea
And all the animals that were with him on the ark
Noah's faith held steadfast during these trials you see
Through the waves, the winds, the hours, and the dark

After 150 days God made a wind to pass over the earth
And the waters subsided as these winds blew
The fountains of the deep were shut up in their berth
And the windows of the heavens were also stopped too

God restrained the rains from coming any more
And the waters receded continually to their new place
Things would be different than they were before
And the world would have a brand new face

The ark rested on the mountains of Ararat
And the waters continually decreased
It was the seventeenth of the seventh month, that...
The 150th day their sailing ceased

On this day, the curse was reversed as the waters decreased
And on this same day the Lord rose from His grave
The world rejoiced at the man they thought deceased
But our curse was reversed when Christ rose, Hallelujah! Mighty to save
And the waters kept going down, this took a while
On the first day of the 10th month the mountaintops were seen
That probably made our good old friend Noah smile
Even though nothing yet was really of the color of green

After 40 days Noah opened the window of the Ark
And he sent out a raven which flew to and fro
The sun could come in and dispel the deepest dark
And that same sun would help new things to grow
Noah also sent out from the ark a dove
To check and see when the waters had left the ground
But the dove returned to Noah's hand of love
Because there was not a dry place to be found

Seven more days, it was in the evening of the day
Behold the dove brought in a fresh picked olive leaf
Noah knew the waters had finally gone away
He must have gave a great sigh of relief
Seven more days and again went out the dove
But this time it didn't return to his waiting hand of love

On the first day of the first month of Noah's 601st year
The waters were dried up from the land's face
So Noah removed the covering of the Ark and turned his ear
And all the waters were gone from that lonely place

On the 27th of the second month everything was dry
So God spoke to Noah, it's time to leave the ark
Take your wife and the others out under the sky
No more do you have to live inside where it's dark

Bring out the every living thing
Bring out the birds and let them sing
Bring out the cattle, every kind of life inside
Yes even the creeping things, it's the end of their boat ride

Let every living thing abound in the earth
Let them multiply until they're everywhere
Let them conceive, and bear, and then give birth
Together with them, the world you will share.
Hallelujah and Amen...

The Flood of Noah

- A Noah (6:10a)
- B Shem, Ham and Japheth (6:10b)
- C Ark to be built (6:14-16)
- D Flood announced (6:17)
- E Covenant with Noah (6:18-20)
- F Food in theArk(6:21)
- G Command to enter theArk(7:1-3)
- H 7 days waiting for flood (7:4-5)
- I 7 days waiting for flood (7:7-10)
- J Entry to ark (7:11-15)
- K Yahweh shuts Noah in (7:16)
- L 40 days flood (7:17a)
- M Waters increase (7:17b-18)
- N Mountains covered (7:18-20)
- O 150 days waters prevail (7:21-24)
- P God Remembers Noah (8:1)
- O' 150 days waters abate (8:3)
- N' Mountain tops become visible (8:4-5)
- M' Waters abate (8:6)
- L' 40 days (end of) (8:6a)
- K' Noah opens window of ark(8:6b)
- J' Raven and dove leave ark (8:7-9)
- I' 7 days waiting for waters to subside (8:10-11)
- H' 7 days waiting for waters to subside (8:12-13)
- G' Command to leave the ark (8:15-17)
- F' Food outside the ark(9:1-4)
- E' Covenant with all flesh(9:8-10)
- D' No flood in future(9:11-17)
- C' Ark (9:18a)
- B' Shem, Ham, Japheth (9:18b)
- A' Noah (9:19)

From the book, Before Abraham Was, (Isaac M. Kikawada and Arthur uinn)

GENESIS 8:20 – 9:7
(A NEW DISPENSATION – GOVERNMENT)

When Abraham was asked to demonstrate his faith in a tangible way, what was it he was asked to do? It was to build an altar and sacrifice his son.

When Jacob was leaving the land of Canaan for the last time, what did he do? He offered sacrifices to God.

When the Israelites were in Egypt, what was the reason they gave to Pharaoh for needing to go into the wilderness? To sacrifice to God.

After receiving the Law, they spent almost an entire year at the base of Mount Sinai building a tabernacle and receiving the instructions for worship, for sacrifice, and how to live within the community of believers.

When they entered the Promised Land and as soon as they had established a foothold by destroying Jericho and Ai, what did they do? They went to Mount Ebal and built an altar and offered burnt offerings.

When they returned from captivity, and even before they had laid the foundation of the second temple, what did the Israelites do? In Ezra chapter three it says this –

And when the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel *were* in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. ²Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as *it is* written in the Law of Moses the man of God... ⁶From the first day of the seventh month they began to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, although the foundation of the temple of the LORD had not been laid.

And today, many thousands of years later, the Jewish people are preparing for a new temple, but above all, they are preparing to offer sacrifices on an altar. The Temple is coming, but even before it's built, they will be making offerings on an altar where it will stand. It is understood from the earliest times of man, even until today, that a sacrifice is necessary when approaching God.

The effectiveness of sacrifices is a separate issue, but the fact that they're made by the people of the earth is universally recognized as a requirement in our relationship with the Creator.

Introduction: Noah was a man of faith and a faithful man. He understood God in a way that brought him near to his Creator even when the rest of the world had been destroyed. Included in his faith were demonstrations of that faith.

He preached to the pre-flood world about righteousness and the judgment to come. He built an ark when there wasn't an ocean in sight. He gathered and stored up food when the world was eating and drinking from the abundance of the ground.

And after the trial of the flood, Noah continued to demonstrate faith as we'll see today. In our opening verse, Genesis 8:20, and lasting until God's promise to Abraham in Genesis chapter 12, God will work with man under a government type of framework. This is the third of seven general workings between God and man. And it leads us to our text verse today which is Romans 13:1-7

Text Verse: *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. ² Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. ³ For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. ⁴ For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. ⁵ Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. ⁷ Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Gratitude and Promises

²⁰ Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.

I need to note here that the day Noah does this is the same day that Ezra offered his offerings in the book of Ezra and it is the same day that Jesus was born. Right here in this verse is the first time the Bible mentions an altar. Instead of building a house for himself, Noah offers to God. He prepares a spot to meet, give thanks to, and glorify God.

Later in the Bible, we'll read these words in Haggai 1 after the return of the Israelites from captivity –

⁴ *“Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?”* ⁵ Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider your ways!
⁶ “You have sown much, and bring in little;
You eat, but do not have enough;
You drink, but you are not filled with drink;
You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm;
And he who earns wages,
Earns wages *to put* into a bag with holes.”
⁷ Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Consider your ways! ⁸ Go up to the mountains and bring wood and build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified,” says the LORD.

By this time, the Israelites had started sacrifices, but they'd lost heart in completing the work of building the temple.

One thing I've noticed while travelling around America is that in the older towns of the land the oldest building in that town, and the building which is most centrally located, is the usually church. Towns were built around the church and centered on the faith and mode of worship of the people who settled there.

When the Mayflower pulled up to the shore of America in 1620, the first thing they did was to write and agree to the Mayflower Compact and then to set a cross on the shore of the land.

In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, defender of the Faith, etc.

Having undertaken, for the Glory of God, and advancements of the Christian faith and honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and

one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic; for our better ordering, and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

Unfortunately, the first thing that's built when a modern town is established is either a shopping mall or a sporting arena. Churches now are built on the outskirts of towns. Instead of being places of intimate worship, praise, confession, humility, and the in-depth preaching of God's word, they now are social events.

There is a high value on providing coffee, creature comforts, and easy listening sermons, and there is a lack of discipline in the Christian life. This is the state of walking with God today. The sanctity and reverence of the altar is a secondary thought, not the first obligation of the purchased and redeemed soul.

But Noah first built an altar; a place for sacrifice. Whether earlier offerings in the Bible included altars or not isn't mentioned. The reason for it being mentioned now is that the earth was completely swept clean by the flood and the Garden of Eden is gone with it.

The Lord is now on high and His presence is withdrawn from the earth. It won't return again to dwell until the time of Moses and the tabernacle. And so, the altar is built to burn sacrifices which will symbolically lift on the smoke to Him and to His dwelling place.

We get our word "altar" from the Latin word "altus" which means "high" or "elevated." Noah was atop the mountains of Ararat and the smoke of his offering would ascend even higher. When the altar was built, it was built to Jehovah and not simply to God.

Jehovah – the Lord, is the covenant keeping God who has proven Himself true to the promise He made to Noah. And because of this, Noah offered "of every clean animal and of every clean bird." By offering from the complete set of them, it was a demonstration of thanksgiving for his complete deliverance.

The term "olah" is used for the burnt offering. This offering is completely burned up on the altar. When an offering like this is made, it's asking that God accept the offering as a substitute for the life of the person offering it and asking for the mercy of God. The fire and burning in the offering symbolize exactly that – the acknowledgment that what is deserved is the Lake of Fire.

The animal is given as a picture of this. Noah offered it because his life was granted to him in the midst of the death of the rest of the earth around him. This and all the other offerings in the rest of the Bible point to the work of Jesus Christ.

The book of Hebrews explains these things and shows how they point to His final sacrifice. In the end, Jesus is the only One who can rescue us from the hell that we rightly deserve. This is Noah's acknowledgment to God.

²¹ And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.

The Lord smelled a soothing aroma. God doesn't have a nose, but the Lord Jesus does. There are two ways to look at this. The first is that the eternal Christ – Jesus, who is the sovereign Lord of the Old and New Testaments, somehow actually smelled this offering and all the other offerings mentioned there and enjoyed the smell.

The other explanation is that it is an offering of faith by Noah. In this flame and smoke is the entire essence of the animal which is being returned to God who gave it. When Noah made this offering of faith, his very heart of gratitude ascended with it.

Everything tied up in the gratitude goes along too – the thanks, the feelings of protection he received, the anticipation of the future which is promised – all of it ascends to the Lord and is therefore a "soothing aroma" to the Lord.

How can we know if this is the correct interpretation? All we need to do is compare it to other offerings in the Bible that weren't accepted. There are lots of examples, but let's just look at one from Jeremiah 6–

¹⁹Hear, O earth!

Behold, I will certainly bring calamity on this people—

The fruit of their thoughts,

Because they have not heeded My words

Nor My law, but rejected it.

²⁰ For what purpose to Me

Comes frankincense from Sheba,

And sweet cane from a far country?

Your burnt offerings *are* not acceptable,

Nor your sacrifices sweet to Me."

The same type of offerings are accepted or rejected based on the attitude of the people, not just on the type of animal being offered. If the fruit of our thoughts is evil, then the offering is considered that way by God. We saw this in the account of Cain's offering.

Even though we're only a part way into today's sermon, this idea of an offering of faith leads us to the end and goal of our faith – the work of Jesus. We'd be remiss if we didn't bring in the true and final sacrifice which God Himself bestowed upon us in Christ –

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Ephesians 5:1-2

God sent His Son to live the life we can't live and then to give that life as a substitute for our own. When we receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, we are transferring our sin and our guilt to Jesus. His death then is just the same sweet-smelling aroma to God which is seen in Noah's sacrifice. Our very heart and gratitude is flowing to God through the death of His Son.

The problem with us is that too often we begin to take for granted the very sacrifice which was made. We tire of our walk, we skip church and Bible study, and we pick up old habits and tread into waters of disobedience.

In essence, we begin to show contempt for the very sacrifice which saved us and brought us close to God. Let's take a moment and pray that our hearts will be renewed in Christ again – just as they were on that first day we accepted Him...

PRAYER

Noah's faithful sacrifice was accepted and God promised to never again curse the earth even though, as He says, “the imagination of his heart is evil from his youth.” Right at that moment in human history, Noah was the priest and representative of his family and everyone who would come after him.

Because God accepted his offering, He graciously transferred that acceptance to the rest of us who came after him. In doing so, God promised to never again destroy every living thing as He has done.

The world will never be destroyed by flood again. One of the questions that I've been asked many times is “Then why do we keep having floods on the earth that kill people?”

The answer is obvious. God only promised no more global floods which would destroy all life. The way of the world, the localized calamities which occur, and judgment on sin has and will continue, but it will never happen again as a worldwide flood. Things will continue on in a constant and even fashion henceforth.

**²² “While the earth remains,
Seedtime and harvest,
Cold and heat,
Winter and summer,
And day and night
Shall not cease.”**

“While the earth remains” appears to mean that the earth will not last forever. This is a confusing subject in the Bible, and there are people who will argue verse against verse as to whether the earth will always be here or not, but we’re not at the end of things, so we really can’t be too big-headed about our opinion.

Even if the earth does last forever, it may not be in the state it’s in and so no promise would be violated by God either way. One thing is for sure though – whether the earth lasts forever but has a major makeover, or whether the earth is a goner at some point in the future, until whichever happens, God has promised that things will remain the same.

There will always be seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night. These things are so regular and so predictable, that people have built the wondrous monuments to the precision of God’s handiwork – Stonehenge, pyramids around the world, cave drawings, and even modern scientific equipment and star charts are all testaments to the splendid precision of what God has done.

We know exactly when to plant crops, exactly when we should reap, just the right time to go up to the attic and get out our long johns, and just when we can put them away and get out our swimming suits.

Ski shops know when to put out the new line of snowboards, and the shops in Florida know exactly when the tourists will come down and spend their money buying all kinds of crummy souvenirs that will shortly end up in the landfills of the world.

And along with us, even the animals have a sense of when to do the things they do. Bears hibernate, birds and butterflies migrate, moose get into their annual ruts, dogs shed, and love bugs swarm right at their appointed seasons.

And even more, the plants know when to bud and flower, the grass knows when to sprout its seeds, the oaks know when to drop their leaves, and almond tree has its nuts ready at just the right time.

Everything is balanced so beautifully and so wonderfully that man is ready at just the right time to experience all of these things which come directly from the mind and the wisdom of God who purposed them. We even know when to get out our bows and arrows and our guns and do a little hunting...

II. Tasty Treats

Here we are now, starting Chapter 9 of Genesis. In a beautiful display of God's love for the people of the world, we come to the comforting words of verse 1 –

¹ So God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.

When God blessed these men of the earth, it was certainly a blessing in their physical person and possibly even in a spiritual sense too, but it doesn't necessarily transfer beyond them.

I say this, because in the coming verses, one of the sons is going to act in a displeasing way towards his father and Noah is going to call down a curse on that son's son instead of directly cursing his own son. As the Bible records elsewhere –

“How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?

And how shall I denounce *whom* the LORD has not denounced? -Numbers 23:8

Cursing the son who has been blessed by the Lord would be a tragic mistake and so the son's son will receive the curse.

The blessing is upon them and they are told to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. This is a repetition of the original command given by God to man back in Chapter 1.

The modern concept of cutting back on population growth isn't just unbiblical, but it's anti-biblical. God has ordained that man multiply, not abort. And we are instructed to fill the earth, not worship the earth.

² And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move *on* the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand.

In Genesis 1, man was given dominion over the creatures of the earth. This same dominion continues after the flood and the title to them belongs to man as well. They are at our disposal and meant for our use. But a new aspect of this relationship comes about after the flood. The fear and dread of man will be on every beast.

This doesn't mean that we won't be eaten by lions if we're not careful, so don't go to the Serengeti without a good long rifle to protect you. What it does mean is that a horse has no idea how strong he actually is compared to the puny little rider on his back who beats on him as he rounds the second turn of the Preakness.

God hides this knowledge from him and gives him a fear of the little jockey so that despite his immense power, he remains in submission to the puny weakling. And animals of prey like the tiger and the lion which can't really be domesticated will still run in terror when man is near. Unless Siegfried and Roy are around, then it's lunch time.

The only animal in the world which is known to actively hunt man is the polar bear. And they are no match to a well-oiled rifle or a few Eskimos who know how to hunt and kill a bear with spears. What was lost in the loving friendship of man and animal before the flood is made up for by man's wisdom and skill.

³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs.

I like this verse. This is one of those verses that I enjoy day after day. I like hamburgers. I like lamb cutlet and lamb chops. I like pork chops and bacon and ham and sausage and baloney too. I love lobster and if crabs weren't so messy I'd like them a lot more as well. Venison is tasty. And who doesn't love chicken or turkey.

This verse is pretty clear, "every moving thing that lives shall be food for you." Alligator tail soup anyone? Until the time of the Law of Moses, there was no (notta one) prohibition placed on what we could or couldn't eat. The Mosaic Law was introduced to the people of Israel. This means the people of Israel, the Jewish people, not the church.

There simply isn't time today to cite all the verses that tell us the Law of Moses is over and done with, but the book of Hebrews says it explicitly several times. The setting aside

of the prohibition against eating certain foods is so clear and so detailed in the New Testament that only someone who has truly been brainwashed can overlook the truth of the matter.

If you struggle with this issue, don't. Email me and I can give you page after page of information about your freedom in Christ. This freedom includes ostrich burgers. If it flies in the skies, if it treads on the earth, if it slithers through the grass, if it burrows in the ground, or if it swims in the seas, God has ordained that you can have it for dinner. And invite me if it's in a curry sauce, please.

So get your special sauces together and prepare for a banquet of tasty treats of all types. Bon appétit.

⁴But you shall not eat flesh with its life, *that is*, its blood.

When the early church was facing legalism and Judaizers telling them what they could and couldn't eat, telling them that they had to be circumcised, or telling them that they had to observe certain feasts or festivals or the Sabbath, a council was called in Jerusalem. Among the distinguished members were the Apostles Peter and Paul, and James the Lord's brother, and other apostles and elders.

The questions included things like, "What do we do with and how do we instruct the gentiles who are coming to faith in Jesus." "What can they eat, what can't they eat, what do they have to do and why."

Their conclusion was so simple and concise that – really – only an imbecile could get it wrong. And yet denominations all over the Christian world blow it. The letter is short, only a few paragraphs, but here is the conclusion of the matter for those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord –

"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: ²⁹that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well." -Acts 15:28-29

The Holy Spirit was **pleased** to levy on them four necessary things. To abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.

Clearly, since then, the letters of the apostles have to be considered and applied to our lives, but nothing written by those apostles contradicts this early decision, especially concerning what can and can't be eaten. Paul later clarifies the part about things offered to idols and he and the other apostles speak in detail about sexual immorality.

Beyond this, things that are strangled has its own context in which to be considered. And the drinking of blood is forbidden because it predates the Law of Moses and is explained in the verse we're looking at. The blood contains the life.

It's is explained again later in the book of Leviticus –

“For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it *is* the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul.” – Leviticus 17:11

We're not to drink blood because God is the source of life. The shedding of blood then is the end of that life. When a sacrificial animal was killed then the life of that animal, its blood, was used for the atonement of the person sacrificing.

When Jesus shed His blood, it was for our atonement. God doesn't want us attempting an end around what He has ordained by drinking the blood of an animal to somehow gain its life force.

But the drinking of blood for this purpose has nothing to do with blood transfusions. There are cults which don't allow them, but this completely abuses the intent of what the Bible is saying. The preservation of life through a blood transfusion is a completely different category than what is attempted in drinking blood. Vampires no, donors yes.

III. The Value of Human Life

⁵ Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man.

⁶ “Whoever sheds man's blood,
By man his blood shall be shed;
For in the image of God
He made man.

This is an eternal standard, set down by God. Man was created in God's image and therefore to shed man's blood brings about a forfeiture of the blood of the one who shed it – whether it is an animal or another man. In fact, as I've said before, Numbers 35:33 says that atonement can't be made for the land which is polluted by bloodshed except by the blood of him who shed it.

Because man is created in God's image, and because the Bible gives the unborn the same rights as those who are born, the curse of abortion in a land is one of the gravest offenses that can be committed against God. There can be no atonement for the shed blood of abortion except by the termination of the life of the person who commits the abortion.

Unfortunately, because this is a political issue, the guilt transfers to the political supporters of abortion. They are actively working against God in order to terminate life created in His image. And even more unfortunately for an entire political movement, those who elect those who support abortion bear guilt in the process too.

This may seem trivial when walking into a voting booth, but when you vote for an abortion supporting candidate – at any level of the political spectrum, you are implicitly involved in the murder of God's image bearer and you bear the guilt of the blood. Think this through when you cast your votes. God demands a reckoning for the life of His image bearers and He will demand it from you.

And one more point about this verse – it says “Whoever sheds man's blood by man his blood shall be shed.” If someone commits murder, the Bible doesn't ask us to look at his childhood and determine what made him do it. It doesn't ask us to look at his social standing or whether he was drunk or on pain meds.

It says, very clearly, that a murderer is to be put to death. This predates the Law of Moses and it is based on the attack against another bearer of God's image. People who stand outside of state executions and protest aren't showing compassion; they are really only showing contempt for God.

**⁷ And as for you, be fruitful and multiply;
Bring forth abundantly in the earth
And multiply in it.”**

We finish up today with this verse. God repeats His mandate to Noah to “be fruitful and multiply.” The beauty of children and an earth full of God’s people, created in His image must be a delight to the heart of God.

He created because He is love and love is His very nature. How pleased He must be when His creation returns that love to Him in praise, worship, and adoration.

He asks us to bring forth abundantly in the earth and to multiply in it. Children are a blessing and a heritage from the Lord and we bring Him honor when we get married, have children, and bring them up in the knowledge of the fear and the admonition of Him.

The Dispensation of Government

Noah built an altar, he built it to the Lord
Thanking God for bringing him to a restful shore
He offered of every clean animal and every clean bird
And to the heavens did his precious offering soar

The Lord smelled the aroma that the sacrifice did make
And in His heart He made a promise to all men
I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake
Although there is evil in his heart as if inscribed with a pen

The imagination of man is evil from his youth
But I will never again destroy every living thing as I have done
I make this vow, the God of perfect truth
And I will keep it until the end of earth has come

While the earth remains, the cycles will work just right
Through seedtime and harvest, and in cold and in heat
Through winter and summer, and in day and in night
These things will not cease, but will faithfully repeat

And God blessed Noah and His sons with him too
Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth is what I ask of you

Fill it with those who are made in the likeness of God
Fill the whole world, wherever foot may trod

And the fear of you and the dread of you will fill every beast
It will be in them all, from the greatest to the least

Every bird of the air and all that moves on the earth
In the fish of the sea as well will be the dread of you
They are given into your hand for food and for mirth
So enjoy the tasty treats – snack on anything from the zoo

Everything is food for you, even as the garden greens
But do not eat flesh with blood, this is forbidden you
If you want, mix the meat with potatoes and some beans
But first drain out the blood, this is what you are to do

For your lifeblood a reckoning I will demand
From the hand of every beast and also from that of man
Anyone who kills someone in all the land
That one's blood shall be shed, this is your game plan

Man bears My image, the very image of God
Therefore in holiness on my earth you shall trod

Be fruitful and multiply, this again I say to you
Bring forth abundantly throughout all the land
“Multiply” I say again, it is what I'm instructing you
And your seed will flourish just as I have planned

Hallelujah and Amen...

For next week please read Genesis 9:8-28, A Rainbow, a Vineyard, a Blessing and a Curse

GENESIS 9:8-29 (A RAINBOW, A VINEYARD, A BLESSING AND A CURSE)

Although for many people the Bible gets easier to swallow from today's passage on, there will still be lots of stories that are hard to reconcile. We'll work through each as we get to it, but in the end, every one of them is given by God and bears the reliability of His truthfulness.

Some of the toughest concepts are now behind us though – we've worked through God being the Creator, a literal 6 day creation, the Garden of Eden and the Fall of Man, people living to hundreds of years old, and a worldwide flood.

I've asked this before and I'll ask it again now, what would be the point of God making up these stories? If they're not true, then what kind of a God are we dealing with? Of course they're true and God expects us to have faith that they are despite the difficulties they present. He even promises through Isaiah to help us along the way – "Come now, and let us **reason together**, says the Lord."

I personally believe that there is a far greater reward for a person who believes these stories and lives his life as a plumber than there is for a lifetime of being a pastor, a Bible teacher, a seminary professor, a missionary, or any other job that makes someone appear religious while not believing what's written here.

I am never more amazed than when I hear a preacher or seminary professor say they don't believe this or that part of the Bible. I mean, I can't think of a stupider waste of time or a more pointless existence than spending your whole life not believing the very thing you've spent your life doing.

One of the people here, right now, was attending a Sunday morning church a few weeks ago and had some questions about the book of Job, which he was reading at the time. He wanted to know about the great beast known as Leviathan. In Job it says this –

¹⁸ His sneezings flash forth light,
And his eyes *are* like the eyelids of the morning.

¹⁹ Out of his mouth go burning lights;
Sparks of fire shoot out.

²⁰ Smoke goes out of his nostrils,
As *from* a boiling pot and burning rushes.

²¹ His breath kindles coals,
And a flame goes out of his mouth –Job 41:18-21

His question was asking if this was really some kind of fire breathing creature like a dragon. The pastor's response was that the Bible will sometimes use local myths and incorporate them into its writings. In essence, God is accommodating His audience... a polite way of saying the story is just a lie.

If God is using a myth about the Leviathan, maybe David is a myth. Maybe Jeremiah the prophet never existed... maybe Jesus was just a guy born out of wedlock with a human father. At what point do we stand up and say, "It just doesn't matter? I can't trust anything the Bible says."

Introduction: Noah was a real man, the flood really happened, and there really were only 8 people who survived to repopulate the world and begin again. Today we're going to venture into the post flood world along with Noah and see how things started off.

Remember this lesson about Bible interpretation – if something is recorded in the Bible, it's there because God wants us to learn from it. It is about His great unfolding plan for the lost human soul. It is a gift and a treasure, so let's handle it carefully and search it diligently for what He is trying to tell us.

Let's do all of this to the glory of God, for the education of our minds, and for the encouragement of our souls.

Text Verse: *"For this is like the waters of Noah to Me;
For as I have sworn
That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth,
So have I sworn
That I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you.
¹⁰ For the mountains shall depart
And the hills be removed,
But My kindness shall not depart from you,
Nor shall My covenant of peace be removed,"
Says the LORD, who has mercy on you. Isaiah 54:9-10*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Rainbow

Irving Berlin said, *“Blue skies, smiling at me / Nothing but blue skies do I see ...”*

It took a lot of smart people to figure out why the sky is blue. People had to build on the ideas of other people and eventually we figured it out. Aristotle worked on the problem as did Isaac Newton, and many others. The reason why it took so long and so many really intelligent people were needed to figure it out and get it right is because the solution encompasses so many components.

We needed to understand the colors in sunlight, the angle that solar light travels through the atmosphere, the size of little particles that float in the air even to the atmospheric molecules, and also how our eyes perceive color.

It was Isaac Newton who demonstrated that using a prism the white light of the sun contains all the colors of the visible spectrum, so all colors are possible in sunlight. But this didn't answer why the sky is blue.

Later in 1871, Lord Rayleigh formulated how the interaction of atmospheric particles scatters the light waves into short wavelengths which appear more blue and violet.

These short wavelengths scatter a lot more than the longer ones. Because of this the scattered light disperses equally in all directions and so the sky appears saturated with color. The only exception is when something brighter than that saturation appears – like when you look directly at the sun.

When you do, you see all the wavelengths at one time and so they appear white. When we look away from the sun, at just the clear sky, we see light mostly from those shorter, scattered wavelengths like violet, indigo and blue. But we only see the light blue. Why is that? It's because of the way our eyes are made.

Unlike our sense of hearing which can recognize individual instruments in an orchestra, our eyes and brains interpret certain combinations of wavelengths as a single, discrete color. Our visual sense interprets the blue-violet light of the sky as **a mixture** of blue and white light, *and that is why the sky is light blue.*

So the next time you go out and enjoy a beautiful light blue sky, remember that the dust in the air and the cones in your eyes, along with lots of other gifts from God, combine to give you our lovely blue days here on planet earth.

⁸ Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying:

⁹ “And as for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your descendants after you,

¹⁰ and with every living creature that *is* with you: the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you, of all that go out of the ark, every beast of the earth.

¹¹ Thus I establish My covenant with you: Never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood; never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Back in Genesis 6:18, we read this concerning the covenant with Noah – “But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.”

Then in Genesis 8:21, we read this – “And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, “I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.”

God said he would establish his covenant with Noah if Noah would be obedient to the directives – which were to get onto the ark with his family and to leave the world behind. Noah did exactly that and consigned the world to its just fate. But God carried Noah through the flood and safely to the shores of Ararat where he made his sacrificial offering and God accepted it.

And now, here in chapter 9, God confirms the covenant and Noah becomes the heir of the new world. He is just as much a father to all of us as Adam is because we all come from Adam and then through Noah.

The seed of man continued through, and because of, the obedience of one man. And even more, God made the covenant with all of the animal life with him as well. Should we ever presume that we need to build an outpost on another planet because global warming would flood the earth, we would be as dumb as the ox who eats the grass of the field.

God’s promise has and always will stand firm. The earth will never again be flooded as it was. You can dismiss whatever Al Gore says. Tell him to take it up with God.

Have you ever taken an outdoor shower and seen a little rainbow in the mist around you? It’s a treat to the eyes and a personal gift from the Lord. How much more splendid

and striking is a giant rainbow, or even a double rainbow on a summer afternoon! We had one right off our dock just this past week on Tuesday evening.

So what is it that makes a rainbow? It's the droplets of water in the air that act as tiny prisms. Light enters the droplets, reflects off of the side of them, and then exits. When this happens, the light is broken into a spectrum just like it is in a triangular glass prism.

The angle between the ray of light coming in and the ray coming out of the drops causes different colors from different drops to reach your eye and form a circular rim of color in the sky – a rainbow. In a double rainbow, the second bow is produced when the droplets have two reflections internally. They have to be the just the right size to get two reflections to work.

¹² And God said: “This *is* the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you, and every living creature that *is* with you, for perpetual generations:

¹³ I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth.

¹⁴ It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud;

¹⁵ and I will remember My covenant which *is* between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

¹⁶ The rainbow shall be in the cloud, and I will look on it to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* on the earth.”

¹⁷ And God said to Noah, “This *is* the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that *is* on the earth.”

The very fact that this statement is given here tells us without any doubt that there were never rainbows before the flood. It doesn't mean there wasn't rain before the flood, but that the sky, if there was rain, diffused light differently.

In other words, all the way back in Genesis 1 we read about the canopy over the earth, known as the raquia. When we were there we noted that it was probably a solid canopy made of water which had frozen.

Because it was there, light would have come into man's eyes differently and no rainbow would have been produced. After the flood, when the canopy was gone, God knew that the result would be rainbows in the new blue sky of the post flood era. And so He used this new display of wonder and beauty as the sign of the covenant He was confirming.

If you think about it, this is why the covenant was given before the flood, but only confirmed after the flood. Can't you just see how everything in the Bible is so perfectly ordered and so logically placed? Now when we look into the sky and see terrifying storms coming our way, we have the reminder that it is only a temporary and local event.

And the thicker the cloud, the more brightly the bow will shine in it. The great life lesson for us in the rainbow then is that when life's many troubles abound, God's encouragement and reliability abounds so much more. As the sun shines through the waters to produce a bow for our eyes, we are told to have the light of Christ shine through our souls to produce encouraged hope in our hearts.

And the rumbling of the thunder which directs our eyes to the rainbow is like the call of the Holy Spirit to the dead soul who is looking for God and struggling to find Him. Paul tells us the remedy for that dry condition –

“Awake, you who sleep,
Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light.” Ephesians 5:14

The light of the rainbow for the physical man is like the light of Christ for the spiritual man. We can trust in both as gracious gifts from our wonderful and glorious Creator. Thanking Him, even now, for the precious promises which proceed from His word.

II. A Vineyard

A few weeks ago I said that various verses in long narratives form pivot points within the narrative. Normally these are ideas which are offset from what is happening on both sides of them. We've come across two of them concerning Noah.

The first was in Chapter 6 which was describing the wickedness of man, but when all seemed hopeless we read these words – “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”

Then right in the middle of the flood account which went on for verse after verse, we read this – “Then God remembered Noah.” If you look for these types of comments as you're reading, you'll be able to understand how God is turning the story on that pivot point for the reader and preparing for the new direction in it.

There's another type of tool God uses in His word is found in the following two verses –

¹⁸ Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham *was* the father of Canaan.

¹⁹ These three *were* the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.

Did anyone here see it? Let me read them again.

For the previous 17 verses, God and Noah were interacting through sacrifices, directives, covenant, promises, and signs. Noah's sons were mentioned during these verses, but when they were, it was only in conjunction with Noah. Now in these verses something more is added.

If you remember way back in chapter 4 on our sermon about the line of Cain, I stressed one name again and again. And I brought up her name several times in later verses as well. The reason I did this is because her name was important to the coming account and yet when she was mentioned it said almost nothing about her. Let me remind you of that verse –

“And as for Zillah, she also bore Tubal-Cain, an instructor of every craftsman in bronze and iron. And the sister of Tubal-Cain was Naamah.” -Genesis 4:22

For what seemed like no reason at all, Naamah was mentioned and never referred to again. But if one missed the significance of her name, then their interpretation of much of the rest of the Bible would be flawed. One name in one verse with seemingly no significance at all and yet so important to what God is telling us.

The verses we just read said, “Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham *was* the father of Canaan. These three *were* the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated.”

The tool God is giving to us isn't just trivial information concerning the names of the sons of Noah. Instead, the tool is the introduction of Canaan. As we'll see later in the Bible, each of the sons of Noah had other children. In fact, in the Table of Nations coming up in Chapter 10, 16 sons are named to these three men and yet here only Canaan is mentioned.

The tool being used is something you'll see many times throughout the Bible. When something or someone is added for no apparent reason, it is actually often a key to understanding the overall picture of the redemption of man or some other major subject in the Bible.

Look for these and think on them when they come and you will find both deep treasure and access to sound doctrine in your understanding of the Bible.

Every person on earth descends from Noah, but after him, the divisions start. We are all sons of Shem, Ham, or Japheth. If we are a son of Ham, then we might be a son of Canaan. If we are a son of Canaan, then we may be able to discern something about ourselves, just like Jews can discern something about themselves. Pay attention and understand the workings of God.

²⁰ And Noah began *to be* a farmer, and he planted a vineyard.

²¹ Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent.

²² And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.

²³ But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid *it* on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces *were* turned away, and they did not see their father's nakedness.

Almost all commentaries really hammer Noah in these verses, particularly for getting drunk. The terms "sin," "shame," "weak," "imperfect" and on and on are used. Or, commentators will say that Noah didn't know that he would get drunk from the wine, and so they show him to be naïve in an attempt to relieve him of the guilt they feel he bore in what he did.

But none of the commentaries get to the heart of the matter, nor do they align this account with what Paul says in the New Testament about drinking. He says there –

“For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk. ²² What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?”

-1 Corinthians 11:21

Although it may show poor decision making, the problem here isn't that Noah was drunk. Paul notes the people at the Lord's Supper were drunk, but he never rebukes them for it. And Noah was in his own house when he was drinking which is exactly what Paul told his fellow Christians to do.

It's simply unacceptable to pick and choose verses for cross referencing in order to suit one's own personal convictions about a matter, like being drunk or even merely drinking alcohol, and then to disregard the verses one disagrees with. The Bible is a unified

whole and what it proclaims as acceptable is to be treated in that manner, whether we personally like it or not.

Having said that, and before I go on, I am not promoting drunkenness. What I am doing is going where the Bible leads us and not taking the Bible where I want it to go.

The issue in these verses has nothing to do with Noah's state of drunkenness or his nakedness – he was in his own home. The issue has to do with the actions of Ham and is the entire purpose of why Canaan was introduced into that odd and pivotal verse we looked at a few minutes ago.

Back a few sermons, I said that one of the most important of all Bible rules is to not get our attention sidetracked or our Bible analysis swayed by personal biases or what we already believe.

Noah was minding his own business and his son Ham did what was disgraceful. But again, like the earlier verse, it brings Canaan into the picture. “And Ham, the father of Canaan...” Once again, despite what Ham did, the relevance is on Canaan, not Ham, even though Canaan wasn't even included in what his father did.

Ham “saw the nakedness of his father and told his two bothers.” We can infer that his words were more than just “dad is lying naked inside his tent.” Instead, it seems that Ham made light of the matter and may have treated Noah with either contempt or levity. In other words, he was at a minimum making jokes about his own father to his brothers.

But his brothers treated their father with a decent, reverent, and obedient respect. Instead of joining Ham in his immoral conduct, they took a garment, laid *it* on both their shoulders, and went backward and covered the nakedness of him. And while they did this, they had their faces *were* turned away.

In the book of Habakkuk, we read this comparable verse –

“Woe to him who gives drink to his neighbor,
Pressing *him* to your bottle,
Even to make *him* drunk,
That you may look on his nakedness! -Habakkuk 2:15

We can act actively or passively in a perverted manner, but either way, the Bible condemns these actions. God calls us to holy living and to act in a manner which maintains both our own dignity and the dignity of others. This is the failure of Ham and it led to the consequences of our next major thought...

III. A Blessing and a Curse

²⁴ So Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him.

²⁵ Then he said:

“Cursed *be* Canaan;

A servant of servants

He shall be to his brethren.”

²⁶ And he said:

“Blessed *be* the LORD,

The God of Shem,

And may Canaan be his servant.

²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth,

And may he dwell in the tents of Shem;

And may Canaan be his servant.”

It may be that the words “what his younger son had done to him” are saying that Ham did more than just speak in an irreverent way about his father. He very well may have actually committed physical perversion against his own dad.

This isn't unlikely and would explain quite a bit that we'll see as we progress through the pages of Genesis. No matter what actually happened though, Noah was severely displeased with Ham because of his actions.

So why did Noah curse Ham's son Canaan instead of him? Again, commentators of past history have inserted Canaan into the account and said he must have participated in what Ham did. But there are two things to consider which dispel that.

The first is that it doesn't explain why Ham wasn't cursed along with Canaan. And more importantly, Canaan isn't ever mentioned. We already answered this in a previous sermon, but let's review the answer.

The reason Canaan is cursed and Ham isn't goes back to verse 1 of Chapter 9, “So God blessed Noah and his sons.” At that time, I said that when God blessed Noah and his

three sons, it was certainly a blessing in their physical person and possibly even in a spiritual sense too. But that blessing doesn't necessarily transfer beyond them.

In other words, God had blessed Ham and therefore Noah couldn't curse him. As the Bible clearly says elsewhere –

“How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?

And how shall I denounce *whom* the LORD has not denounced? -Numbers 23:8

Because Ham received God's blessing, it would be an act of defiance against God for Noah to turn and curse him. Instead he cursed Canaan. Ham was the youngest son of Noah and Canaan was the youngest son of Ham. And so in order to demonstrate justice in the matter and ensure he didn't curse the one God had blessed, he turned his curse towards Canaan.

This curse of Noah upon Canaan and the blessing of Shem and Japheth by Noah is the first explicit prophetic utterance by man of the entire Bible. What is left unstated is any blessing or curse at all on his son Ham. He neither confirms God's blessing upon him, nor does he call a curse on upon him.

Ham is the great ignored figure of the prophecy and to this date, the people groups who make up the sons of Ham around the world remain relatively outside of the main scope of the world's attention.

In the next chapter, we will see the divisions of these sons. The curse on the Canaanites will become more and more evident leading right up until the time of Israel inhabiting the Promised Land and the interaction of these people with Israel will be exactly as Noah has prophesied right here.

After the cursing of Canaan, Noah directs his first blessing to the second son – Shem. This is known as the doctrine of divine election. Abel was put ahead of Cain. When Abel was killed, Seth replaced him as the chosen and adopted son of God. Now, for the second time we see a second son placed above the first.

This pattern will continue and grow richly in the Bible and points directly to the work of Jesus Christ who replaces fallen Adam. The second replacing the first. When we get to the story of Abraham, we'll see him receive the blessing even though he was the second son of his father.

From Abraham came two notable sons, Ishmael and Isaac, but only one son is chosen to continue the selected line – Isaac. From Isaac, will come two notable sons, Esau and Jacob, but only Jacob will be chosen to continue the selected line.

From Jacob will come the 12 sons of Israel – all who will share in his blessing, but from one of them, Judah, the line will again be narrowed. Judah will have two notable sons – Zerah and Perez, but only one is chosen to continue the line – the second son Perez.

And so the Bible continues in this way. If we think about it, we can see that God places each of us in the exact place where He chooses to display His wisdom and knowledge and yet when He does this, He doesn't violate the free will of the people of the world. Thus He is both just and the justifier of all who demonstrate faith in Him.

In his blessing, Noah mentions Japheth, his firstborn. He says, "May God enlarge Japheth." In saying this, he makes a pun on his name. The name Japheth means to enlarge or to widely extend. Noah blesses the son with the very name he gave him.

In all, the prophecy mentions the servant-hood of Canaan 3 times and he is placed directly as a servant to both Shem and Japheth.

²⁸ And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. ²⁹ So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years; and he died.

Here we are, having arrived at the last verse of Chapter 9 and our last verse for today. Noah was 600 years old at the time of the flood and he lasted another 350 years after it. This means that Noah died in the year 2006 Anno Mundi.

Before we close things up today, I want to give a note of hope and assurance to you all. In the Bible, there are blessings and curses that fall on various people and, yes, these transfer through to the descendants of those people.

The problem many people have then is that if they are outside of the favored line, they may feel like they are still living under the curse of their fathers. However, through Jesus Christ, all are granted the same privileges and the same salvation. The account of Noah lists his sons in this order – Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

In the book of Acts, this is the same order in which salvation through Christ came to the people of the world. The sons of Shem include Israel, and they received Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts Chapter 2.

The sons of Ham came next when an Ethiopian eunuch received Christ and was baptized in chapter 8 of Acts. And finally, the sons of Japheth were represented in chapter 10 when Cornelius, an Italian, received Christ together with his family. In other words, God worked out a plan which would restore all of the people of the world, represented by these three men.

In Christ, every curse is lifted and every heart is made new. All who call on Him are elevated to the same level and none rises above another.

Paul explains this in the book of Galatians – There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Abraham was of the favored line of Noah's son Shem, but we are all included in the same spiritual blessing through Jesus Christ. No matter where you descend from and no matter what your past may have been like, in Jesus Christ there is a grand and glorious future for you as God's cherished and blessed child.

A Rainbow, a Vineyard, a Blessing and a Curse

God spoke to Noah and to his sons too
As for Me, behold I establish my covenant with you

And this covenant will continue on forever, it is true
I am also making it with your descendants after you

And even more, it is with every living creature that you see
With the birds, the cattle, and every beast with you
Of all the life that leaves the ark, the promise is from Me
This is my covenant and My words to you are true

Never again shall all flesh be cut off by such an inundation
Nor again shall there be a flood to destroy every living man
I make this covenant with you and make this proclamation
This promise to you is a part of my great unfolding plan

And this is the sign of the covenant between Me and you
And every living creature with you for all generations

I set my rainbow in the cloud, to remember that it's true
That your flood was the last of such watery devastations

It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the land
That the rainbow will be seen brightly in the cloud
And I will remember my covenant and my word, it shall stand
Never again will a destroying global flood be allowed

The rainbow shall be in the cloud to remind me of this day
I will look on it to remember my everlasting promise
Between God and every living creature I do convey
My word is true so I ask you to not be a doubting Thomas

Now the sons of Noah that were on the ark were three
Shem and Ham and Japheth, each had his given name
And Ham was the father of Canaan, cursed he would be
When Ham did something wrong, on Canaan fell the blame

Noah began to be a farmer and he planted a vineyard
Then he drank of the wine and lay drunk and uncovered in his tent
And Ham for his father's state, modesty he did not regard
And he talked to his brothers saying things with bad intent

But Shem and Japheth treated their father with respect
They covered Noah's nakedness in a caring way
They had their faces turned and his dignity they did protect
And their deeds are hailed as noble, even to this day

When Noah awoke from his wine, He knew what Ham had done
And so in repayment Noah cursed Ham's youngest son

Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants he shall be
He shall serve his brethren and they shall rule over him
Blessed be the Lord the God of Shem, yes blessed is He
And may Canaan be his servant, may his days be ever grim

And may God enlarge Japheth, and in Shem's tents may he dwell
And may Canaan be his servant, to serve Japheth as well

And Noah lived after the flood 350 years
So all the days of Noah were 950 and he died
He lived through great trials and certainly many tears
It can be said of Noah, his faith was perfectly applied

And we like Noah can also be called sons of God
When we call out to Jesus as our saving Lord
When we do, heavenly streets we will trod
Yes, simply by believing and taking God at His word

Hallelujah and Amen...

For next week, take time to read Genesis 10:1-5, The Table of Nations, Part 1, The Sons of Japheth

GENESIS 10:1-5

(THE TABLE OF NATIONS, PART 1: THE SONS OF JAPHETH)

Chapter 10 of Genesis is a lot like Chapter 5 in one respect. It lists names of people and it includes just a little bit of other minor information coming along with those names. For this reason, it's often passed through quickly and without a lot of study or thought. But it's been placed in the Bible by God and therefore it is something we should deem as important as He does.

This chapter is the last time that all of the people of the world are listed together in a family type of arrangement. Many of the people groups mentioned here though will show up again in the Bible, particularly in future prophecy.

So understanding who these people were and where they migrated to can help us to understand who is being spoken of in prophecy, including future battles.

Without this knowledge, the events of the world today seem unpredictable and frightening, but knowing who these people became reveals to us that God is in complete control of all things, including our present trying times and the future which we are rushing headlong into.

I hope you'll allow me a couple minutes to read Martin Luther's thoughts on this chapter-

"Whenever I read these names, I think of the wretched state of the human race. Even though we have the most excellent gift of reason, we are nevertheless so overwhelmed by misfortunes that we are ignorant not only of our own origin and the lineal descent of our ancestors but even of God Himself, our Creator. Look into the historical accounts of all nations. If it were not for Moses alone, what would you know about the origin of man?...

Of this wretched state, that is, of our awful blindness, we are reminded by the passage before us, which gives us instruction about things that are unknown to the whole world. What do we have about the very best part of the second world besides words, not to mention the first one, which antedated the Flood? The Greeks wanted to have the account of their activities preserved, the Romans likewise; but how insignificant this is in comparison with the earlier times, concerning which Moses has drawn up a list of names in this passage, not of deeds!

Hence one must consider this chapter of Genesis a mirror in which to discern what we human beings are, namely, creatures so marred by sin that we have no knowledge of our own origin, not even of God Himself, our Creator, unless the Word of God reveals these sparks of divine light to us from afar. Then what is more futile than boasting of one's wisdom, riches, power, and other things that pass away completely?

Therefore we have reason to regard the Holy Bible highly and to consider it a most precious treasure. This very chapter, even though it is considered full of dead words, has in it the thread that is drawn from the first world to the middle and to the end of all things. From Adam the promise concerning Christ is passed on to Seth; from Seth to Noah; from Noah to Shem; and from Shem to this Eber, from whom the Hebrew nation received its name as the heir for whom the promise about the Christ was intended in preference to all other peoples of the whole world. This knowledge the Holy Scriptures reveal to us. Those who are without them live in error, uncertainty, and boundless ungodliness; for they have no knowledge about who they are and whence they came.”

Introduction: Martin Luther correctly came to the conclusion that this chapter contains the thread which started at creation and will continue until eternity. Without this link, there would be a tear in the fabric of our understanding about the things of God and the redemption of man. Because of this, we need to spend some time in chapter 10 and not hurry through it.

Text Verse: *So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. Deuteronomy 8:3*

Every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD includes passages which may seem tedious, but they contain deep riches of wisdom and truth. So, ...

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Blessings and the Curse

¹Now this *is* the genealogy of the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And sons were born to them after the flood.

This is now the fourth set of generations or genealogies that the Bible has given us. So far we've seen the generations of the heavens and the earth in Genesis 2; the generations of Adam in Genesis 5; the generations of Noah in Genesis 6; and now we've come to those of **the sons of Noah**.

Noah, which means "rest" safely came to the other side of the flood and received his rest. But from him came three sons, all of which were named in anticipation of growth. Shem means "name or fame" indicating he would expand and become well known.

Ham means "hot or passion" indicating anything but idleness, and Japheth means "to expand or enlarge." The world was going to move in many directions and these three sons would be the fathers of that human movement. In this chapter, the world will be divided into seventy nation groups. This then, is the table of the nations.

Before going any further, let's go back and look at the blessings and curse that were given by Noah to his sons. These will come into clarity of focus in the world, even as we know it today. And also from them will come many interesting biblical patterns.

Here is Noah's curse and blessings as we heard them the week before Palm Sunday –

Cursed *be* Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brethren."

²⁶ And he said:

"Blessed *be* the LORD,
The God of Shem,
And may Canaan be his servant.

²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth,
And may he dwell in the tents of Shem;
And may Canaan be his servant." -Genesis 9:25-27

Because of what Noah's youngest son Ham did, Ham's youngest son Canaan was cursed. After this Shem and Japheth are mentioned, but Ham isn't. Noah's sons are listed here in chapter 10 and elsewhere in the Bible in order as Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Noah's blessing to Shem said, "Blessed *be* the LORD, The God of Shem, And may Canaan be his servant." Rather than directly blessing Shem, Noah says, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem." The blessing then is a spiritual one.

And the line of Shem since then has been the main spiritual line of man, including all three of the world's monotheistic religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Regardless of the validity of the religion, the spiritual nature of the people has continued for over 4000 years.

Ham is the second son and received no blessing or curse directly. Only his son was cursed, but implied in the curse of Canaan is the family of Ham in general. The curse is that they would be servants to their brothers.

The line of Ham, as we will explore in greater detail next week, has truly been the servants to the world in several ways. From the line of Ham have come the great technological and physical achievements of the earth. They are the great artisans and builders.

And finally, Japheth is mentioned last. In his blessing, Noah said, "May God enlarge Japheth, And may he dwell in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant." Today we will see how accurately this was fulfilled in the line of Japheth, in both a literal and a spiritual sense. From Japheth have come the great scientific and philosophical achievements of humanity.

In a previous Genesis sermon we saw that in the book of Acts, the same order in which these three sons are mentioned is the same order in which salvation through Christ came to the people of the world. The sons of Shem include Israel, and they received Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts Chapter 2.

The sons of Ham came next when the Ethiopian eunuch received Christ and was baptized in chapter 8 of Acts. And finally, the sons of Japheth were represented in chapter 10 when Cornelius the Italian received Christ together with his family.

But in what is an equally amazing pattern each of these three groups specifically came seeking Jesus at one time or another and when they do, they are mentioned in this same order – Shem, Ham, and then Japheth. The three groups who seek Him are shepherds, wise men, and Greeks.

The shepherds who sought Jesus at His birth in Luke 2 were sons of Shem. The Magi in Matthew 2, came seeking Him some time later and were probably sons of Ham from Arabia. And finally, the Greeks who sought Jesus in John 12 were from Japheth.

And then again, we can look and find another biblical pattern which follows these three sons and the achievements of their descendants. It is reflected in the order of the three synoptic gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

These three accounts are amazingly similar and yet they contain different information and are directed to different audiences. And these audiences are in the order of Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

Matthew is obviously directed to the sons of Shem – the Semites, and in particular the Jewish people. In Mark, Jesus is depicted as the servant, just as the people of Ham are noted as the servant people of the world. And there is no doubt who Luke is directed to – the Greek mind, which comes from the line of Japheth.

If you've ever wondered how the gospel of Jesus can affect people from every culture, every race, and every ethnic group, it's because it is directed in various ways to the people of the world, all who came from one of these three sons of Noah. The gospel is a message for all the people of the world and a message of hope which can connect with the thought process of any mind.

And if these wonderful points so far weren't enough, there is yet another beautiful picture of the universality of the message of Jesus and His work accomplished on the cross of Calvary. It is prominently displayed in the crucifixion account where each of these three branches of mankind took part in His crucifixion.

The sons of Shem were morally and spiritually responsible for His death. They sold Him, they tried Him, they convicted Him, and they handed Him over. As they did, they cried out, "His blood be upon us and upon our children."

Ham was represented there too. Simon of Cyrene acted as the servant, just as Noah prophesied, when he carried the physical burden of the cross for Jesus, leading him to the Place of the Skull where He would be crucified and die.

And Japheth was there as well. His sons were given the executive responsibility for what occurred when Pilate tried Him and the Roman soldiers actually pierced His body through with the nails and the spear.

From what may have seemed like an innocuous sentence about three sons of Noah in an otherwise mundane seeming chapter of the Bible come patterns and parallels which

show us both the immense wisdom of God and the wonderful love of Him for all the people of the world who seek Him out.

II. May God Enlarge Japheth

²The sons of Japheth were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras.

³The sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah.

⁴The sons of Javan were Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim.

⁵From these the coastland *peoples* of the Gentiles were separated into their lands, everyone according to his language, according to their families, into their nations.

Despite being mentioned in the first verse as Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the lineage of Japheth is given first now because he was the firstborn of Noah and possibly also because he was the group of people furthest removed geographically from the Israelites and therefore the people who would have the least immediate affect on them from a biblical perspective.

In this account, fifteen names are mentioned including Japheth, seven sons of Japheth, and seven grandsons.

Some of these names are mentioned in Ezekiel 38 and even in the book of Revelation as people who will come against Israel in the future. In the case of Ezekiel 38, the battles may actually occur in our lifetime... and maybe even in the next few years.

These sons of Japheth became the coastland *peoples* of the Gentiles. Because of this, they would more easily branch out around the world than Noah's other sons. From the coastlines, they would become the great sea-going adventurers of the world.

Early on, the descendants of Japheth, also known as the Aryans, split into two main groups. One group settled in the direction of Europe and the other went towards India. These groups, although varying widely in skin tone, are of the same basic stock of people.

What's really nifty about these two divisions of Japheth is that even apart from the Bible, they both trace their ancestry back to Japheth. The Greeks claim an ancestor named Iapetos. A name which is extremely similar to the Hebrew name Yapeth.

In India, they have their own flood account which has many parallels to the biblical one. The great hero of their account is a guy named Satyaurata and he had three sons. The name of the oldest son is Iyapeti, again a name amazingly close to Japheth.

The other two brothers were named Sharma and C'harma (Shem and Ham, or as Ham is pronounced in Hebrew Cham). This story says that C'harma was cursed by his father because he laughed at him when he got drunk. If that's not the biblical story in a nutshell, I don't know what kind of nutshell you're trying to crack.

There is no doubt that what is given in Genesis 10 is truly the Word of God telling us the amazing details of real people and real matters concerning the beginnings of the post flood world.

Because the sons of Japheth are the predominant people of India and Europe, they are therefore the source of most American families and groups as well. As you can see, the sons of Japheth have widely enlarged over the centuries, thus fulfilling the meaning of his name – to enlarge.

But the enlargement isn't just physical and geographical in nature. It also includes enlargement in the scientific, philosophical, intellectual, and spiritual disciplines as well.

The descendants of Japheth have been at the forefront of scientific understanding, rivaled only by the sons of Shem. History is replete with names like Newton, Pasteur, Galileo, Lavoisier, Kepler, Copernicus, Faraday, and on and on. All of these and so many more have fulfilled the blessing pronounced on Japheth so long ago. Even Bill Gates and Steve Jobs are from the line of Japheth.

In the curiously intellectual realm, it's evident that most of those who developed the great philosophic disciplines and the most noted philosophers since then are from Japheth. And they continue to be dominated by this group of people.

The Greeks in particular began the western concepts of philosophy. Such great early classical philosophers like Thales, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, and Plato led into great minds like Parmenides, Protagoras, Socrates, Euclid, and Aristotle.

Later came the Hellenistic and Roman Philosophers and then the Western Medieval, Early Modern and Modern Philosophers, the majority of which are of the sons of Japheth. These great minds developed because of an ancient blessing by Noah on Japheth.

There's one more extremely important point to make about the sons of Japheth. The blessing on him didn't stop with the thought of "enlargement."

Remember what else Noah said about him, "And may he dwell in the tents of Shem." This isn't speaking of literally dwelling in tents, so it must be relevant to the first portion of the blessing.

Dr. Arthur Custance, from Toronto, noted that Japheth dwelling in Shem's tents means that he would come to share in the same inheritance as Shem – the spiritual one... carrying on the message of the cross of Jesus. If you understand what I just said, then you can understand the Bible in an entirely new way.

After the Jewish people rejected Christ, the spiritual banner of humanity which is the Christian message, was moved from Shem to Japheth. This isn't just a leap into speculation either. The Bible elsewhere speaks of dwelling in another's tent in this manner.

It is this group of people – the sons of Japheth – who has, for 2000 years held the spiritual primacy of the doctrines of Christ. And in a marriage which has proven to complete the message the scientific and philosophical doctrines of Japheth have been united to the theological message given to us by the sons of Shem.

In other words, it is the philosophy of people like Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas which has allowed us to grasp the nature of what the Bible speaks of in matters like the Trinity. This and many other concepts only come into clear focus from what the line of Japheth has brought us through philosophy. God makes no mistakes.

Those of you who listened to my sermon on Genesis 1:1 might remember what I'm talking about. How can we understand the nature of God who is revealed in the Bible? By understanding the concepts derived by the sons of Japheth. Noah's blessing upon Japheth is amazing when we see how it is literally fulfilled in this way.

Dr. Custance is exactly right about his conclusion. But to complete the thought about Japheth dwelling in Shem's tents, we need to stand back even further and look at how God both started and will complete His message to the world – through the Jewish people.

Dwelling in the tents of someone means that they encircle you. And the Bible, without any doubt, shows that the Jewish people will again be the focus of the world's spiritual attention, thus fulfilling the encircling effect of Shem around Japheth.

Let's stand back and look at the Bible from the widest angle possible. The line of the Messiah is established in Genesis with the son of Adam named Seth, then through Noah, and then through Shem. It then runs down through the Jewish people all the way to the end of the Gospel of John.

After John comes the book of Acts, the first 12 chapters of which are focused particularly on Peter who is the Apostle to the Jews. From chapter 13 until the end of Acts, the book is focused on the work of Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. At this point the spiritual banner is being handed over to the sons of Japheth.

The book of Acts begins in Jerusalem speaking to the Jews and ends in Rome with these words, "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

After Acts and its end in Rome, the next 13 epistles are written by Paul, specifically to the gentile people. After these letters though, the direction changes completely. The next book is called "Hebrews" and is written again to the Jewish people. After Hebrews comes James who writes to the 12 tribes scattered abroad.

The next two are written by Peter, the apostle to the Jews. From there are 1, 2, & 3 John which carry on the style and form of the Gospel of John. After John comes Jude which is almost a repetition of the words of Peter. These 8 letters from Hebrews to Jude lean toward the tent of Shem and serve a transitional purpose of leading up to the book of Revelation.

In Revelation, the first three chapters deal with the church, but from chapter 4 through 19 it deals solely with Israel and the end times. Finally, in chapter 19, Christ returns to Israel with the church and the book finishes off after three chapters of future events which combine the physical and spiritual. We see there the final merging of God's people from both Jew and Gentile.

In other words, when one stands back and looks at the overall picture, the sons of Japheth, meaning the Church, truly dwell in the tents of Shem, being encompassed on all sides by his spiritual tent. It is the message of redemption found in the Person of Jesus, the greatest of all the descendants of Shem and our Lord and Savior.

III. The Japhethites Near You...

Although, this might be a bit easier with a chart in front of you, I want to give you the names of Japheth's line again with the modern equivalent of who those people are. By doing this, you'll see where they generally ended up in people groups.

Gomer – Germany, Crimea, Cambria, Celts

*Ashkenaz – Germany, Saxons, Scandinavia

*Riphath – Carpatheians

*Togarmah – Armenians

Magog – Georgia, Scythians

Madai – Medes, Aryans, Indians of India

Javan – Ionians, Greeks, coastlands

*Elishah – Hellas

*Tarshish – Spain

*Kittim – Cyprus

*Dodanim – Rhodes (area of the Black Sea, Dardenelles)

Tubal - Tobolsk

Meshech – Moscow

Tiras – Thrace, Teutons

One thing to remember about biblical names is that they are often groups of people rather than individuals. In other words, when we just read the names Kittim and Dodanim we were reading plural names. That “im” at the end of the word is a plural marker, like our “s.” Some translations even change the name to end with an “s” or an “ite” for our benefit in stead of using the “im.”

So when you see a name like this as you're reading, they are not the names of individuals, but of clans, families, or tribes. They probably got their name from a main figure within the tribe and that name was then identified with all of the people.

To help you get this, try to remember that when you see an “im” name, it's like reading something that says, “The Garretts are all really handsome people.” You know it's speaking of a clan bearing the name of Garrett. But... don't always believe what you read. Not all Garretts are handsome like me.

I want to take a minute and read a portion of what Ray Stedman has to say about the sons of Japheth. This will help you to mentally understand much of what the Bible will speak of elsewhere.

As I said, what is especially important is how these people are mentioned in prophecies to come, some of which might be fulfilled in the very near future.

“We learn here that Japheth had seven sons, but only two of them are traced for us in any detail: The first son was Gomer. From this word, Gomer, ... came the word, Gaul, or Gallic. These are the people, interestingly enough, to whom the New Testament Epistle to the Galatians is written. The Galatians were Gauls. Most of us have a Gallic or Celtic ancestry, and the Gauls and Celts were descendants of Gomer. They migrated to the north and settled in Spain, France and in Britain. From these Gauls come most of the early families of Western Europe and, consequently, of the Americas as well.

The oldest son of Gomer was Ashkenaz. He and his descendants first settled around the Black Sea and then moved north into a land which is called Ascenia, and which later became known as the Islands of Scandia, which we now know as Scandinavia. You can trace a direct link between Ashkenaz and Scandinavia. Another of the sons of Gomer was Riphath. Although we do not know too much about Riphath, we do know that he located in Central Europe, and some scholars feel that the word, Europe, itself comes from this name, Riphath. Another son is Togarmah. This name is easily traced. He was the ancestor of the present-day Turks and Armenians, who also migrated northward into Southern Germany. Certain scholars have felt that the word, Germany, derives from the word, Togarmah. If you drop the first syllable you have the basic root of Germany.

Two others of the sons of Japheth were Madai and Javan. These are easily recognizable in history: The Madai became the Medes, of the famous Medes and Persian Empire. Javan is unquestionably the ancestor of the Greeks. His name, Javan, is still found in Greece in the form of Ionia. The Ionic Sea and Ionian Peninsula all derive from this word Javan. His sons were Elishah, from which we get the Greek word, Helles (the Greeks are still called Hellenes), and Tarshish, whom most scholars associate with Spain; Kittim, which is the Island of Cyprus; and Dodanim, who settled around the Black Sea, and still finds a modern parallel in the word, the Dardanelles. These can all be traced by the geographical titles and place names they left behind.”

To close today’s sermon, I’d like to read you the 120th Psalm. It mentions dwelling in the tents of Meshech. Like I said, Meshech was a son of Japheth and is the basis for the name Moscow, thus representing Russia. The psalm also mentions Kedar which was a son of Ishmael and therefore a son of Shem.

For 2000 years, the Jewish people were exiled around the world and dwelt in the tents of foreigners, but now God has restored them to their homeland. In His sovereign way,

He has faithfully protected and returned His unfaithful people and He will continue to do so as the world comes against them.

Let's remember to pray for Israel – both the people and the land and to pray for the peace of Jerusalem...because when it comes, it will be under the blessed rule of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

In my distress I cried to the LORD,
And He heard me.

² Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips
And from a deceitful tongue.

³ What shall be given to you,
Or what shall be done to you,
You false tongue?

⁴ Sharp arrows of the warrior,
With coals of the broom tree!

⁵ Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech,
That I dwell among the tents of Kedar!

⁶ My soul has dwelt too long
With one who hates peace.

⁷ *I am for peace;*
But when I speak, they *are* for war. Psalm 120

The Line of Japheth

Noah had three sons who came with him on the ark
And they each had a wife to carry on humanity's life spark

The genealogy of these sons starts in Ch 10 vs 1 of the book
Shem is first and then comes Ham and finally Japheth too
Don't just read this verse without taking a deeper look
Because these names hold immense and wonderful treasure for you

Shem's blessing was spiritual and spiritual he would be
Through his line came the very oracles of God
And also through Him came the Messiah for all the world to see
When he came among us, and on the earth He did trod

Ham received no blessing, but his son received a curse
Yes a servant of servants to his brethren he shall be
And the line of Ham fulfilled the words of this verse
Even to Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross to Calvary

Japheth was blessed with enlargement, like the spreading of a tree
And enlargement truly has been found in him
He spread out in science and also in philosophy
Greatness of the mind is the fruit of his tree's limb

And sons were born to Japheth after the flood
Seven sons he had who now fill all the land
Gomer, Magog, Madai and Javan carry on Japheth's blood
As do Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras across the world they fanned

And Gomer's sons are noted in the Genesis account
Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah, Gomer say's "They're mine!"
These sons add to Japheth's total head count
And even till today, we can identify them in Japheth's line

One other son of Japheth has children noted in the scroll
That son is Javan who had four sons of his own
Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim are counted in the roll
And these sons spread out, their own seed having sown

From this line of Japheth the coastland peoples came
Of the Gentiles they were separated each into their land
Everyone according to his language and his family name
Everyone into their nations directed by the Divine hand

Japheth's name has grown great, especially in one way
His line became the steward of the Messiah's name
Bearing His banner and waiting for the day
When the sons of Shem will once again do the same

The time is coming full when Shem's tents will finally
Finish encompassing Japheth's bearing of the sword
And to Shem the world's attention will be directed, you see
Because to Shem will return Jesus, God's living Word

Everything in due time and as directed by the unseen Hand
And when Jesus returns His Rest will be gloriously grand

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 10:6-20

(THE TABLE OF NATIONS, PART 2: THE SONS OF HAM)

When I first started typing the sermon we did last week, it was while a friend was in the hospital. She emailed me with the times she'd be in her room so that I could visit and I emailed back and said,

"I'm starting the sermon on Genesis 10 today and I honestly don't know if I'll be able to come by to visit. There are a lot of names, but not a lot of other information. I think it's going to take forever to get through this chapter with an entire sermon."

What I thought would be an uneventful sermon covering the entire chapter, turned into being last week's sermon on five verses. And I left out so much that I can't believe the Lord would be happy with the presentation unless I go revisit those verses again someday.

I feel like I committed a crime by passing through them so quickly. And if I stick to the schedule I've planned, we will be doing the line of Ham today and the line of Shem next week and then moving on. We're missing so much as we zip along.

Were we to really dig into Chapter 10, we could probably go on for weeks. But move on we will and I pray that you will forgive me in glory when you see how much we've missed in these sermons.

Introduction: The line of Ham, Noah's youngest son, has been the subject of an immense amount of abuse and people have tried to justify slavery based on Noah's curse of this line. The African people descend from Ham and past scholars used this logic to account for why it was acceptable to own slaves from there.

But the curse was one of servant hood, not abusive slavery. Overall, Ham is the great ignored figure of Noah's blessing and the people groups who make up the sons of Ham remain relatively outside of the main scope of the world's attention, despite being the talent behind many amazing inventions and achievements.

Text Verse: *After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and*

crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" Revelation 7:9, 10

Precious souls from all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues will stand before the throne of God and worship. Let's remember that as we arrogantly look down on our fellow man and...

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Curse of Canaan

²⁵ "Cursed *be* Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brethren."

²⁶ And he said:
"Blessed *be* the LORD,
The God of Shem,
And may Canaan be his servant.

²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth,
And may he dwell in the tents of Shem;
And may Canaan be his servant." Gen 9:25-27

Ham, if you remember, did a reprehensible and offensive thing to Noah. But God had already blessed Ham, and so instead of cursing his youngest son he turned and cursed his youngest son's youngest son. This curse symbolically covers the entire line of Ham in the Bible, but it is especially directed at the line of Canaan.

⁶The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

More space is used in Chapter 10 to describe the line of Ham than either of the other brothers, Shem or Japheth. For this reason, it's important to know who these people became and how they affect both God's people in the Bible and future prophecy.

Ham means "passionate" or "hot" but it can also mean "burnt" or "dark." Both of these descriptions perfectly fit the people who descended from him. Most of the darker people of the world including the Australoid, Negroid, and Mongoloid peoples descend from him. However, other dark groups of people are found in both the lines of Shem and Japheth.

The first of Ham's sons who is listed is Cush. His name means "black" and today Cush is known as Ethiopia. The people of Cush were spread out as far as Arabia too. Moses' wife was called a Cushite or an Ethiopian even though she was from Midian and so the two people were mixed by that time.

The second son listed is Mizraim which means "double straits" and they became the people of Egypt, both in upper and lower Egypt. After him, Put is listed. His name means "a bow" and we've seen them rise onto the world stage once again in the past months due to the war in Libya.

The Libyans come from Put along with other North African groups such as those in Cyrene, Tunisia, the Berbers, Somalians, Sudanese, etc. For the most part, they've been a troublesome group of people to the world in many ways and the name "a bow" is most fitting for their warlike attitude.

⁷ The sons of Cush were Seba, Havilah, Sabtah, Raamah, and Sabtechah; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.

Here, we have five sons of Cush listed. In the next verse we'll see another. They're divided up and named based on their importance to the story of the Bible. Out of the five sons listed in this verse, only one has the names of his sons listed too – Raamah. His sons are Sheba and Dedan.

Once again, these are listed because they are relevant to the biblical story and how they will interact with God's people. There may have been lots of others born to these sons of Ham, but only these are listed because of that. These sons and grandsons spread all around the borders of Israel. They go from North Africa, around Arabia, and as far as the area of Iran today.

In a beautiful example of God's faithfulness to the line of Cush we read in the book of Jeremiah, about one of his descendants, an Ethiopian eunuch named Ebed-Melech, who saved Jeremiah's life by getting him out of a dungeon full of mud.

It was so bad that Jeremiah had actually sunk into the mud, so this eunuch went to the king to get permission to pull him out. In order to get him up, they had to put worn out clothes and rags under his armpit and it took thirty men to pull on the ropes. Because of what he did, in the next chapter, God remembered Ebed-Melech during the horrible siege and eventual overthrow of Jerusalem –

“Go and speak to Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: “Behold, I will bring My words upon this city for adversity and not for good, and they shall be *performed* in that day before you. ¹⁷ But I will deliver you in that day,” says the LORD, “and you shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you *are* afraid. ¹⁸ For I will surely deliver you, and you shall not fall by the sword; but your life shall be as a prize to you, because you have put your trust in Me,” says the LORD.’” -Jeremiah 39:16-18

And you might remember last week that I mentioned that the very first descendant of Ham to receive Jesus in the book of Acts was also from the line of Cush. He was the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts chapter 8 who worked for the Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians.

⁸ Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth.

⁹ He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, “Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD.”

Along with his other sons, Cush begot Nimrod. This is an enigmatic figure mentioned only a couple times in the Bible and his name means “we shall rebel” and comes from the word *marad* which specifically means to rebel.

The word *marad* is used in three ways – either rebelling against God, rebelling against a king’s authority, or in one instance to rebel against the light. It is Job who speaks of it in the last way and it’s possible he was thinking of Nimrod and his descendants and their spiritual rebellion against God –

¹³ “There are those who rebel against the light;
They do not know its ways
Nor abide in its paths.

¹⁴ The murderer rises with the light;
He kills the poor and needy;
And in the night he is like a thief.

¹⁵ The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight,
Saying, ‘No eye will see me’;
And he disguises *his* face.

¹⁶ In the dark they break into houses
Which they marked for themselves in the daytime;
They do not know the light.” -Job 24:13-17

The Bible says Nimrod, “began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD.” He is the first active figure mentioned of all of the Noah’s grandsons. Up to this point, we’ve only had names and places mentioned, but now we get real details on an individual.

There are two general ideas about what being a “mighty hunter” means. The first is that he hunted animals like we do today and that he cleared the land of them in order to establish a place that was suitable to live in... not likely.

The second, and more probable idea, is that he became a leader and gathered people under his command in order to make himself a ruler of the area he would settle. He was a mighty hunter before, or literally, in the face of the Lord.

This certainly means that he rebelled against the Lord and against spiritual authority and this is the picture that the Bible sets for him. Just like Cain before the flood, he has established a line separate from God and has gone into rebellion against Him.

¹⁰ And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar.

¹¹ From that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh, Rehoboth Ir, Calah,

¹² and Resen between Nineveh and Calah (that is the principal city).

¹³ Mizraim begot Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim,

¹⁴ Pathrusim, and Casluhim (from whom came the Philistines and Caphtorim).

Nimrod was a mighty hunter, but he was also a mighty builder, and a mighty leader. Like Cain who established the first recorded city and culture, it is Nimrod who follows this same path after the flood. The line of Cain, though wiped out in the flood, is symbolically alive and kicking in this guy, Nimrod.

There are several ancient writings that speak of Nimrod. One of them says, “He was mighty in hunting... and in sin before God, for he was a hunter of the children of men in their languages; and he said unto them, ‘Depart from the religion of Shem, and cleave to the institutes of Nimrod.’”

Another writing says: “From the foundation of the world none was ever found like Nimrod, powerful in hunting, and in rebellions against the Lord.”

These writings aren’t biblical, they both show us that the belief from ages past that Nimrod fought against the true faith revealed in nature and by his fathers before him.

The word which is used for “hunter” signifies prey. It is used when talking about hunting men by persecution, oppression, and tyranny. And it’s likely then that he acquired power and used it in tyrannical oppression to establish the first kingdom after the flood.

So what is it about Nimrod that makes the list of people suddenly stop and highlight him? It’s not only because of who he was, but more importantly what he did and the cities he founded. His rebellion against God established the land of wickedness which will come into play throughout the rest of the Bible.

From this point on, even to Revelation, there will be two cities of major importance which reflect two concepts. The first is Jerusalem, the city of peace and wholeness. It is the city where God dwells and righteousness reigns.

The other is Babylon, which means “confusion.” It is in Shinar and is the city in spiritual opposition to God. It is where evil and wickedness reigns. Babylon is east of Jerusalem. When man was sent out of Eden and away from God’s presence it was to the east.

When the Israelites were in fellowship, or at peace with God, they possessed the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, but when they were disobedient, they were cast out of the land to the east, to Babylon in the land of Shinar.

But Babylon isn’t just a place; it is also a concept of spiritual rebellion against God. The second exile of the Jews was by the Romans. In his first letter, Peter writes from Rome, but says this –

She who is in Babylon, elect together with *you*, greets you; and *so does* Mark my son. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen. – 1 Peter 5:13-14

God is telling us in His word that the Babylon of the future, the one mentioned as the great Harlot in the book of Revelation will be centered in Rome, right where the Vatican now stands. At some point, probably after the rapture, the city of Rome will become the leader of all spiritual opposition to God and direct the forces of evil against Jerusalem, the city of Peace.

This will certainly include an alliance with the people who live in the actual plain of Shinar today, the muslims. This merging of the world’s apostate religions will come against God’s people, Israel, in an attempt to destroy them from the earth.

II. A Servant of Servants He Shall Be

- ¹⁵ Canaan begot Sidon his firstborn, and Heth;
¹⁶ the Jebusite, the Amorite, and the Girgashite;
¹⁷ the Hivite, the Arkite, and the Sinite;
¹⁸ the Arvadite, the Zemarite, and the Hamathite.**

I said earlier that more space is used in Chapter 10 to describe the line of Ham than either of the other brothers, Shem or Japheth. And of all of the sons of Ham, more space is used to describe the Canaanites than any of Ham's other sons.

This is because they settled in the lands directly in and around where Israel is and so they will have the greatest effect on the people of God. Canaan means "merchant" or "servant."

Eleven groups of people descend from Canaan. Remember, it is Canaan who received the curse of servitude from Noah and these are the accursed descendants of him. Despite this, we see later in the Bible that grace is found even towards some of these people.

Knowing who these people are helps us to understand the avenues the Bible travels as we read through it. To neglect this chapter and these particular names leaves us misunderstanding a lot of what God has done through the people of the world and so we pass over them too quickly at our own loss.

Three examples from the Old Testament of people from the line of Canaan who found the Lord's grace are recorded in the women who would be named in Jesus' genealogy in Matthew chapter 1.

Of the five women mentioned in that genealogy, only Mary is an Israelite. Ruth was from Moab which was from the line of Shem, and the three others are from the line of Canaan.

The first is Tamar who was the daughter-in-law of Judah and who fathered his sons Perez and Zerah. Despite the scandal, Judah said she was more righteous than he was in the affair that occurred.

The second is Rahab the harlot of Jericho who hid the spies of Israel and was brought into the people of Israel when she married Salmon. The two of them would have a son named Boaz who would become the great grandfather of King David.

And the third comes from the account of David and Bathsheba. Bathsheba was married to Uriah the Hittite, one of the sons of Heth, who was the second son of Canaan. Despite the what occurred, God's grace was bestowed on Bathsheba and she was brought from this line into the line of Shem.

In the New Testament, an example comes from Matthew 15:21-28 –

Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed."

²³ But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us."

²⁴ But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" ²⁶ But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the little dogs." ²⁷ And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great *is* your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

The grace of the Lord Jesus was given to a woman from the line of Ham and from the children of Canaan because she was a woman of great faith.

And I brought up Simon of Cyrene last week. He was the one who carried Jesus' cross. Here is the account –

Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross.

²² And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. – Mark 15:21-22

And it's very likely that this son of Canaan not only served Jesus, but became a servant of Jesus. In Paul's closing comments to the Romans, he writes this – "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine." It is believed that the Rufus mentioned here is the same Rufus who was the son of Simon who carried the cross.

Simon then was the ultimate fulfillment of Noah's words of curse – "a servant of servants you shall be." Jesus, the Suffering Servant, was served by this son of Canaan who carried His cross for Him, even to Golgotha where all curses find their termination.

And whenever I read this account, I remember what happened between Peter and Jesus on the night He was betrayed –

Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?"

Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward."

³⁷ Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake."

³⁸ Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.

-John 13:36-38

Simon of Cyrene the son of Canaan replaced Simon Peter the son of Shem who promised Jesus he would even go to death with Him.

I said earlier that we could spend weeks on the names and people listed in today's verses. But in order to reach the end of the Bible sometime this century we'll have to pass over a lot of them. Pay attention to the tribes of the people as you read the Bible and you will find riches and treasures there about the three sons of Noah.

Let me ask you a question though not just about the line of Ham, but specifically the line of Canaan. Of the 11 groups of people who came from him can any of you tell me where the Jebusites settled, what city of biblical importance they held, or the name an important Jebusite?

Jerusalem was settled by the Jebusites and even after they were almost completely driven out during the conquest of Canaan, there remained a Jebusite presence there until the time of David.

The name Jebus means "treading down" or "threshing place" and surprisingly this name becomes a prophecy of the point in history when David buys the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

This became the spot where Solomon's temple would be built and is the exact same place that almost 1000 years earlier Abraham went to offer his son Isaac. It is also the

spot where the Temple Mount stands today and which is the single most contested piece of real estate on earth.

If you understand who these people are in Chapter 10, you can understand so very much more about our past, where we are going, and how we will get there.

¹⁸ (con't)...Afterward the families of the Canaanites were dispersed.

¹⁹ And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; then as you go toward Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.

These locations are given to indicate that the Canaanites settled in the land that would eventually be given to Abraham and then to his son Isaac and then to his son Israel. It is generally showing that they filled the land from north to south and from east to west. These cities will be mentioned again as the Bible continues.

²⁰ These *were* the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands *and* in their nations.

As you can see, the Hamites and the Canaanites figure prominently in the Bible. Many of these people groups were destroyed in conquests and battles, but many of them survive partially intact or after having interbred with other people groups. The accomplishments of these people have been immense and today Ham's children fill the earth.

III. The Hamites Near You

I was flipping through the TV a while back, and at our house that doesn't take long. We have about 15 channels and most of them are pretty terrible. But in hopes of finding something worthwhile, and knowing it wouldn't be on the Christian channel, I clicked down the line.

I came to an education channel and there was this guy talking about Mayan hieroglyphs. I thought, "BO-RING," but I stopped for a sec anyway. I figured it would be some crazy nonsense about how Mayans have predicted the end of the world or something. Instead it was Dr. Mark Van Stone who is a Professor of Art History at Southwestern College. He not only reads hieroglyphs, but writes them out too. He did a general greeting to the producer of the show in Mayan and it took an immense amount of labor and care and very special pens to get it just right.

To me, it was one of the most fascinating 10 minutes I've spent outside of the Bible in eons. As I watched him write and enunciate each character, I thought "This guy has dedicated his life to something that most people would simply pass by without a second thought."

Here is this ancient language and ancient writing and a man from the sons of Japheth is keeping it alive. You see, the Mayans come from the line of Ham and all of their great achievements indirectly reflect a part of this third son of Noah. Along with the Mayans, the Aztecs, the Incas, the Babylonians etc. come from Ham.

So what does it mean to be a "servant of servants" in the context of the curse pronounced by Noah? Well, like I said, the curse was on Canaan, but it reflects itself in the entire line of Ham. The line of Shem is God's servant in the spiritual sense and the line of Japheth is God's servant in an intellectual way.

The line of Ham however, has provided physical service and invention to the world and therefore, what they have produced has served both Shem and Japheth. In other words, Ham has been a servant of servants.

Two of the great ancient empires of the world, the Egyptians and the Sumerians were from Ham. The sea-going Phoenicians descended from Ham. The African tribes and the Chinese and Japanese people all descend from Ham as do the American Indian tribes which moved from the direction of Asia.

Ham's sons were the original great explorers, travelling to all parts of the world. They were the first people to cultivate food staples like corn, potatoes, beans, and so on. The Japanese people have made amazing developments in plant grafting and pollination.

Most of the basic forms and types of building structures, and the materials and tools for building have come from the line of Ham. They developed many types of fabrics and sewing and weaving techniques and devices.

Medicines and surgical instruments and practices going back for eons came from Ham's line as do most concepts of practical mathematics, surveying, and navigation. Banks, postal systems, commerce, machinery, and trade money came from them too.

And paper development, ink for writing, block printing, movable type, and many other writing and communication skills come from them. The further back you go, we find that

almost every basic system or device that we use for living and for making life convenient come from one of the sons of Ham.

In this sense, they have been mankind's servants in fulfillment of the ancient prophecy of Noah. However and despite this, almost all of their inventive skills have come to a certain point and stopped. Eventually, the sons of Japheth or Shem step in and refine them and make them more useful.

And something else... just as we had an interesting flood story in the line of Japheth last week, we have one in the line of Ham too. The Chinese have a tradition that their first king, Fohi, which is Chinese for Noah, appeared on the mountains of Chin which was surrounded by a rainbow after the world was covered with water.

He sacrificed animals to God, just like the Genesis story. And he had a great grandson named Sin, which again perfectly matches the Bible. The Sinites, named after Canaan's son Sin, lived at exactly the time that the Chinese culture developed. Even today the Chinese culture is called the Sino culture after Sin.

Another flood tradition within the Chinese culture comes from the Miao tribe of southwest China. It's said that before they were ever visited by missionaries, they believed that God had once destroyed the entire world by flood because of man's wickedness, but He saved a righteous man named Nuah, his wife, and their three sons.

Nuah's sons names were Lo Han (Ham), Lo Shen (Shem), and Yah-hu or Japheth. They and pairs of animals were all saved by building a giant ship.

The Chinese also have a Book of History known as the Shu Jing which was compiled by Confucius. This book speaks about an Emperor Shun who ruled about 2200BC when the first dynasty began. He worshipped and sacrificed a bull to Shang Di or the Heavenly Ruler.

Shang Di corresponds to Shaddai who the Almighty of the Bible. Apparently, these sacrifices to Shang Di went on until 1911 when the last Chinese emperor was deposed. Of all of those who descend from the line of Ham, three in particular have had a huge affect on my own life. You see, the prettiest Hamites around are my wife Hideko and my daughter Tangerine.

Both of them, along with my son, Thorr, are the Hamites closest to me. And like so many from their line over the centuries, God has shown grace and favor on each of them.

The wonderful story of the Bible is that despite whom we are, or where we come from, God looks at us all the same when we call on Jesus Christ as Lord. It doesn't matter what our color is, where we were born, how much money we have, or any other thing.

All of us are or were enemies of God, but He reaches out His hands to us through His word which tells of Jesus. Jesus lived the perfect life that no one has ever lived and He was willing to give that life up for any who call on His name. We are all either sons of Shem, sons of Ham, or sons of Japheth. And they are all sons of Noah and Noah came from Adam.

We bear Adam's guilt and Jesus wants to take it away from us. Let me tell you how He will do it for you...

The Line of Ham

Noah's youngest son had the name of Ham
He displeased his father doing a disgraceful thing
This put his life into a real jamb
And on his youngest son, a curse it would bring

The sons of Ham were Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan
From these four groups Ham's line has spread around the world
Cush had six sons to carry his name on
And so his seed spread as his descendant's lines unfurled

Cush begot Nimrod, a mighty one on the earth
He was a mighty hunter before the Lord
He did great things, but his actions brought a dearth
To the spiritual life of many sons of Noah's horde

The beginning of Nimrod's kingdom was Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh
These cities he built in the frightful land of Shinar
And from that land he went to Assyria and built Nineveh
And also Rehoboth Ir, Calah, and Resen he built them near and far
Mizraim became the people where Egypt is now

And they grew into six more groups as the years passed
From these came the Philistines who pestered Israel... somehow!
By them the Israelites were continuously harassed

Canaan, the one to whom Noah directed his curse
Became eleven groups of peoples that settled in the Land
They spread around, never fearing the worse
But were eventually displaced by Israel, and God's mighty hand

Despite being a servant of servants and the unfavored son
The line of Ham, great things they have done

And many of these people did our precious Jesus save
Because for all of Noah's sons, His life He gave

People from Ham's line all around earth
Celebrate Jesus' victory at the cross of Calvary
And of Jesus' name, they too proclaim His worth
Jesus is the Savior of all the people, you see

And to this day we remember Simon of Cyrene
Who carried the Lord's cross up that hill of Calvary
A servant of the Servant, is how Simon is seen
The ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy

And for me, what a blessing the line of Ham has been
My wife and children all came from this line
But like so many others, they were washed from every sin
When they called out in faith, "Yes, Jesus is mine."

Thank You Lord for grace upon the people of the earth
May we ever sing Your praise and of Your infinite worth

Hallelujah and Amen...

Next we'll finish Chapter 10 with – Genesis 10:21-32, The Table of Nations, Part 3, The Sons of Shem

GENESIS 10:21-32

(THE TABLE OF NATIONS, PART 3: THE SONS OF SHEM)

In one of the first sermons I ever preached, I quoted the preface to the Gideon's New Testament Bible. It's good to be reminded from time to time about things, so I'd like to quote that today. As I do, listen to how the author, who is anonymous, so delicately and yet rightly describes the Bible and what it means to us –

The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler's map, the pilgrim's staff, the pilot's compass, the soldier's sword, and the Christian's charter. Here Paradise is restored, Heaven opened, and the gates of hell disclosed. *Christ* is its grand subject, our good the design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently, and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, will reward the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.

Beautiful words which come from a contemplative soul. One who clearly understood the greatness of God's word and the depth's which it delves into...the very mind of God and the very heart of Christ.

Introduction: I decided to quote this today because the Bible does reveal different things and they may affect us in our walk at various times of our life. It is filled with many major subject areas and one of them is one which all Christians should hold dearly to. That is, of course, the grand subject, Jesus Christ.

From the earliest words of the Bible, right to the last sentence, Jesus Christ is on prominent display. He is the center and focus of our faith and He is the One who reveals the unseen Creator to us.

In the process of going through the stories of the Bible, there are specific ways God reveals Himself. When we look for these various keys during our studies, we can see how He opens each new passage that comes to us.

I called this Progressive Revelation. In other words, God is progressively and succinctly revealing Himself in a way which makes even complex issues understandable.

Step by step we make a journey as we read the Bible and just like opening door after door to get closer and closer to the middle chamber of a building, as we read the Bible, we open one door after another until we reach the very heart of God and the inner workings of His Mind.

In this Progressive Revelation there is a particular way that God narrows what He is doing, leading us to Jesus Christ. I was going over some sermon notes by a man named Ray Stedman and he used a term which nicely summarizes one particular avenue of revelation and so I am happy to adopt it into my own terminology.

He calls it “God’s Funnel.” As you certainly know, a funnel is used to narrow the path of something like a liquid or powder or pebbles or sand or whatever. By using a funnel, you take something broad and unwieldy and you direct it into a definite and sure path.

God uses a funnel type of pattern throughout much of the Old Testament to eventually direct our attention to a particular event and Person in human history.

Along the way, He branches off shoots from the main story, such as in Genesis 4 when Cain and his line are mentioned. But after going off on branches, the story returns to the main line and proceeds... down the funnel.

We left the ancient world behind in the flood and started out the new adventure with Noah and his three sons – Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Then the story went into a branch about what Ham did to his father and then to Noah who pronounced a curse and blessings.

After that, we came here to Chapter 10 and read about two branches, Japheth and then Ham. Now God is returning to **the funnel** with Noah’s second son, Shem.

Remember this type of pattern as you read the Bible and you will see how branches are mentioned when they will somehow affect the funnel and then the funnel will be returned to. Eventually, the funnel will come to King David and God’s promise to him about an eternal kingship through one of his descendants, a promise which forms our text verse for today.

Text Verse: *“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. ¹⁵ But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.”” 2 Samuel 7:12-16*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Blessed be the LORD

The **funnel** that leads to Jesus started in Adam then went through his son Seth, and we have followed it through to Noah and now it will narrow again to Shem. When Noah pronounced his curse and blessings, it was Shem who received the spiritual blessing and primacy over the rest of Noah’s seed.

“Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants he shall be to his brethren.”

²⁶ And he said: *“Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem, And may Canaan be his servant.*

²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth, And may he dwell in the tents of Shem; And may Canaan be his servant.” Genesis 9:26-27

Going back to a previous sermon, we saw how Noah’s words here have come true in each case. And, it is the line of Shem which leads to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and then to David. The funnel narrows and branches come in and out of focus each step of the way, but the main line is always maintained.

Why is this information so important and how do we take it in? What is the meaning of doing it this way? I guess the question we could ask is this, “Is God arbitrarily choosing people and rejecting others... is He showing favoritism as He narrows His funnel?

The answer isn’t as easy as a yes and a no. God has a plan to reconcile the world to Himself and He is doing it through real people who really lived. But along the way He is giving us insights into the human condition and what does and doesn’t please Him.

When we get to the book of Ruth, we will see a story about a real human family who has real tragedies and real joys. One main character of the book, Ruth, is outside of the line of Israel and yet she is brought into it and eventually becomes an ancestor of Jesus.

So was there favoritism in her case? No. There was a response to faith, just as there was a response to Abel's faith and a rejection of Cain who lacked it. At the same time, there is a sort of favoritism involved towards people in the Bible as well.

Once God establishes his covenant with a group of people, like the sons of Israel, they partake of the blessings of that covenant whether they individually have faith or not. The rains would fall on the disobedient sons of Israel and water their crops just like they did on the obedient sons. Likewise, the disobedient would often receive the same protection as the obedient.

Today in Israel, there are those who have called on Jesus and those who haven't. Some of them will and some of them won't. But God has returned all of them to their land and they all benefit from His grace. So in a physical sense, God seems to show favoritism, but in the spiritual, each has to come to Him individually, by faith.

But guess what, it's the same for all the people of the earth. None of us deserve to be born at all. Some of us are born to nice families and some to bad ones. Some of us are born in a nice location like Siesta Key and some in places like Nowheres'ville, USA. The world may seem arbitrary and unfair, but Ecclesiastes says –

I returned and saw under the sun that—The race *is* not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all. ¹² For man also does not know his time: Like fish taken in a cruel net, Like birds caught in a snare, So the sons of men *are* snared in an evil time, When it falls suddenly upon them.

-Ecclesiastes 9:11, 12

Time and chance... that is where we stand, even if that time and chance is directed by God. In other words, the chosen line, God's Funnel, which leads to Israel, is a microcosm of the world at large.

In the end, whether Jew or gentile, unless we approach God by faith, we have no true share or inheritance in Him, just the temporary earthly blessings which fade away when we die. Paul explains this in the book of Galatians and uses Abraham, the man of faith, as an example of this faith leading to favor –

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. -Galatians 3:26-29

II. From Shem to Eber

Back in Chapter 9 we looked at this verse –

Now the sons of Noah who went out of the ark were Shem, Ham, and Japheth. And Ham *was* the father of Canaan. These three *were* the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated. – Genesis 9:18, 19

When we were there I asked you to note the part that said “Ham was the father of Canaan.” No one named Canaan had even been mentioned to that point and so we received a key that he would become a central point of focus at some later point in the Bible.

We're about to see the same thing happen again –

²¹ And *children* were born also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, the brother of Japheth the elder.

The table of nations has discussed the line of Japheth and the line of Ham. It now turns to Shem, the son with the spiritual blessing which came from Noah and the line which is a part of God's Funnel. And the first thing we see in this godly line of Shem is the mentioning of Eber – who hasn't been mentioned at all until this point.

As unusual as it may seem, Eber is actually Shem's great, great grandson. And yet despite this, he is brought into the picture at the same time that Shem's son's are to be mentioned – one of 70 names mentioned in the Table of Nations.

Following this key, we can note that Eber will be mentioned again and that he will have importance in the story as God's funnel is directed toward Christ. Eber means “yonder side” or as a verb: to pass or cross. This name will become important later in the Bible.

Also in the verse we're looking at, it says that Shem is “the brother of Japheth the elder.” One thing I recommend when doing Bible studies is to have people bring

different translations and when they notice a difference from what is being read, they should call it out.

In this verse the NASB says, “Also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, **and the older brother of Japheth**, children were born.” This is an incorrect translation because Shem is younger, not older than Japheth. Pay attention to the details...

It says in Genesis 11 that Shem was 102 years old after the flood. Noah had his first son at 500 and the flood was only a year long. This means that the firstborn was Japheth. Little things like this might seem unimportant, but they aren’t when we look at how things happen in the Bible and why.

The difference between Shem being the firstborn or not is important because it falls under the doctrine of divine election. God has passed over the firstborn in order to continue **His funnel** through his chosen line regardless of order of birth.

²² The sons of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram.

Shem means “name” or “fame.” He is the father of all of the Semitic peoples of the world. Today this includes Jews, Arabs, and others. When we hear the term anti-Semitism, it is usually being applied to Jewish people, but it is far more encompassing than that.

After Shem, the Bible mentions his five sons. The first one mentioned is Elam which means “eternity.” His line has led to the Elamites and Persians of the world today.

Asshur is mentioned next. His name means “a step” or “strong” and he has led to the Assyrians and Northern Iraqis of the Middle East.

The next son is Arphaxad which means “I shall fail as the breast.” His descendants have become the Chaldeans mentioned in the Old Testament, the Southern Iraqis, the Hebrews, Moabites, Jordanians, and other groups of people in the general area.

The fourth son mentioned is Lud, which means “strife”. They have become some of the groups in Asia Minor and North Africa.

And the last son mentioned here is Aram, which means “exalted.” They have become the people around Syria, Lebanon and some other spots of the Middle East, Africa, etc.

All of these people have come from Shem and they are still very active figures on the world scene today. From Shem the three major monotheistic religions of the world are derived – Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

²³ The sons of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash.

In 1 Chronicles 1:17, these four sons of Aram are actually listed as sons of Shem. One of the sons, Uz, is certainly an ancestor of Job of the book of Job because in Job 1:1 we read this –

“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man was blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil.”

It’s not known with certainty who wrote the book of Job, but if it was written by him or someone from his tribe, then it is a rare work in the Bible because that book and only a couple others were written by non-Jewish people.

We know that Luke wasn’t a Jew and yet he wrote both the Gospel of Luke and Acts. These two books make up almost a third of the New Testament which makes his writings exceptional.

Just so you know how to tell that Luke wasn’t a Jew, in Chapter 4 of Colossians, Paul gives a list of people and then says this –

¹¹“These *are my* only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision; they have proved to be a comfort to me.” -Colossians 4:11

Only after saying this does he bring up Luke and others, meaning that Luke wasn’t of the circumcision, meaning a Jew.

III. The nations of Shem

²⁴ Arphaxad begot Salah, and Salah begot Eber.

Here now we will see where God’s funnel leads from Shem to his son Arphaxad and then down the line. First the sons of Shem were mentioned and after that came the side branch which were the sons of Shem’s son Aram. They were specifically listed because the sons of Aram play such a large part in the later pages of the Bible as they interact with the chosen line of Israel.

²⁵ To Eber were born two sons: the name of one was Peleg, for in his days the earth was divided; and his brother's name was Joktan.

We'll stop at this verse to mention one of the sons of Eber who is Peleg. Unlike the other names in this account, Peleg is mentioned **with** specific information – “for in his days the earth was divided.” This has to be in here for a reason and the reason can only mean one thing. Let's look at a few possibilities and see which is right.

The first is that the earth was divided, meaning the physical earth and the continents. This is a very popular view concerning Peleg. You've heard about continental drift. This view is held by many people who say this is what is being referred to here. The land masses divided and the people were separated according to them.

Support for this view is that Peleg in Hebrew means “division” but in Greek it means “sea.” The word *archipelago* comes from this. The Greeks called the Aegean Sea “Archipelago,” or the first sea, drawing the name from this man, Peleg.

The second possibility is that that the earth was divided according to people groups, not geography. Which is correct and can we really tell? Peleg is Shem's great, great, great grandson and was born 100 years after the flood, or in the year 1758 Anno Mundi.

We know this from the account of Genesis Chapter 11 which records the generations of Shem. Between Chapter 10 and Shem's genealogy though is recorded the Tower of Babel, which we will look at next week. This account is specifically placed there to show us the division of the people by languages.

In other words, the division of the earth when Peleg is mentioned is speaking about the division into individual languages and this is why the accounts are placed in the order they are placed. Again, God is progressively revealing to us what is occurring and why.

The Tower of Babel occurred during Peleg's life and the nations of the earth were divided accordingly at that time. Peleg means “division” and his brother Joktan's name means “small.”

²⁶ Joktan begot Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah,

²⁷ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah,

²⁸ Obal, Abimael, Sheba,

²⁹ Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab. All these were the sons of Joktan.

³⁰ And their dwelling place was from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the mountain of the east.

These people are found to the east of the land of Israel. They settled around Arabia, Yemen, and even along the Indian Ocean as far as India. Last week we learned about Sheba and Dedan, sons of Ham. In this verse today we hear about another Sheba.

It's not 100% sure which one is the ancestor of the famed Queen of Sheba who came to visit Solomon, it could be that because of intermarrying between the lines of Shem and Ham, the name is reused here as a descendant of the other Sheba.

³¹ These *were* the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, in their lands, according to their nations.

A second ago I said, Shem's line will be brought up again in Chapter 11. This is to show God's Funnel as it is directed from Shem down to Abraham, the man of faith. He will become the example of justification by faith according to Paul's writings.

God has been working through time and history and slowly unfolding His beautiful plan and we skip or quickly pass over each step at our own great loss. Even with the many details we've looked over, we have had only touched on the vast amount of information that about these many people in Genesis chapter 10.

Despite this, we're now at our final verse of the chapter and our last verse for the day –

³² These *were* the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood.

Noah came on the scene in Genesis 5:29 and this is the last we'll hear about him until much later in the Bible when he is mentioned in short accounts. He served his time and now quietly departs from the scene in a verse which is more speaking of his sons than him.

He will be mentioned in the book of 1 Chronicles, by Isaiah and Ezekiel, and then by Jesus, the author of Hebrews, and by Peter. Noah was a man of faith and a faithful man and he is acknowledged as such by God in His word.

In the end, the lesson of Noah is one that we all need to take to heart. God loves the people of the world and He will carefully and tenderly look after them as they faithfully call on and trust in Him for their safety and deliverance.

From Noah to the mentioning of his sons we see a transition and in this transition is a division of the world. All people come from Noah and from him we take one of three routes – through Shem, the spiritual son, through Ham, the son of physical achievement, or through Japheth, the intellectual son.

Now I'll turn to the writings of Ray Stedman and quote his reflective thoughts on these three and how they point to us as individuals and members of the human race. A race of people created in God's image and for His glory –

“There are three divisions of mankind, as there are three divisions in man, in you. To each of these divisions is given the responsibility for meeting one of the basic needs of man – spiritual, physical, and intellectual. In each one of us these same three divisions are found. We each have a capacity to worship; we each have a capacity to reason; and each has a capacity to **create**. These are the things that distinguish us from the animals. This is the image of God in man.

Each of them needs to be held in perfect balance. The world is in a state of confusion, uncertainty and despair because the balance God intended has been left unfulfilled, so, in your individual life you are in a state of confusion, despair, frustration, weakness, or whatever it may be, because you have neglected to fulfill the three-fold capacities of your own nature. You can only do so as they are kept in perfect harmony, one with the other.

It is wrong to think of man as essentially spiritual. He is also intellectual and physical. It is wrong to think of him as being essentially physical, and to develop the athletic abilities to the neglect of the others; he is also spiritual and intellectual. The interesting thing is that in the Bible the intellectual is put last. If the order of scripture obtains for the individual as well as for the race, the order within us is also Shem, Ham, and Japheth. First the spiritual, then the physical, then the intellectual.

In that order mankind finds its complete fulfillment. If we understand ourselves we will also understand the world around us. The glory of the gospel is that it addresses itself to mankind exactly on those terms. We find ourselves entering into fulfillment, into excitement, into a dramatic sense of being what we were intended to be, when we open our lives to God through Jesus Christ, making that our first priority; then developing the

physical life, taking care of physical needs, physical demands; and through these two working together, developing the intellect to an understanding of ourselves...” Thank you Ray Stedman.

Now that we’re at the end of the account of Noah and the Table of the Nations, I’d like to again give you an overall brushstroke of the curse and blessing given by Noah. I realized this as I was preparing an earlier sermon. This will show how these things have literally been fulfilled in the pages and layout of the Bible.

Basically what we have in the Old Testament is information given by God to the Jewish people. Even though Genesis comes before the calling of Israel, it is part of the Torah, or the five books of Moses received at Mount Sinai. All the way through the Old Testament, Israel is the focus of the story as it leads to Jesus.

And then in the three first gospel accounts, we see Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament on our behalf. In other words, what is said there is written under the Old Testament and is directed to the Jewish people, not the church. It wasn’t until the night of the crucifixion that Jesus established the New Covenant in His blood.

In the New Testament, Paul calls the church and our life in Christ “a mystery” which had not been previously revealed. The gospel of John, although written mostly under the concepts of the Old Covenant, carries a mixture of Old and New Testament and so it forms a transition to the understanding of Christ and the church.

After John is Acts and it completes this transition. Acts starts where? In Jerusalem. And it ends where? In Rome. The first 12 chapters of Acts can be subtitled, the Acts of Peter, and then from chapter 13 to 28 they can be subtitled the Acts of Paul.

I’ll show you some parallels of this from Acts. God put these parallels there to show us the transition from Peter, the Apostle to the Jews, to Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles –

1. Peter’s work began by the Holy Spirit (2)
1. Paul’s work began by the Holy Spirit (13)

2. Peter was thought to be drunk and & then explains himself (2)
2. Paul was thought to be mad and then explains himself (26)

3. Peter’s first sermon begins new section of book (2)
3. Paul’s first sermon begins new section of book (13)

4. Peter has a time of work, preaching, and then persecution (2-11)
4. Paul has a time of work, preaching, and then persecution (13-19)

5. Peter has trouble after healing a man lame from birth (3)
5. Paul has trouble after healing a man lame from birth (14)

6. Peter says, "Silver and gold have I none" (3)
6. Paul says, "I have coveted no one's silver or gold" (20)

7. Peter's shadow heals (5)
7. Paul's handkerchief heals (19)

8. Peter is arrested in the temple and taken to Sanhedrin (4, 5)
8. Paul is arrested in the temple and taken to Sanhedrin (21-23)

9. Peter confronts Simon the sorcerer (8)
9. Paul confronts Elymas the sorcerer (13)

10. Peter performs an exorcism (5)
10. Paul performs an exorcism (16)

11. Peter raises Tabitha from the dead (9)
11. Paul raises Eutychus from the dead (20)

12. Peter lays hands for reception of Spirit (8)
12. Paul lays hands for reception of Spirit (19)

13. Peter worshipped (10)
13. Paul worshipped (14)

14. Peter imprisoned with miraculous escape (12)
14. Paul imprisoned with miraculous escape (16)

15. Angel stood by Peter (12)
15. Angel stood by Paul (27)

16. Peter called by vision to preach in Caesarea (10)
16. Paul called by vision to preach in Macedonia (16)

17. Peter's success brings Jewish jealousy (5)

17. Paul's success brings Jewish jealousy (13)

18. Peter heals the bedridden Aeneas (9)

18. Paul heals the bedridden father of Publius (28)

19. Peter ordains deacons (6)

19. Paul ordains elders (14)

20. Peter is "filled with the Spirit" (4)

20. Paul is "filled with the Spirit" (13)

Along with these many parallels, Paul in his writings says four times that he is the Apostle to the Gentiles and twice that Peter is the Apostle to the Jews.

Right after Acts, the first letter is Romans. The baton is passed from Shem to Japheth who will carry it for 2000 years while Israel is under punishment for rejecting their Messiah. Paul's last signed letter is Philemon which is followed by what... by Hebrews.

The letter is directed to the Hebrew people. After that is James which is written to the 12 tribes scattered abroad – the Jewish people. Immediately after James are Peter's two letters and he writes to "the pilgrims of the dispersion." He even writes from Rome where the book of Acts left off.

After these letters, the three letters of John are introduced which follow the same pattern as his gospel – a mixture of Old and New Testament concepts which form a transition to the understanding of Christ and the church.

After that is the letter of Jude which is a near summary to the book of 2 Peter and which speaks on identical themes. Finally is the book of Revelation which is written to the church in the first three chapters and about Israel in chapters 4-19.

From the time of Jesus' return in chapter 19, we see the merging of the two bodies into one in the millennial reign from Jerusalem and then the eternal state.

In other words, if you stand back and look at the overall picture of the Bible and then look at Noah's blessing to his sons, it is Japheth who resides in the tents of Shem. This means that Japheth would share in the same spiritual legacy as Shem. And it has – for

2000 years. But dwelling in the tents of someone means that you are encompassed by them.

Shem is the banner carrier of the spiritual legacy from Genesis through the first half of Acts. From Acts chapter 13, until Philemon, Japheth carries the spiritual legacy. But from the book of Hebrews on, the spiritual banner is returned to Shem.

And this will be literally fulfilled at the rapture of the church when Israel, descended from Shem, will again be the spiritual focus of the world's attention. We already see the world lining up for that.

All of this has come from the blessing of one man to his three sons in the foundational book of the Bible. It is an amazing and beautiful story in the unfolding revelation of God's eternal word.

The Line of Shem

Children were born also to Shem
The father of all the children of Eber
Eventually Jesus would descend from him
And he was the brother of Japheth the elder.

Shem's sons were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Lud, and Aram
And the sons of Aram were Uz, Hul, Gether, and Mash
The Arabs come from these boys, some have their own harem
And others today spend shekels, which is the form of Israeli cash

Arphaxad begot Salah, and Salah begot Eber
And to Eber were born Peleg and Joktan too
Peleg is a name for us to remember
Because in Peleg's time the earth was divided into who's who

Joktan begot 13 sons, a whole big bunch indeed
Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, and Hadoram too
Also Uzal, Diklah, Obal, and Abimael, were of his seed
And Sheba, Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab round out the whole slew.

These 13 were the sons of Joktan, a mouthful for sure
And they dwelt from Mesha to Sephar, the mountains out east

Of these sons of Shem some lines still endure
According to their nations from the greatest to the least

And so we finish listing the line of Noah's blood
All carefully given according to their generations
From these the people were divided after the flood
All from these sons who have become the world's nations

What a treat to know what God has done
Carefully leading us through many generations
And making His funnel which leads to His Son
Who would become the Savior of the Nations

Oh great and awesome God
Help us in thy light to trod

Keep us on the path of glory
And may our lips spread the gospel story

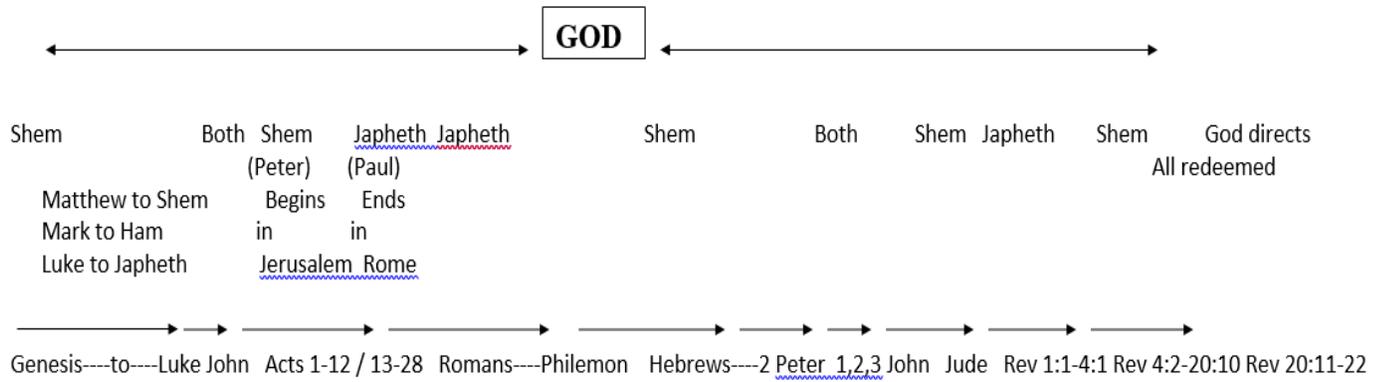
To You our highest praise we sing
For You have created us for Your praise and for Your glory
And so on earth may every living thing
Proclaim the great marvel of Jesus' victory

Hallelujah and Amen!

Next week - Genesis 11:1-9, The Tower of Babel

May God enlarge Japheth,
 And may he dwell in the tents of Shem
 Genesis 9:27

Who the information is primarily directed to/who is carrying the spiritual banner.
 Peter is the Apostle to the Jews. Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles.



GENESIS 11:1-9 (THE TOWER OF BABEL)

Universal translator, Star Trek, Google, Bing
Wycliffe Bible Translators – adapt it

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come. Matt 24:14

Introduction: Within just a short 100 year period after the Flood of Noah, the world had walked away from the knowledge of what happened and had not only rejected God and the lesson of recent history, but they had actually come together to work against Him and establish their own society and religion apart from Him.

Text Verse: *“Whom will he teach knowledge?*

And whom will he make to understand the message?

Those just weaned from milk?

Those just drawn from the breasts?

¹⁰ For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept,

Line upon line, line upon line,

Here a little, there a little.”

¹¹ For with stammering lips and another tongue

He will speak to this people, Isaiah 28:9-11

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Tower to Heaven, verses 1-4

¹ Now the whole earth had one language and one speech.

Two terms are used here to assure us that everybody on earth understood each other. The first is “language” which is the Hebrew word *saphah* and means literally, lip. Everyone had the same lip.

The second word used is “speech.” The Hebrew word is *devarim* which means “words.” It may interest you that this word, *devarim*, is the Hebrew name of the fifth book of the

Bible – Deuteronomy. If that seems odd, it's because the Hebrew name for biblical books is often the first main word in that book.

In the case of Deuteronomy, the book begins with "These are the words..." or *elleh ha'davarim*... And so the word *Devarim* is given as the title.

- Genesis = Bereshit = In the Beginning
- Exodus = Shemot = Names
- Leviticus = Vayikrah = And called
- Numbers = Ba'midbar = In the wilderness

Anyway... the whole earth had one language and one speech. The reason that two terms are given here, language and speech, is because they make up the two major parts the understanding of our communication. The **words** are the substance of the language.

If I write, "Charlie, go park the car in the yard," anyone who **reads** those words and understands them will know what I mean. But there is another part to language and that is the spoken part. If I'm from Boston, a Floridian will think I've completely abused such a simple sentence when I say "Chahlie, go pahk the cah in the yahd."

The spoken part, or the lip, is how we **speak** the words, how we form our mouth, how we use the air and the muscles of our mouth, and so on. It includes all of the matter of the speech that comes from our heads and then proceeds past our tongues and lips. So the Bible is telling us that the whole world once had just one language and one way of speaking that language.

This should seem completely obvious if you think about it. Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their three wives were the only people on the ark and they obviously spoke the same language and they had one lip, or one way of "parking the care in the yard,,, Charlie."

Whether you believe in Noah or the Tower of Babel or not, the same thing will be true even with evolution. There was a point when there was one language on the earth and only one. From a biblical perspective, I will be as bold as I can be and say that this language was certainly Hebrew.

This is the original language of the world, it was the language that God spoke to Adam, and it is the same language that continued on through one group of people and which gets its name from the great great grandson of Noah, whose name was Eber.

This language was lost for all intents and purposes at the first exile of the Jewish people, where Aramaic became the spoken language of the Jews. But it was resurrected for common use after more than 2500 years by a guy named Eliezer Ben Yehuda.

It is the language of Israel and the Jewish people today and it will be the language spoken around the world in place of English in the millennial reign of Christ. If you believe some reports, Hebrew was even proposed as the language for America at its founding.

This wouldn't surprise me a bit, but God's plans come in His timing and it will occur at some point in the future. The wee little book of Zephaniah, right towards the end of the Old Testament tells us this –

“Therefore wait for Me,” says the LORD, “Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination *is* to gather the nations To My assembly of kingdoms, To pour on them My indignation, All My fierce anger; All the earth shall be devoured With the fire of My jealousy. ⁹ “For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, (or a pure lip) That they all may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him with one accord. -Zephaniah 3:8, 9

The day has come for the pure language to be restored to the nation of Israel and someday it will be, I am certain, the universal language of the world, like English is now. When Jesus comes back and sits among His people, He will speak Hebrew.

² And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.

Depending on which version of the Bible you use, you may or may not have a correct translation in this verse. I use the NKJV for my sermons and what you just heard... is wrong. If you use the King James Version, the New King James Version, the English Standard Version, or some others, it will say, “as they journeyed from the east” instead of “As men moved eastward...” That is the NIV.

The NIV and some others got it right. Both options are possible from the Hebrew which is *be-nah-se-am miqeddem* but we do know from the Bible which is correct. First, the mountains of Ararat, which are the focus of the last main narrative, is west, not east of the plain of Shinar, which is in the area of Mesopotamia.

And secondly, the exact same term is explained elsewhere, such as in Genesis 13:11... coming soon to a sermon near you.

As they traveled eastward, they came to the plain of Shinar. The land of Shinar is the same area that Cain dwelt in before the flood and it is the same area which has been in complete spiritual opposition to God, both actually and symbolically, from that time all the way through to the end of the Bible.

It is where false religion got its foothold with Cain and where it will rise up again in the verses ahead. And even to this day, the area is a hotbed of false religion and fighting against God and against God's people. And it is also the place where Israel was sent when they were disobedient to His word.

We read this in the second verse of Daniel chapter 1 – “And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.”

The word Shinar is mentioned 7 times in the Bible and the last time it's used is prophetically speaking of a date which is future even to us now. This, in Zechariah chapter 5 –

⁵ Then the angel who talked with me came out and said to me, “Lift your eyes now, and see what this *is* that goes forth.” ⁶ So I asked, “What *is* it?” And he said, “It *is* a basket that is going forth.” He also said, “This *is* their resemblance throughout the earth: ⁷ Here *is* a lead disc lifted up, and this *is* a woman sitting inside the basket”; ⁸ then he said, “This *is* Wickedness!” And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth. ⁹ Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there *were* two women, coming with the wind in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven. ¹⁰ So I said to the angel who talked with me, “Where are they carrying the basket?” ¹¹ And he said to me, “To build a house for it in the land of Shinar; when it is ready, *the basket* will be set there on its base.” Zechariah 5:5-11

It's important to follow the story we're looking at today in order to understand everything that is coming on us in the future, including all the trouble and woe in the book of Revelation.

³ Then they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks and bake *them* thoroughly.” They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar.

⁴ And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *is* in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

Two verses, in a seemingly obscure passage about people who lived over four thousand years ago, which point to every false religion that has ever existed or that will ever exist until the Lord Jesus returns and puts an end to them. Let’s read them again –

NOW LET’S BREAK IT DOWN – Then they... the impetus for false religion – the ideas and thoughts of men. Then they said to one another... the idea comes from a person and he says it to another person and they agree on the terms. Yeah, that sounds like a good idea. Let’s do it!

^{3 (cont)} **Come...**

Yeah man! Here we go, let’s work on this idea.

^{3 (cont)} **Let us make bricks...**

We are going to make something with our own hands. (Do you see where this is going yet?)

^{3 (cont)} **And bake them thoroughly...**

Ha’vah nil-be-nah le-vah-nim v’nis-re-phah lis-re-phah (21 sec). We have a little rhyming in the words... almost like they’re doing something naughty – “

We’ll make these bricks

And we’ll bake these bricks

We’ll bake them through and through

And we’ll get to heaven... Yes, that’s what we will do

“Not only will we make bricks, but we’ll put them through the fire, just like a sacrifice that we should have made to God.”

^{3 (cont)} **They had brick for stone...**

Brick for stone. Who made the stones? God did. Who made the bricks? Man did. Do you see the difference? Let me take you forward to what God told the Israelites concerning the altar of sacrifice –

²² Then the LORD said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘You have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. ²³ You shall not make *anything to be* with Me—gods of silver or gods of gold you shall not make for yourselves. ²⁴ An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I record My name I will come to you, and I will bless you. ²⁵ And if you make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone; for if you use your tool on it, you have profaned it. -Exodus 20:22-25

Moses repeats this in Deuteronomy 27 before the Israelites went into the Promised Land. And in both Joshua 8 and 1 Kings 6, we see the Israelites care in following this procedure – once at Mount Ebal and once when building the Temple in Jerusalem. The temple in Jerusalem did use cut stone, but it was done in the quarry and no iron tool was used at the site of the temple.

Do you see the significance of all of this yet? Let’s go on.

^{3 (cont)} **And they had asphalt for mortar...**

This is a mineral pitch, which, when hardened, forms a strong cement which is commonly used in Assyria even to this day. It forms the mortar found on the burnt brick reaching back into antiquity.

The people weren’t just making their own bricks to work their way back to heaven, they were uniting them in an attempt to reach God. You may not see the symbolism, but every brick is a false religion and every one of them is being united against the truth of God.

⁴And they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top *is* in the heavens...

The people rejected God’s way of approaching Him and decided that they could make up their own way to get to God. Have you ever heard the term, “All paths lead to God?” This is where it started. But God has and always will reject this. Man doesn’t work to God, God comes to man.

Let's go back over these verses and clarify what is happening here. The people have moved east – away from God's presence, just as man was cast east out of Eden and Cain moved further east of Eden to the Land of Nod, the land of wandering.

And this is just as the disobedient Israelites were cast out of God's presence... to the east – to Shinar, the place which symbolically represents exile and banishment from God's presence.

In this land which is apart from God, the people have determined that their way to God is the right way and have begun to build a tower to heaven – to the throne of God itself...working their way to heaven. This is exactly what every false religion on earth – every one of them has in common – works-based salvation.

And not only is this a type of works based salvation, but it is a type of what we call in modern terms "ecumenicalism." This is an attempt to unite supposed Christian sects into one cohesive unit. At the same time, these are uniting with non-Christian religions in what we call religious pluralism.

A tower is being built, right before our eyes where all world religions are being brought together as equal in power and equal in truth. The only religion which is unacceptable is a religion which is intolerant of untruth; the one with the exclusive claim... the only one God accepts – Christianity.

"My Son is the only way – there is no other."

The Tower of Babel is again being built, right before our eyes, and the United Nations is the largest force behind this tower of confusion and chaos.

It doesn't matter where you go on this planet or what religion you look at, it will ultimately be a religion of working to please God. But the Bible, from the first page to the last proclaims that God does the work to reconcile us to Him. There is one way and one way alone to be right with God. And works are not involved. Paul sums it up in Ephesians chapter 2 –

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. -Ephesians 2:8, 9

4 (cont) Let us make a name for ourselves...

The people of the world and every false religion looks for their own glory, no matter how piously they seem to do it, this is the goal – “I, even I, have earned my salvation. I have done the deeds. I have merited God’s favor. I.” But the Bible teaches a vastly different lesson –

“Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. 11 For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it; For how should My name be profaned? And I will not give My glory to another.” Isaiah 48:10-11

And again –

Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised
In the city of our God,
In His holy mountain.
² Beautiful in elevation,
The joy of the whole earth,
Is Mount Zion *on* the sides of the north,
The city of the great King.
³ God *is* in her palaces;
He is known as her refuge. Psalm 48:1-3

4(cont) Lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.

We will build the tower. We will reach the heights. We will be like God and we will be gods. And we will unite so that our efforts will be united. Our deeds will collectively rule the world and from this spot we will be the rulers.

Whether it is a false religious religion like Islam or Mormonism, or a false political religion, like Communism or progressive liberalism – the goal is always the same – shun God and work out our own salvation.

Progressive liberalism? You mean America’s Democrat party? If you don’t believe this, just read the writings of Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama. Their own words testify to their true intentions.

One other idea about building this tower to heaven comes from the writings of the ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. Not only were they defying God by

attempting to work their way to Him, but they were also attempting to defy Him should He ever presume to go back on His word about flooding the earth again.

He says that their intention was to build a tower so tall that any floodwaters couldn't cover it. The materials used bear this out. They used burnt brick cemented together with bitumen, or asphalt to keep it watertight. Anyone inside of it would be safe, just like Noah was in the ark. They're building their own little ark...

This then is an example of not believing the very words and promises of God because God promised to never flood the world again. And just like the Tower of Babel supposedly protecting from another worldwide flood, we have an exact repeat of this in our modern society in the lies about global warming.

“We need to act because the world will flood.” You hear it on the news everyday. “We need to save ourselves. We cannot trust God's word which states that this will never happen again.”

Every twisted thought of man – whether it is murder of the unborn, promoting vegetarianism in order to save the wildlife, or fighting against capital punishment of killers, the reason behind it is always the rejection of the truth of God's word. Always.

II. Unless the Lord Builds the House, verses 5 & 6

⁵ But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.

The Lord came down... Before the flood, a different type of terminology was used. Before the flood there was still a place where the Garden of Eden was located. Before the flood, the Lord talked with Adam, with Eve, and with Cain. Before the flood there were cherubim who guarded the Garden of Eden.

Before the flood, He spoke with Noah in several different ways and He established a covenant with him. And before the flood, the Lord is the one who shut the door of the ark. But after the flood, Noah went out of the ark and it says nothing about the Lord opening the door.

After the flood, Noah built an altar at the top of the mountain of Ararat and the smoke of the offering soared even higher to reach the Lord. His presence since the time of the flood is symbolically on high and now the Lord descends to bring about judgment and

inflict discipline on those who have so quickly and so shamefully been disobedient to the commands they were given through Noah.

The omniscient Lord of creation is coming down “to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.”

Just think how the Lord comes down to visit every new building that we erect for whatever false religion pops up. And every time, His visitation is the same – “I’m sorry, this isn’t the way. Can’t you get something so simple, so tender, and so heartfelt right?” I have done it all and all you need to do is simply accept it by faith.”

⁶And the LORD said, “Indeed the people *are* one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them.

It is true... man is created in God’s image and is capable of amazingly great things. But the things we do and the things we make can ultimately have only one of two end purposes – either the glorification of self or the glorification of God.

If it is for self, it is a futile attempt at achieving immortality. If it is to glorify God, then it will truly, in some capacity, be a work of eternal significance. The Bible says in the 127th Psalm –

¹ Unless the LORD builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it;
Unless the LORD guards the city,
The watchman stays awake in vain.

² *It is vain for you to rise up early,
To sit up late,
To eat the bread of sorrows;
For so He gives His beloved sleep. -Psalm 127:1-2*

The Lord came down and looked upon the work of the men in Shinar and He was displeased. A little over 2000 years later, the Lord accomplished His own great work... and it was marvelous –

¹⁰ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;
He has put *Him* to grief.
When You make His soul an offering for sin,

He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days,
And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

¹¹ He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied.

By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,
For He shall bear their iniquities. -Isaiah 53:10-11

III. A World of Confusion, verses 7-9

⁷ Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

Come let Us... once again, the nature of God is brought into the pages of the Bible. Yes, there is one God, but He refers to Himself here in the plural, "US", just like He did in Genesis 1 and in Genesis 3, and just as He will in Isaiah chapter 6 and in Zechariah chapter 12 and elsewhere in the Old Testament – and just as He will do throughout the entire New Testament.

Come let Us go down and confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

The most effective way of getting people to quit a task is to simply throw that task into confusion. God confused the language of the people in which way? He did it by their lip, their speech, not by their words. And this explains why all the way back in verse one the idea of the language of man was divided into two concepts.

As the people were working, their speech became confusing to one another to the point where one person would ask for a brick and the other person would bring a stick; one would ask for some clay and the other would ask, "What did you say?"

In no time at all, fights broke out, people killed each other, and decided to pick up their family and bail out of the great task they had set out on.

Here then is a miracle of God which disperses the people of the world and which caused devolution from one culture and monotheism to a cacophony of cultures and a world rife with religious beliefs which encompass the earth even to this day.

But by another miracle of God, the world's people are reunited in the family of God and all speak in one religious voice, not as individuals, but through God's manifestation of Himself in the Person of Jesus. He is the true Universal Translator for everyone who has been reunited into God's family through His shed blood.

This is never more evident than what occurred in the book of Acts, chapter 2 –

¹ When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ² And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. ⁵ And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. ⁷ Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, “Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?” ⁸ And how *is it that* we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” ¹² So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?”

-Acts 2:1-12

In 3 more weeks, we will again celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit and the uniting of all believers under one Head. Regardless of our physical looks, our cultural backgrounds, or our languages, God has accepted us as His own through the work of Jesus and the powerful sealing of the Holy Spirit.

⁸ So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city.

In Genesis 10, we read about Eber and his sons. One was named Peleg and we read this about him – “for in his days the earth was divided...”

The entire reason why that description of him was included was to tell us that the people of the earth were divided at the time that he lived. It wasn't a division of the lands of the earth into continents. Instead it was a division of the people of the world by their speech.

As they moved out into the world with their increasingly distinct languages, they developed written languages to assist them in their lives and to keep their cultures tied together. One of my favorite of all written languages is the Korean alphabet.

Despite looking complex, like Chinese or Japanese, it is actually one of the simplest to read languages of all. Speaking it is another matter, but to learn to read it, if taught properly, is a cake walk.

I attended a Korean church for several years and wanted to learn to read it, so I went on line and tried several sites, almost giving up because Koreans do not know how to teach Korean.

But then I clicked on a site developed by a... yes, by a Jewish guy. His instruction allowed me to read Korean within a few days. I still don't understand it well, but I can read it.

It was originally developed by Korea's great King SeJong who lived in the 1400s. It is a masterful piece of both artwork and functionality and is beautiful in its simplicity and ease of use.

⁹ Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Just as in verse 8, the credit for the dispersion of the people is given solely to the Lord. It is He who directs the winds which blow across the nations and through time and it is He who fashions the changes in everything, from the transformation of the caterpillar into a butterfly, to the number and size of the nations on the earth. He is in complete control of everything that happens around us.

The city the people left behind was called Babel, which means confusion and the explanation is given right in the same sentence, "because the Lord confused the language of all the earth." And spiritual Babylon is the city of confusion even to this day.

In the place where religion is developed by man, there is confusion. In the place where people attempt to please God through their works, there is confusion. And in the place where God's word is disregarded or distorted, there is confusion.

God has given us His word and His word reveals His Son, Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ reveals the unseen Father – nothing confusing there.

Apart from this revelation, there is only confusion and disorder, but when we open our eyes and our hearts to the truth of God's word, confusion is replaced with right thinking.

Anger is replaced with peace. And discontentment is replaced with the hope of a better life at the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Tower of Babel

Now the whole earth had one language and one speech
And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east
That at last to the plain in the land of Shinar they did reach
And the people dwelt there, from the greatest to the least

Then someone said, "Come, let us make some bricks"
"And let us bake them thoroughly, through and through"
They had brick for stone, and clay was used in the mix
And they had asphalt for mortar to bind the bricks two by two

Another said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city"
And also a tower who's top to heaven it will reach
Let us make a name for ourselves, to be scattered would be a pity
Let's start building now, I know you understand my speech

We will work our way to God
And by our deeds heavenly streets we will trod

We will reach the highest heights
And we ourselves will be gods.. shining like heavenly lights

But the Lord came down to see the city
And to view the tower built by the sons of men
And He shook His head knowing it was a pity
They'd rejected Him and His glory, once again

And the Lord said, "Indeed the people are united as one"
"And one language they all have to share in their task"
If this is what they begin to do and what they have already done
Then nothing they intend will be very far from their grasp.

Come, let Us go down and their language we will confuse
That they may not understand one another's speech
So the Lord scattered them, giving their plan the blues

And they ceased building the city, the goal no longer in reach
Therefore its name is called Babel and confusion rules the place
Because the Lord confused the language of the human race

And from there the Lord scattered them to all corners of the earth
And the Lord filled the world with many types of speech
Across the globe man has gone, spanning its entire girth
And also across the globe, man does the gospel teach

And the gospel unites us all to the glory of the Lord
As we wait on His return as promised in His word

Until He comes we live by faith in the promises He's made
And continue on in His strength and resting in His shade

Hallelujah and Amen...

Next week's sermon is Genesis 11:10-32, Introducing Abraham

GENESIS 11:10-32 (INTRODUCING ABRAHAM)

In the past few weeks, we've left the flood and Noah behind and then we traveled to Babylon to see how the world moved away from God and towards a system of false religion.

This week the Bible backs up to a date before that time to list the line of Shem and about half way through the list of names, it catches up with the story of Babel when we get to Shem's great, great, great grandson Peleg. Eventually today, we'll arrive at the great hero of our faith named Abram or Abraham.

Before we jump into the Bible, let me tell you about the land of Ur where some of Shem's descendants moved to, which is south of Babylon. It's the land that Abraham was called out from and by the time he left, false religion had completely taken over.

It was a city of Mesopotamia midway between the modern city of Baghdad and the head of the Persian Gulf. In ancient times the Euphrates River flowed near the city walls and because it controlled the outlet to the sea, it was favorably located for the development of commerce and for attaining political dominance.

It was the principal center of worship of the Sumerian moon god Nanna. There are three known dynasties from the area and from their earliest days they had set up their own deities.

The oldest dynasty, which goes back to the time of the flood itself, built a temple to the goddess Ninhursag. It was from this land that Abraham received his call to leave with his family and go to a land God would grant to him and his descendants forever, the land of Canaan which today is known as Israel.

Introduction: The names we'll go through in the next 30 minutes or so are listed with almost no commentary at all, but they're important for a few reasons. First, they continue to establish the line of people who will eventually become the people of Israel leading to Jesus.

They also continue to provide dating for the age of the world. We know when things have happened and so we can tell both how long ago this people lived and how long from the creation they lived.

These verses, like others we've looked over, are the only such records on the face of the earth. And yet, curiously, they are included in the most printed document in human history – the Holy Bible. God surely works in wondrous ways!

Text Verse: *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”⁵⁷ Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”⁵⁸ Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” John 8:56-58*

From the beginning, Jesus was and He always will be. Even before the great man of faith, Abraham, existed, Jesus Christ is. The entire Bible speaks of the Person and work of Jesus, so...

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Generations of Shem

¹⁰ This is the genealogy of Shem: Shem was one hundred years old, and begot Arphaxad two years after the flood.

¹¹ After he begot Arphaxad, Shem lived five hundred years, and begot sons and daughters.

This is now the fifth set of generations or genealogies that the Bible has given us. So far we've seen the generations of the heavens and the earth in Genesis 2; the generations of Adam in Genesis 5; the generations of Noah in Genesis 6; and the generations of the sons of Noah in Genesis 10. Now we further refine God's workings in human history by looking at the generations of Noah's second son, Shem.

The Flood of Noah ended in the year 1657 AM (Anno Mundi) and so Shem was 100 years old in the year 1659 AM when his son Arphaxad was born. After Arphaxad was born, Shem lived 500 years and so he died in the year 2159 AM.

If you notice from the time of Shem on, the lives of the people get progressively shorter and each of their first recorded children will often come at an earlier age as well. Shem is the last person to live to 600 years of age. He lived long after Abram was born, which was 10 generations later... Amazing.

¹² Arphaxad lived thirty-five years, and begot Salah.

¹³ After he begot Salah, Arphaxad lived four hundred and three years, and begot sons and daughters.

Arphaxad was born in the year 1659 and he had Salah in the year 1694 AM. Arphaxad died in the year 2097 at 438 years of age.

¹⁴ Salah lived thirty years, and begot Eber.

¹⁵ After he begot Eber, Salah lived four hundred and three years, and begot sons and daughters.

Salah was born in the year 1694 AM and he had Eber in the year 1724 AM. Salah died in the year 2127 AM at 463 years of age.

¹⁶ Eber lived thirty-four years, and begot Peleg.

¹⁷ After he begot Peleg, Eber lived four hundred and thirty years, and begot sons and daughters.

Eber was born in the year 1724 AM and he had his son Peleg in the year 1758 AM. Eber died in the year 2188 AM at 464 years of age. He is the last person who would live to be more than 450 years of age and in fact, he is the last one who would even live beyond 300 years. Man's years drop quickly after the flood.

The name Eber means "One from beyond" or "He who crossed over" and his name is where the term "Hebrew" comes from. Eber was alive at the time of the divisions of languages and he certainly was the father of the family line that maintained the original language of the earth which we call Hebrew today.

Because his name means, "He who crossed over" and it's recorded that his descendants lived in Ur which is on the opposite side of the Euphrates from Babylon, it's probable that he and several generations of his descendants moved away from Babylon to Ur some time after the time of the Tower of Babel.

The reason why I say this is that In Genesis 14, we will see the word Hebrew used for the first time in the Bible when speaking about Abraham. He is the man who "crossed over" the Euphrates and away from the area of Babel.

It's likely that Eber was with him because he lived until 2188 and Abram was born in 2009 – 179 years before Eber died. So this group of people, with this special language, the Hebrew language, crossed over the Euphrates as directed by God's divine hand.

And in Joshua 24:2 we read that Abraham's father who will be introduced later, lived on the other side of the Euphrates and worshipped other gods –

“And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Your fathers, *including* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods.’”

Abraham being a Hebrew certainly crossed the Euphrates with several generations of his fathers, including Eber.

¹⁸ Peleg lived thirty years, and begot Reu.

¹⁹ After he begot Reu, Peleg lived two hundred and nine years, and begot sons and daughters.

Peleg was born in the year 1758 AM and he had Reu in the year 1788. Peleg died in the year 1997 AM at 239 years of age. He died 191 years before his father Eber and 9 years before his great, great, great grandfather Noah. Yes, Noah was still alive at this time. Peleg is the last person in this line of Shem who was mentioned in the generations of the sons of Noah in Genesis 10. He was listed with his brother Joktan, and Joktan's sons were mentioned, but not Peleg's.

Joktan is no longer relevant to the story and so this line in Chapter 11 focuses on Peleg and those who come after him. It is he, not Joktan, who is an ancestor of Jesus.

Peleg's name means “division” and during his lifetime the nations were divided. From the time of Peleg on, the world is going to move out in many directions. And the languages will be as varied and difficult to understand by others as they are to this day.

²⁰ Reu lived thirty-two years, and begot Serug.

²¹ After he begot Serug, Reu lived two hundred and seven years, and begot sons and daughters.

Reu was born in the year 1788 AM and he had his son Serug in the year 1820 AM. Reu died in the year 2027 at 239 years of age.

²² Serug lived thirty years, and begot Nahor.

²³ After he begot Nahor, Serug lived two hundred years, and begot sons and daughters.

Serug was born in the year 1820 AM and he had his son Nahor in the year 1850 AM. Serug died in the year 2050 AM at 230 years of age.

²⁴ Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and begot Terah.

²⁵ After he begot Terah, Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years, and begot sons and daughters.

Nahor was born in the year 1850 AM and he had his son Terah in the year 1879 AM. Nahor died in the year 1998 AM at the age of 148. This was 22 years before his father Serug and 8 years before his great-great-great-great-great grandfather Noah.

Yes, Noah was still alive in the 9th generation when Abraham's father Terah was born and even when Nahor died. The environment of the post flood world is obviously much harsher on humans than it was before the flood.

And this harshness has a cumulative effect, transferring down the line. We know this because Noah lived 350 years after the flood and each generation lived less than the one before. So whatever affects us is something that transfers to the next generation.

Noah outlived many of those who came after him and the incredible thing to me is to think about all of the trouble and turning from God that had come about since the flood.

All the people had to do was to go up to Noah and ask him if the story about the flood was true. He was related to them all, so all they needed to do was "go ask grandpa."

But the Bible shows us that people like Nimrod rejected this and went out fighting against God and trying to do things their own way. And is this really any different than us? We have photographs and movies about the holocaust in Germany and yet there are people in almost every country that deny it happened.

Nobody denies that America used two atom bombs on Japan and yet something which has much more evidence, from the same time frame, is denied. If you go to Japan today, there is almost no trace of the atom bomb's destruction and what is there could be blamed on a fire or a normal aerial attack, but no one denies it occurred.

If you go to Germany, not only are there memorials and photographs but the concentration camps are still there and the ovens are there. Everything is there for anyone who will simply open their eyes, and yet people deny it happened.

This is a very sad human condition called peanutheaditis and it didn't just exist in the early post flood world, but it continues on to this day. Peanutheaditis can be defined as the denying of that which is certain and in the face of overwhelming evidence.

Another good example of peanutheaditis concerns the modern state of Israel. There is more than abundant evidence that there never was a group of people known as the "palestinians." In fact, all you need to do is read the book, Innocents Abroad, by Mark Twain to know this is true. And you can read it right on line for free.

He documented his travels through the Holy Land in 1869 and marks out how many people lived there and what the people groups were. This was before the modern state of Israel and even the Zionist movement and so it is completely unbiased.

It shows without a shadow of a doubt that the land of Israel didn't have the volumes of so called "palestinians" that they claim nowadays. And there are plenty of other historical records about the land and the people to verify the truth of this matter.

There also never was a palestinian government, palestinian money, or any other way to connect the palestinians to the land. But this doesn't matter to people who hate the Bible and hate the truth.

Instead of believing the truth, they allow the terrible affliction known as peanutheaditis to direct every thought and every action of their lives.

There is a cure for peanutheaditis though. It's not a terminal disease by any stretch. Rather, all one needs to do is to read and believe their Bible, follow Jesus obediently, and open their eyes to the truth of history, and reject the lies of the world.

I hope each person here will pursue the remedy for peanutheaditis all the days of their life and will remain healthy, happy, and content that we can know truth, we can reject lies, and we can stand firm on the surety of God and His gospel message which tells us about Jesus His Son.

²⁶ Now Terah lived seventy years, and begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran.

Terah was born in the year 1879 AM and from this point, the Bible dating can get confusing and you really need to dig to figure things out. Abram is listed first in this verse, but he is not the oldest son. We know this because the eldest, Haran, died back in their hometown of Ur. I'll explain this a little bit later.

Abram is actually the second son of Terah and once again we see God's guiding hand in the process of Divine Election. We saw it when Adam's oldest son Cain was replaced by Seth and we saw it when Noah's oldest son Japheth was replaced by Shem.

The pattern continues with Abram replacing Haran and it will continue all the way through the Bible, leading us to a greater knowledge of the Person of Jesus Christ.

Verse 26 ends the generations of Shem and leads us into a new section of the biblical account, which is our next main thought of the day...

II. The generations of Terah

²⁷ This is the genealogy of Terah: Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran. Haran begot Lot.

This is now the sixth set of generations that the Bible has given us – the generations of the heavens and the earth; the generations of Adam; the generations of Noah; the generations of the sons of Noah; the generations of Shem, and now those of Terah.

One of the things I try to do when going through verse by verse like this is to remind people that there are keys to understanding the Bible and how things will develop. We just talked about one of those keys – seeing the second son replace the first. This is the key of Divine Election.

In the verse we just read, we see Terah and then three of his sons listed. Right after that, it says, "Haran begot Lot." Because Lot is mentioned like this, we can guess that we will be seeing him again, and the chances are that he will show up again in a significant way.

Because Lot is introduced now, it is a good time to mention that he very well may be older than Abram. Most people who have read the story of Abram and Lot know that he is Abram's nephew and we normally associate nephews being younger than their uncles.

But Abram's older brother Haran was 60 years older than he was and so it's likely that Lot was older than him as well. In fact, studies of the way these two guys interact have some scholars convinced this is the case.

²⁸ And Haran died before his father Terah in his native land, in Ur of the Chaldeans.

Haran was the oldest son of Terah. I said I'd explain how I knew that a little later, and a little later isn't yet. So you'll have to wait till... a little later. Here, however, we see that Haran died in Ur before the family left.

Before we go on, we can look back on some great parallels between the line of Adam to Noah before the flood and the line of Noah to Abram after the flood. Some of them are pretty cool.

Noah rose above the waters of the flood. And Adam was created out of the land which was brought out of the waters of creation.

Adam ate of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil which caused a curse on his seed, just as Noah was drunk by the fruit of the vine which ended in a curse on his seed.

Cain was a builder and the first to organize a culture on earth before the flood and he did it in the land east of Eden which was around where Iraq is today. This culture was separated from God and led to overall wickedness in the world.

Nimrod was a builder and the first to organize a culture on the earth after the flood and he did it in the land which is around where Iraq is today. This culture was separated from God and led to overall wickedness in the world.

Noah was the tenth man from Adam and was saved from the world of physical death by flooding waters. Abram was the tenth from Shem and was saved from the world of spiritual death in flame – the meaning of Ur where he came from is light or flame.

The Bible says there will be two destructions of the world – one by flood and one by fire.

The world into which Adam was created was given the great lights of the sky for signs and for seasons. The world into which Noah arrived was given the rainbow as a sign of the covenant.

In Genesis 5, before the flood, the 10 generations of Adam are given from Adam to Noah. This genealogy ends with the listing of Noah's three sons – all of whom would have an important impact on the rest of the Bible story.

In Genesis 11, after the flood, the 10 generations of the sons of Noah are given, from Shem to Abram. This genealogy ends with the listing of Terah's three sons – all of whom would have an important impact on the rest of the Bible story.

These parallels aren't at all obvious and they have to be searched for. They're put here to show us that there is a divine hand behind the writing of these accounts and that He is in control of all things.

So let's stop here, for just a minute and think about that. If God has been in control of all of these things even down to the minutest details, then shouldn't that make us feel better about the things that are getting us down in life right now?

Why should we assume that God, who was in charge of every detail of the pre-flood world and the post flood world, right up to the time of Abram should somehow stop being in control of it during our own lives. The big question during the attacks of 9/11 was "Where is God in all of this?"

The answer, if you follow these accounts like we are, is that He was right there and completely aware of everything that happened to every person that it happened to. And that same God is still in control when you wake up and wonder how you're going to pay your bills or what will happen to the family problem you're facing.

God isn't unaware of your trials and He asks you to not worry about things that seem hopeless or out of control. Going through these names, and dates, and ages, and places might seem to make your head hurt, but here are two things for you to consider –

First, I'm the one who had to sit down and type all of this up. So it's really not all that bad for you.

And secondly and more to the point, God gives us these minute details to show us that He really does have His hand on the ages and on the people of the world. And He has His hand in every single detail to show His immense wisdom and greatness.

Never feel like you're just an unwanted grain of sand on an infinitely long beach. No matter how many grains of sand there are, He is tending to and aware of each and every one of them.

²⁹ Then Abram and Nahor took wives: the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife, Milcah, the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and the father of Iscah.

The two remaining sons of Terah both married their own relatives. Abram married his half sister Sarai. We learn later in Genesis that she was the daughter of his father Terah, but they had a different mother, meaning Terah had more than one wife.

Nahor on the other hand married the daughter of his oldest brother Haran. And then we have another daughter of Haran mentioned, Iscah. Remember, what I've said a jillion times – when a person is mentioned like this in the Bible, even if it's only once, their name is important to something else in the Bible.

Iscah means “on who looks forth” and because her name is mentioned only once with no other known significance, most scholars – and I mean most going back thousands of years – say that Iscah and Sarai are the same person.

This is a cheap way of resolving the problem and it doesn't resolve it at all. Iscah is not Sarai and Sarai is not Iscah. It's very clear they are two people.

The reason why she is mentioned is that she is most probably Lot's wife. If you know the story of Lot and the destruction of Sodom, the destroying angels told him, “Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.”

And then we read...

But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

-Genesis 19:26

Iscah, or “Jessica” in English, means “One who looks forth.” Instead of living out her name, she looked back instead and became the seasoning for many curry dishes in the Middle East.

³⁰ But Sarai was barren; she had no child.

By the time these pilgrims are ready to leave Ur and head towards the Promised Land, Abram and Sarai had been married long enough to know that Sarai was barren. It's probable that others in the family already had children, but there were none for Sarai.

And just like the introduction of people's names, verses like this will always lead to something interesting later in the Bible. For those of you who know the story of Abram and Sarai, you know that her being barren will affect the course of human history in enormous ways and it continues to affect it to this day.

She is the first person mentioned who is barren, but there will be many more in the pages of the Bible. When a statement like this is made, it will inevitably lead to a happy resolution and to a demonstration of the greatness and glory of God. Stay tuned in the weeks ahead to the wonderful story of Abram and Sarai...

³¹ And Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot, the son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out with them from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there.

Off goes the family, escaping the flame of Ur and heading for spiritual renewal in the land that God will lead them to. On the way to Canaan... they stopped.

The reason isn't given, but they stop in a place called Haran and we can guess that when they stopped, Terah their father knew he couldn't go on, maybe because he was just too old. Instead of going any further, it seems they established a foothold in the land and called it Haran after their dead son and brother.

Abram wouldn't leave this place until Terah died. Only after that would he continue on to the land he was promised to come to. If you think about it, there are people all around the world that are symbolically a lot like Terah.

They come to know that there is a Promised Land and they start their journey towards it, but they never make the commitment to complete the journey. It's sad too, because God doesn't make it hard on the lost soul.

He makes the call and waits for the response. When He receives it, He ushers them the rest of the way to glory. All the work is done and He only asks that we receive it by faith. But so many, like Terah, see it only from a distance. They never make it to the place God intends for them... very sad.

³² So the days of Terah were two hundred and five years, and Terah died in Haran.

Terah was born in the year 1879 and he had his son Abram in the year 2009 AM. Terah died and Abram was called to move to the land of Canaan in the year 2084 AM. Terah

was 205 years old at his death and he is the last person to live over 200 years of age and believe it or not Shem is still alive at this point.

A bit earlier, I said that Abram was the second son of Terah and that I'd explain that later. Well, later is now. It's a bit confusing, but Genesis 12:4 says that Abram left Haran to go to the Promised Land when he was 75 years old.

His father Terah would have been 130 when he had Abram in the year 2009. But Terah was 70 when he had his first child. That means that Haran, the oldest son, was 60 years older than him.

The funny thing about this is that we actually need the New Testament to confirm this. Without Acts 7, we could only speculate, but in Stephen's speech in Acts 7, it says this –

Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, **when his father was dead**, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. -Acts 7:4

Only when Terah died did God call Abraham to move. Next week, we'll actually start into the account of Abraham's call and his move to the land of Canaan. He is one of the greatest heroes of faith in the Bible and yet he faced plenty of failures and failings just like we all do.

But God uses real, fallible people for His purposes and He always carries them to a happy end. Don't forget this as you go home today. Yes you have troubles and your own shortcomings, but God can and will use you as you submit to Him and His leading.

The Generations of Shem and Terah

Shem was 100 when he begot is son named Arphaxad
It was two years after the flood
After he begot Arphaxad five hundred more years he had
And other sons and daughters received his life blood

Arphaxad lived 35 years and he begot Salah his son
And then Arphaxad lived 403 years more
He added other sons and daughters before his race was run
And then Arphaxad stepped through eternity's door

Salah lived 30 years and then came Eber – a baby boy
Salah then added on another 403 years just like his dad
During that time, more children came to give him joy
And he kicked off at 433 thinking life wasn't that bad

Eber was 34 when along came Peleg which means "division"
And we continue to follow the line recorded with such precision

After having Peleg Eber lived 430 years more
And he had other children before knocking on heaven's door

Peleg lived thirty years before he begot Reu his son
And then another 209 years Peleg continued to live
And during Peleg's time, came many languages instead of just one
And so the people spread out as if having gone through a sieve

Reu's son Serug came when he was aged 32 years
When he saw his son he was surely filled with joyful tears

After Serug arrived, Reu live 207 years more
And other sons and daughters were added to his store

Serug lived 30 years and begot Nahor, Abram's grandpa
And then Serug lived 200 years after that birth
And other sons and daughters Serug in his life saw
And he kicked the bucket after 230 years of mirth

Nahor had his son Terah when he was just 29
And little Terah probably made Nahor's face shine

And other sons and daughters Nahor did add
And he died at 148 thinking life wasn't that bad

Terah begot Abram, Nahor, and Haran in the land of Ur
And Haran begot Lot which made him happy for sure
But Haran died in his native land
And then Abram and Nahor took wives from their kin
Abram married Sarai and Nahor took Milcah's hand
Back then marrying your family wasn't a sin

Milcah's dad was Haran and she had sister, Iscah by name
And Abram's wife Sarai was barren, she had no child
But the barren woman would be the one of great fame
When someday on her womb God finally smiled

So Terah took Abram and Lot and Sarai his daughter in law
And they headed out for Canaan, from Ur they did withdraw

And when they came to Haran, they dwelt there
Until the time that Terah closed his eyes and died
He was 205 years old when they said his funeral prayer
And in the ground of Haran his body does abide

This is the line of Shem and the line of Terah too
These lines that lead to our Lord and Savior Jesus
They are recorded for us to carefully read through
Because God recorded them for especially for us

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 12:1-9 **(THE FOURTH DISPENSATION – GOD’S PROMISE)**

Today we’re staring chapter 12 of Genesis and it is the beginning of the fourth “dispensation” or way of working in human history. So far we’ve seen three dispensations. The first was Innocence, which covered man’s very short time in the Garden of Eden.

After that came the second dispensation, Conscience. This went from the time of being expelled from the garden until the time of the Flood of Noah. And the third was Government, which went from the time after the Flood right up until where we are now. The fourth dispensation is a time of promise to the sons of God.

We’ve seen God’s Funnel at work ever since the time of Adam. God chose one of his Adam’s, Seth, to establish His line which will lead to Jesus. From Seth, one son has been selected from each of the subsequent generations – all the way down to Abraham.

And now, throughout this Dispensation of Promise, we will see God validate a covenant that He made to Abraham in his son Isaac and then in his son Jacob, who is Israel.

Introduction: What kind of a God do we serve? Is He changing? Vindictive? Does he promise and then renege? Or is God the faithful and covenant keeping God who truly is unchanging, all knowing, and the sovereign ruler of the universe? We had better hope for the second option, or our faith is in vain!

Text Verse: *You will give truth to Jacob
And mercy to Abraham,
Which You have sworn to our fathers
From days of old. Micah 7:20*

We all have choices to make and how immensely important is the choice, “Shall I take God at His word?” When we do, it leads to life. When we don’t there is only sadness and condemnation awaiting us and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Divine Directions

¹ Now the LORD had said to Abram:

**“Get out of your country,
From your family
And from your father’s house,
To a land that I will show you.**

This is known as the call of Abraham and it actually occurred when he was living in Ur by the Euphrates River and so goes back to that time. We know this because Stephen confirms it in Acts chapter 7. From Acts 7 we read –

“Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, ³ and said to him, ‘Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.’ ⁴ Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. Acts 7:2-4

In this call, Abraham or Abram, is asked to cut three specific ties. The first is to his country. It would be like God asking one of us to leave America, renounce our citizenship, and go to a place that He will show us. Until recently no one on earth would have wanted to leave this greatest nation on God’s green earth.

And even now, despite our current woes, it is still the place of our widest range of affections and the place we are so comfortable in – because of language, because of familiarity, because of ties and heartstrings, and for a host of other reasons.

The second tie he’s asked to cut is his place of family. This certainly means more than just the people in his house. It includes all of the people of his culture. You never know how much your surrounding culture is ingrained in you until you go to another one. When I went to live in Malaysia, there were things there that were so foreign that even when I left 3 years later, I couldn’t get used to them. Thinking about them today still drives me insane.

The third tie he is called to cut is his father’s house. This really is his home and family. This included his cousins and those he grew up with. It included the smells that came when passing through the front door, and the place where he automatically left his shoes without even thinking about it after working in the field.

Maybe it included the tree that he planted at six and then watched grow for so many years of his life. Abram is being called to cut all these ties and to move to a place that he

has never seen and without even being told why. All God said is that it would be "...a land that I will show you."

We don't know how old he was when he received this call, but in the last chapter we looked at it said his father Terah, was 70 years old when he had Abram, Nahor, and Haran. So it has been more than 290 years since God spoke directly to man.

The last time He did was after the flood in the year 1657AM. This was in chapter 9 verse 17 when God made a covenant with the people of the world – "And God said to Noah, 'This *is* the sign of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that *is* on the earth.'"

Like bookends on the time where God was silent, He closed His mouth after making a covenant with Noah and then He opens it again to direct Abram to go to the covenant land He will give him. The sign of the covenant will come later, but God now speaks and His word is a covenant in and of itself... and here is the promise –

**² I will make you a great nation;
I will bless you
And make your name great;
And you shall be a blessing.**

Abram's gonna be rewarded and receive restoration for everything he's giving up. He was told to leave his country and in place of it he will be made into a great nation. He was told to leave his family and in place of this he is promised to be blessed. And he was told to leave his father's house and in place of it he's promised that his name will be made great.

If you look at what Abram gave up and what he received, the difference is immense. He gave up a land of idolatry to inherit the covenant land of God. He left his family and he would become the father of many nations. And he left his father's house and he became the man of faith, renown throughout history.

This is the way God works in the life of those who are obedient to Him. What we give up for the sake of Christ is to be counted as rubbish in comparison to the glories which He will bestow upon us by simply calling out to Him in faith. Nothing which is left behind can compare to the beauty of what lies ahead.

Jesus Himself said –

“Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,³⁰ who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

-Luke 18:29-30

**³ I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;**

God has spoken and made a promise to Abram. The only thing that we could call a condition on this promise is that he leaves his country, family, and father's house and go to the land he'd be shown. If he does this, then the promise stands and it must be otherwise unconditional because nothing else is added.

If not, then this isn't the Creator God and Abram would have wasted his life pursuing that which is less than God. Like so many who had gone before him and so many who have come since, misdirected faith is wasted faith....

Either Jesus is Lord or He isn't. Either we are saved by grace through faith alone or by grace through faith but with works being necessary. Either Christianity is true and islam is false, or islam is true and Christianity is false, or they are both false.

Either Ellen G. White of the 7th Day Adventists was a prophet or she was a false prophet. Either Mormonism is true and Christianity is false or Momonism is false. Either Jesus is a created being as claimed by the Jehovah's Witnesses or Jesus is the uncreated God.

Where is your faith directed? It is the most important question in the world because if your faith is misdirected, then you are still in your sins and only hell awaits. You see, in the book of Numbers we are told this:

“God *is* not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent.
Has He said, and will He not do?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good? Numbers 23:19

Abram was asked to leave home and go off to a place that God would show him. And in exchange God made a promise – an otherwise unconditional promise – to him. And because it's written in what we believe is God's word, then we are asked and expected to believe it just as it was spoken and just as it is recorded.

This is especially important because this promise of a blessing is passed from Abram to his son Isaac and then from Isaac to Jacob who is Israel. The promise to Isaac is in Genesis chapter 26 –

² Then the LORD appeared to him and said: “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. ³ Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. ⁴ And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; ⁵ because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.” Genesis 26:2-5

And from Isaac, the promise was passed down to his second son, Jacob, who is Israel, in Genesis chapter 28 –

¹⁰ Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. ¹² Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder *was* set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: “I *am* the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”
-Genesis 28:10-15

The reason why I’m quoting these verses is because Paul brings them up in Romans chapter 9 through 11 and says they still and always will apply to the people of Israel. In chapter 11 he says –

Concerning the gospel *they are* enemies for your sake, but concerning the election *they are* beloved for the sake of the fathers. ²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God *are* irrevocable. Romans 11:28-29

What is Paul saying here? Well, who is he speaking about? He is speaking about

unbelieving Jewish people – in general, the nation of Israel. And what does he say? They are enemies of the church because of the gospel. That's pretty clear.

An unbelieving Jew is no different than any other unbeliever. If they don't hold to the gospel, they are the gospel's enemies and are thus enemies of those who hold to the gospel. One plus one is two. But Paul didn't stop there like so many scholars seem to believe.

Replacement theology says that the church replaced Israel; that Israel is out and so for them it's end of story baby. But how someone can come to that conclusion when reading Romans is more than mystifying. What else does Paul say? "Concerning election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers."

Who are the fathers? Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the 12 sons of Israel and even David is called a patriarch in the book of Acts. Israel is beloved because of the promises made to these people. They are the elect of God. If they are elect, then they cannot be cast off as a corporate body, only individually when they reject Christ.

And so God still must, and does, have a plan and a purpose for them. Why? Again, just as before, Paul explains it in the same verse. It's because the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.

Anybody who has read and studied chapters 9 through 11 in Romans and cannot see this clearly has been blinded. Either they were blinded by God, during Israel's time of punishment, or they are blinded by one of two other things.

The first possibility is a hatred of the Jewish people – anti-Semitism. And this is more prevalent in Christianity than you may realize. The second would be an unwillingness to open their eyes to what God has done because they would rather hold to what they have been taught rather than what God has revealed.

God has never rejected Israel and this is so obvious and so clear in our world today. All of the prophecies which predicted Israel's return were fulfilled in 1948, proving God's faithfulness to this unfaithful nation. This book, called the Holy Bible, is based on the covenant promises of God to His people.

The only time that a covenant like this can be broken is when it is conditional, and this covenant, after Abram's getting up and going, ain't conditional. But people know better than Paul and they know better than God too. Or, they think they do. And so they insert

the church into the picture where it doesn't belong and they remove Israel from where it does belong.

Let us remember this, especially in this nation today, where we are so close to turning our blessing upon the people of Israel into a curse. The nation who fights against God's elect is the nation that will disappear in fire and destruction.

God has chosen to plant the people of Israel once again in the Land of Israel. Who would we be fighting against if we decide they aren't worth fighting for? ...God!

^{3(con't)} **And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**

This half of verse three is fulfilled in two ways - first, through the line of Abram which became the Jewish people. Through this line have come the very oracles of God, the Holy Bible. With only a few exceptions, every book in the Bible came from and was saved for posterity by Jewish hands.

And also from the Jewish people have come wonderful blessings which have graced all the people of the world. Although they are only 2% of 1% of the population of the world, they have made up about 20% of the Nobel laureates in the past century.

And the areas where they have lagged in these awards are subjective areas where ungodly people make ungodly choices about ungodly things – such as giving algore a Nobel Peace Prize for something that is based on an outright lie or giving barak obama a Nobel Peace Prize which covered the period of his presidency when he had accomplished... actually nothing.

When put side by side in real human achievement though, the Jewish people have excelled in literature, chemistry, medicine, physics, economics, etc.

Apart from the Jewish people as a whole though, but still as a part of the Jewish people, this blessing given by God to Abraham finds its ultimate fulfillment in the greatest Jewish Person, Jesus Christ – the Messiah of the world who came from Abraham and in whom truly, all of the families of the earth are blessed.

Jesus took on humanity through the line of Abraham and He tasted God's wrath and human death for everyone. It is through Him that all people, tribes, tongues, and nations are reconciled to God.

II. Obedience to the Word

⁴ So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him.

So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him. He is being obedient to the word which he was given. It's probably good to note that the word of the LORD to Abram is the same as the word of the LORD today.

The only difference is that instead of it coming in dreams, visions, or prophetic utterances, it now comes in the page of the Bible – and I personally believe only in this way.

Do you know that the Bible has rules about the conduct of a church? For example, in the book of 1 Corinthians there are specific rules about speaking in tongues in a church. And do you know that they are almost never obeyed?

If the Bible has been breathed out by the Holy Spirit as the Bible states, and the Holy Spirit gives the guidance for speaking in tongues, then you can know – 100% you can be certain – that if a church which isn't obeying the rules given about tongues, then the tongues have not come from the Holy Spirit.

Don't be led astray in your thinking by people who would rather make a show than learn their Bible.

It isn't complicated. Abram was given a word from the Lord and he obeyed. We have, likewise, been given the word of the Lord and we disobey it at our own loss.

If we can't get such simple things straight, then what do we expect about the weightier matters which affect our souls? Pay attention to the call of the Lord and don't lose out over pride or ego. If you want to be remembered by God as a person of faith, then obey the word of the Lord, just as our father Abraham did.

⁴(con't) And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Abram was born in the year 2009AM and his father died in the year 2084AM when Abram was 75 years old. Once his father was dead, Abram left Haran and headed to the Promised Land.

⁵Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan.

Abram is now the leader of the family. He leads the way in this new adventure. Their father Terah died, O so close to the Promised Land, but he never entered it. And how many people start their journey of faith, but never finish it.

They study about Jesus, hear what they need to do, and they never make the final leap of faith into His protective care. And so they remain forever outside of the grace of God.

But Abram and his wife, and Lot and everything they had, including human servants, picked up and departed to Canaan – the land of servants. And the Bible says they safely arrived too.

When I lived in Malaysia, there was a pretty sizeable portion of Indians who lived there, 8% of the population. When Malaysia was being colonized by the British, some of the wealthy landowners in India picked up to move there.

When they did, they took along their Indian servants. The Brits eventually left, but the Indians, who worked in the tea plantations and as house servants, stayed. This is one way the people of the world get around – some by choice and some by force.

⁶Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land.

After entering Canaan, Abram went as far as Shechem. This location is key to the Bible in both testaments. It's between Mount Gerizzim and Mount Ebal. Here, God will meet with Abram. It is the spot where Israel's daughter Dinah will be raped and Israel's sons Simeon and Levi kill all the men of the town.

It's the spot where Joseph's bones would be buried after Israel returns from Egypt and it became a town which belonged to the Levites. After the Israel divided and became two countries, it would become the capital of the northern 10 tribes of Israel.

It is also the same town known in the New Testament as Sychar where Jesus spoke to the woman at the well in John 4. The history of the place is rich and goes back through the ages to Abram and the place where God first met him in the Promised Land.

There in Shechem, Abram stopped at Alon Moreh, or the terebinth of Moreh. Some translators say “oak” and some say “plain of Moreh.” The word *Moreh* means “teacher” and in a moment we will see where the name came from and who the Teacher is.

III. A Promised Possession

⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.”

This verse is one of the most important to know and understand of any you will come across in the Bible. By it, you can continue dating history. By it, you can understand how long the people of Israel were in Egypt, by it you can understand the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith apart from the law.

So much is tied up in this one verse, that if we were to take it as a stand alone for a Bible study, we could spend hours on it. The Lord “appeared to Abram” What does this exactly mean? It is the first time this phrase occurs in the Bible and I believe that this is a divine visitation by the Master of time and space, Jesus.

Numerous times in the Old Testament, the Lord appears in human form to people. It will happen to Abraham, to Joshua, to the parents of Samson, to Gideon and to others. This is the eternal Christ who is coming to meet Abram.

Yes, I believe Jesus appears in His own past and directed human history leading to Himself. When He came to Abram, he made an unconditional promise, “To your descendants I will give this land.”

There is nothing tied up in the promise and it is God’s land to parcel out. We will see how this promise will be made true throughout the rest of the Bible. This verse is so important that Paul cites it Galatians 3 and he uses it to say that it points to the work of Christ. Here is what he says –

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. ¹⁷ And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise. Galatians 3:16-18

^{7 (con't)} And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

After receiving the promise, Abram built an altar to the Lord there. The spot where the Lord stood is hallowed by His presence and he acknowledges this in the building of the altar.

In building this altar, he is making an open profession of his belief in Jehovah, thus establishing worship of the true God on the soil of the Promised Land, and he is also declaring faith in the promise he has just been given. We could equate this altar with our accepting baptism – it is an open profession of our faith.

Here at the Terebinth of the Teacher, Abram met the great Teacher who would be recognized as such over 40 times in the New Testament gospels.

⁸ And he moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his tent *with* Bethel on the west and Ai on the east;

After leaving the shade of the Terebinth of the Teacher, Abram moved to a mountain east of Bethel and west of Ai. Bethel means “House of God” and it will become a very important place throughout the Bible. It is where Jacob saw the ladder reaching to heaven which Jesus claimed in the book of John was Him.

Ai means “heap of ruins.” The spot where he is now is a picture of life on earth. The house of God, Bethel, is a picture of heaven and the heap of ruins, Ai, is a picture of hell. Abram is between them – having “pitched his tent.” Pitching one’s tent means you are a temporary pilgrim on your way to somewhere else.

Abram then is a picture of us. We are pilgrims in the land of servants and we are between heaven and hell. Will we be a servant of the Lord and take the ladder, which is Jesus, to heaven, or will we be a servant of sin and be destroyed in the heap of ruins?

All of us have a choice to make while we are here before we move on. Abram made the right choice.

^{8 (con't)} there he built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD.

Abram knew that the only house where divine protection can be realized is the house where the proper worship of God is established – a lesson for each of us – particularly

when children are involved. And so Abram built an altar and called on, or invoked, the name of the Lord.

By invoking the name of the Lord, he is acknowledging that the Lord is the Mediator between him and God. This is why the Lord appeared to him at the Terebinth of the Teacher. Jesus is our one and only Mediator and somehow, Abram knew this too.

⁹So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the South.

We finish up today with this verse. Abram was a pilgrim in the land of servants and after meeting with the great Teacher, he heads toward the South.

I hope you've seen how rich and deep these passages about Abram are and the beautiful pictures and symbols they contain. They all point to Jesus Christ and His work in time and history as He carefully works out the great plan of redemption for mankind.

He has given us pictures of paradise and pictures of hell and he has shown us the way to obtain the former and avoid the latter. In the end, what He asks for is very simple – faith.

Jesus asks us to believe that He is who He said He is and He did what He said He has done. If we can just believe, He promises that He will safely carry us to the home which He has prepared for us.

Abram built an altar where the Lord had been and he continued to worship the Lord as he traveled. For some of us, the Lord has already tread upon our hearts and so we need to consecrate our hearts to Him as an altar worthy of His greatness.

Some of us may not yet have received Christ. Let me take just a minute and explain how you can...

If you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are eternally saved. The Bible says that even now you are seated with Him in the heavenly realms. I would pray that you would dedicate your life to acknowledging that fact by placing Him properly in the altar of your own heart. To the glory of God who saved you.

The Call of Abraham

Now the LORD had said to Abram, "A directive I have for you"
Get out of your country and from your family too
And depart from your father's house, my son
Yes, leave everything behind
I want you to leave because you are the one
You are a great part of the plan I have designed

Off to a land that I will show you
There I will make you a great nation
I will bless you, this is what I'll do
But you must first start on this great migration

I will make your name great, my promise is true
And you shall be a blessing
I will curse him who curses you
There will be no second guessing
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed
So Abram departed, and for the journey he was dressed

He departed as the Lord had spoken, taking along no doubt
And Lot went with him as did his wife and others too
He was seventy-five years old when they headed out
So to the place called Haran, the company bid "Adieu"

Off to the land of Canaan, Abram did head away
And they arrived in that land – the land of promise
They passed through to Shechem and there they did stay
Abram was of faith and not a doubting Thomas

There at the Terebinth of Moreh, with Canaanites all around
The Lord appeared to him saying, To your descendants I give this piece of ground.

So he built an Altar to the Lord whom he met there
Yes, he built the altar on that very spot
He acknowledged his Mediator, the one who handles prayer
And so should we do the same, with contemplative thought

Abram then moved from there to the mountain east of Bethel
And there he pitched his tent, Bethel on the west
And to the east was Ai, a picture of the place called hell
Abram was a pilgrim on the earth, but he passed the test

There he called on the name of the Lord
And clung faithfully to God's holy word

So Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south
And surely as he went the praise of the Lord was in his mouth

We remember Abram this man whose faith was great
And each of us should surely follow in his path
Let us love the Lord with all our heart and let us patiently wait
For the coming of Jesus, who keeps us from God's wrath

Yes, let us love our Lord and give Him all our praise
Let us serve the King and glorify Him all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

The Jew

*Scattered by God's avenging hand,
Afflicted and forlorn,
Sad wanderers from their pleasant land,
Do Judah's children mourn;
*And e'en in Christian countries, few
Breathe thoughts of pity for the Jew.
*Yet listen, Gentile, do you love
The Bible's precious page?
Then let your hearts with kindness move
To Israel's' heritage:
*Who traced those lines of love for you -
Each scared writer was a Jew.
*And then as years and ages passed,
And nations rose and fell,
Though clouds and darkness oft were cast
O'er captive Israel,

*The oracles of God for you
Were kept in safety by the Jew.
*And when the great Redeemer came
For guilty man to bleed,
He did not take an angel's name
No - Born of Abraham's seed
*Jesus, who gave His life for you,
The gentle Savior was a Jew.
*And though His own received Him not
And turned in pride away,
Whence is the Gentile's happier lot?
Are you more just than they?
*No: God in pity turned to you -
Have you no pity for the Jew?
*Go, then, and bend your knee to pray
For Israel's ancient race;
Ask the dear Savior every day
To call them by His grace;
*Go, for a debt of love is due
From Christian Gentiles to the Jew.

GENESIS 12:10-20 (OUTSIDE THE LAND OF PROMISE)

Introduction: Today we're going to continue through, and finish up, Genesis 12. In these verses are some things that seem foreign to our current idea about how to do things and Abraham, the great man of faith, is often called weak, lacking faith, or even sinful in what occurred. But I've never looked at these verses this way.

What we need to do when reading the Bible, is put aside our own thoughts which come from a modern world view and try to insert ourselves into the times, locations, cultures, situations that we read about. If we don't do this, we can find ourselves making unfounded judgments about the way things were done.

This isn't always easy, because some of the things that happen are so foreign to us, that we simply can't process how these things could be. When we come to passages like this, we need to continually ask ourselves, "What is God trying to tell me here?"

If we do this, then we will be far better off than throwing unfounded accusations at biblical figures. When the Bible condemns an action, we should too. But when it doesn't, it usually means that we should accept it at face value and not insert our own condemnations, but instead attempt to learn from them.

Text Verse: *Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls—¹⁸ Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. Habakkuk 3:17, 18*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Going Where God Leads

In the first half of Genesis 12, God had made the great promise and proclamation to Abram –

“Get out of your country, From your family And from your Father's house, To a land that I will show you. ² I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless

you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

In obedience to this, he departed just as the LORD had spoken to him, taking along his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran.

As he passed through the land, the LORD appeared to him and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” It would be good to note that it says “**to your descendants** I will give this land.” It doesn’t say that Abram would receive it.

After building an altar to the LORD at that place he moved two more times. First to the mountain east of Bethel and then further south, into the Negev desert.

This is where we start today’s passage –

¹⁰ Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine was severe in the land.

The famine, like all natural events on earth, was directed by God. Abram would have no doubt about this as he already had a relationship with the Lord, had heard His promises, and had believed them and offered offerings to Him.

Many commentaries barbecue Abram for leaving the Promised Land and heading to Egypt, stating he lacked faith in the move. I don’t see that here at all. The land promise was made at this time to his descendents, not to him.

He received the promise and believed it, confirming that belief by building an altar and offering on it. And then after that he moved further south. Maybe he was sightseeing and checking out the land. We have nothing else to go on. But eventually a famine comes.

Famines are used throughout the Bible for the correction of the people of the land. Abram was living among the Canaanites and certainly saw their lifestyle and may have even preached to them, who knows... A famine comes along at some point and there’s no reason to think that Abram didn’t realize it was to correct the very people he was dwelling with – the Canaanites.

A good example of this kind of correction from God due to disobedience is found when King David took an unauthorized census of the people of Israel. Famine was one of the choices David was given as punishment in 2 Samuel 24:13 –

“So Gad came to David and told him; and he said to him, ‘Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or shall you flee three months before your enemies, while they pursue you? Or shall there be three days’ plague in your land? Now consider and see what answer I should take back to Him who sent me.’”

David chose wisely because he understood God’s great mercy, even to the disobedient –

“And David said to Gad, ‘I am in great distress. Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies *are* great; but do not let me fall into the hand of man.’”
-2 Sam 24:14

And of course, this led to David’s purchase of the land which became the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. Even in disobedience and punishment, God’s purposes always work out to fulfill His plan.

The Promised Land is mountainous and it is completely dependent on two seasons of rain in order to grow its crops and provide water. Apart from correcting the Canaanites, the famine may have had a secondary purpose of teaching Abram that everything comes from the Lord and so he was completely dependent on Him. He would also learn that direction and deliverance is found in Him alone.

And so the natural thing to do would be to go where the Lord was providing food and water, to Egypt. I can’t personally find any fault in Abram’s decision. It’s logical and it’s what any right thinking person would do.

What would be less right thinking would be to stay put in a land with no hope of providing anything to eat or drink. But we too often get stuck in our rut and become unwilling to move, even though it’s the right thing to do.

We can look at famines in America in the past and around the world even now and see people who won’t simply get up and move when it’s time to do so. Whose fault is that? In some cases, it’s because of national borders or war, but in many, it’s simply a resistance to move on.

And in the same way, how often do we get spiritually dried up in a church that has nothing to offer, like a barren desert, but we stay because we feel at home with the people around us... as if they are the reason for staying. In cases like this, we hint that God is only a side issue and a secondary priority in our spiritual life.

Clinging to a spiritually dead church because it's our home would be like Abram staying in Canaan when there was nothing to eat. We need to follow the Lord and His provision, not sit idly and become so malnourished, either physically or spiritually, that we are no longer of any use to Him or to those dependent on us.

And so off to Egypt he goes. The Hebrew name for Egypt is Mizraim. This name came from one of the sons of Ham, a brother of Canaan. The English name for Egypt comes from the Greek.

One possibility is that it goes back to a king named Aegyptus, but what is more probable is that it comes from the color of the soil around the Nile which the Greeks called aegyptios and also from a vulture which has the same dark color which is called aegyps.

¹¹ And it came to pass, when he was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, "Indeed I know that you *are* a woman of beautiful countenance.

Believe it or not, Sarai is probably somewhere around 65 years old at this time. What a silver-tongue Abram must have been to call a lady of this age "a woman of beautiful countenance." Oh, but she really was as we'll see in a moment. He wasn't just being nice, but Sarai was a woman of true beauty.

I don't want to tread on any thin ice here, but if I can think of a modern parallel to Sarai that everyone has seen, I'd propose Raquel Welch. I didn't say "I'd propose TO Raquel Welch." I was merely suggesting that she is one such as Sarai.

Raquel Welch was born in Chicago on 5 September 1940 and that would make her as of today 71 years, 8 months, and 29 days old or 3743 weeks old, or 26,204 days old, or 628,896 hours old, or 37,733,760 minutes old, or 2,264,025,600 seconds old.

And just to check and make sure she didn't suddenly wrinkle up and blow away since her last movie, I did an image search on Google and yes, she still looks lovely.

So if Raquel looks good at this age, then there is no reason to assume that a woman younger than her couldn't be just as lovely in Abram's time as well. And as a second

reason to believe this, Sarai lived to 127 years of age and so she was really only in her middle ages at this time. Although the ages of people continue to decrease throughout Genesis, at this time, 65 really isn't that old.

¹² Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.

Abram was so convinced of her beauty that he actually feared for his life. I do this a lot when I'm out with my own wife. She is so incredibly beautiful and such a pleasant soul, that I'm continuously in fear around her. I know exactly how Abram felt.

¹³ Please say you *are* my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you."

In Genesis 11:31, we saw that Sarai was Abram's sister because she was a daughter of Terah his father. Later, in Genesis 20, we'll see that she was actually Abram's half sister, meaning she came from a different mother. This is what that account says –

¹¹ And Abraham said, "Because I thought, surely the fear of God *is* not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife. ¹² But indeed *she is* truly my sister. She *is* the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. ¹³ And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This *is* your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, "He *is* my brother.'""

So Abram isn't lying, nor is he asking Sarai to lie. They simply aren't telling the whole story. I think every commentary I've ever read which addresses this issue says that what Abram did was wrong, lacking faith, and/or sinful – every one of them.

And yet, I've read this story probably 50 times and I've never felt this way about it. The logic of these commentaries is that he was willing to sacrifice his wife for his own safety and that he was lacking in faith toward God in asking her to say this.

That's really inserting a personal opinion and a personal worldview into the story. Here's an example of a typical commentary on this story. This one is from Matthew Henry –

"The grace Abram was most eminent for was faith, and yet he thus fell through unbelief and distrust of the divine Providence, even after God had appeared to him twice. Alas, what will become of the willows, when the cedars are thus shaken."

How do we know that this very action of Abram wasn't an action **based on faith**, not lacking it? Let's read it again –

¹³ Please say you *are* my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you."

He'd been given a promise by God that his descendants would be given the land. Nothing was said about Sarai – and to this point, she's barren. There is nothing to suggest that Abram was required to have only one wife and we'll see that after her death he will have another wife named Keturah, and concubines to boot.

He has no idea that Sarai will ever have children, only later will come God's promise that the child will come through Sarai. All he's doing here is ensuring that he won't be killed because he's her husband. Does this in any way negate his belief in God's promise?

So why should we assume Abram was either lacking faith or sinning. One thing is for sure, if Abram were killed because of Sarai, her life would certainly be in jeopardy. With him out of the picture, she would be at the whims of whoever got to her first.

We're going to see in just a few chapters that when Abram's nephew Lot is abducted, he goes after the entire army who took him, fights against them, and brings Lot and the others back safely. Why don't we assume at this point that he wouldn't do the same for her when the opportunity arose?

In other words, he may see Sarai as the very instrument which saves him in the first place and keeps him alive. God has made a promise to him and she is a part of that plan. I have no problem at all with what he's done here. The very thing that makes him a faithful man is that his actions were based on faith.

If God were to come to one of you and promise that you'd be wealthy someday, would you assume that a pot of gold was going to fall out of the sky at your feet? Or would you assume that He would use your circumstances to get you to the point He promised?

I think any reasonable consideration would say that both you and your surroundings are involved in the process. You're simply exercising your faith through hard work and the opportunities that God places in your path as you go. Abram is doing the same.

II. I Will Bless You

¹⁴ So it was, when Abram came into Egypt, that the Egyptians saw the woman, that she was very beautiful.

Abram was born 352 years after the flood and this about 75 years later or about 430 years after the flood. There probably wasn't much difference in the complexions of the world's people by then.

Although changes certainly occurred as people moved away from Babel and started breeding among family groups, they would start to have more and more differences between them.

The Chinese would look more and more Chinese the further east they moved and the Scandinavians would look more and more Scandinavianish the further north they moved, but these changes would be gradual.

If you look at the people in paintings from 500 years ago, they look pretty much like their offspring 500 years later. So the beauty of Sarai isn't so much a beauty of difference and novelty, but a real beauty which would be recognizable in any society.

¹⁵ The princes of Pharaoh also saw her and commended her to Pharaoh.

Archaeology apparently shows that by this time there was already a monarchy established in the area. This was about 430 years after the flood and about 330 years after the Tower of Babel, but the people had moved as far as Egypt and established a large society.

According to Jewish and Arabic writers, it was at the time of Reu the son of Peleg that Egypt was established and this is actually right in line with the Bible, so we can be confident it's correct.

And that's really not hard to imagine when we see what kind of a society America grew to in much less time. After the signing of the Declaration of Independence, we went from 13 rural colonies with a few larger cities to 50 states filled with industry, agriculture, and a large society.

The main seat of government when Abram moved to Egypt was in the delta region which is in the northernmost part of the land and very close to where Abram probably

arrived. The people under Pharaoh would have immediately noticed Abram and his large company arriving from outside of their region.

None of this is improbable and in fact, it's more than likely, especially considering God's hand in it all.

¹⁵ (con't) **And the woman was taken to Pharaoh's house.**

Regardless of what Abram thought when he asked Sarai to say she was his sister, this couldn't have been easy on him. This doesn't mean his faith had to be weakened at all, but being taken in by Pharaoh isn't the same as being taken in by some lesser person.

He may have planned to rescue her otherwise, but it would be a lot less likely under Pharaoh. However, Abram is described throughout the Bible as a man of faith and he certainly exercised his faith in prayers to God for his wife.

Once again, I just don't see things the way other commentators do. I don't see anything sinful or lacking faith in his actions and if you look at how things do turn out, there's no reason to think they aren't a response to prayers of faith, offered by a faithful man. As James says it in the New Testament –

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”- James 5:16-18

Prayer really does work.

¹⁶ **He treated Abram well for her sake. He had sheep, oxen, male donkeys, male and female servants, female donkeys, and camels.**

In the process of handing over Sarai, Abram is actually blessed just as God promised. He received all kinds of gifts because of her and these are the wealth of nomads. If you travel around the Middle East, you'll see the nomadic families with all of their livestock and possessions. The more of these, the higher status they are.

So concerning both the blessings promised by God and the safety of Sarai, we need to remember that not everything that happens is recorded in the Bible. Only the things that are relevant to the story are given to us.

Abraham will do this same thing again in Genesis 20. He will tell Abimelech the King of Gerar that Sarah is his sister. After Abimelech finds out that she is his wife, God will speak to him and say this:

“Now therefore, restore the man’s wife; for he *is* a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore *her*, know that you shall surely die, you and all who *are* yours.” Genesis 20:7

We’re often not given all the information in the biblical account to allow us to reason out what happened based on other passages in the Bible. Abram was a prophet and so why can’t we assume that every step he’s taking is taken by faith. He understood that everything will work out according to God’s plan.

Speaking of Abraham and his line, right down to Israel, we read this in the 105th Psalm –

¹³ When they went from one nation to another, From *one* kingdom to another people, ¹⁴ He permitted no one to do them wrong; Yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes, ¹⁵ *Saying*, “Do not touch My anointed ones, And do My prophets no harm.”

Did Abram know this? There’s no reason to assume he didn’t. God had given him a promise and so why should he think that things wouldn’t apply in this situation too?

I don’t mean to belabor the point about what he did with his wife, but nowhere else does the Bible say that what Abram did was wrong or that he lacked faith and so I think we need to avoid that line of thinking and see God’s hand in everything that’s occurred.

And in our own lives, we need to do the same. I don’t care how bad a situation is or how frustrating it is, or how much we may lose – financially, personally, or interpersonally. Whatever happens, we need to understand that it happened because God allowed it and so it’s a part of what He ordained for us.

If we can see that in everything that happens, then we really are living by faith in a world which would otherwise seem scary, overwhelming, or maybe even pointless.

But the psalmist said we can have confidence in what happens when we trust in the Lord –

⁵⁷ *You are* my portion, O LORD;
I have said that I would keep Your words.

⁵⁸ I entreated Your favor with *my* whole heart;
Be merciful to me according to Your word.

⁵⁹ I thought about my ways,
And turned my feet to Your testimonies.

⁶⁰ I made haste, and did not delay
To keep Your commandments.

⁶¹ The cords of the wicked have bound me,
But I have not forgotten Your law.

⁶² At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You,
Because of Your righteous judgments.

⁶³ I *am* a companion of all who fear You,
And of those who keep Your precepts.

⁶⁴ The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy;
Teach me Your statutes. Psalm 119

One last thing about Abram's time in Egypt – ancient tradition recorded by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus says that it was he who delivered arithmetic and astronomy to the Egyptians. These were sciences which came from the Chaldeans of Babylon where Abram came from.

If this is true, then all of the wisdom for the great achievements of Egypt like the building of the pyramids came from Abraham. Only when they had been given insights from him were they able to combine them with the great physical construction which is found throughout the land.

III. The Wife is Restored

¹⁷ But the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

The first time God's chosen people enter Egypt, which was 430 years after the Flood, it results in plagues on Pharaoh's house. And then 430 years after that, the chosen line of Israel will again be in Egypt, enslaved by the Egyptians under Pharaoh's rule and it will again result in plagues.

As it says in Ecclesiastes 1:9 and as we will learn is O so true, both in the Bible and in history –

“That which has been *is* what will be,
That which *is* done is what will be done,
And *there is* nothing new under the sun.”

The patterns of the Bible are rich, complex, and astonishing. How wonderful it is when we think about how God has woven everything together in this great drama we’re participating in.

God shows that He is in complete control of the situation. The psalm I read earlier said, “He permitted no one to do them wrong; Yes, He rebuked kings for their sakes...” Even when it may seem that things had turned out for the worse for Abram, the Lord had a handle all of it each step of the way.

And it is no different in our own lives. He made a promise to Abram and Abram believed it. He has made a similar promise to us and we need to hold fast to it, even when things seem beyond our control... what is it? Romans 8:28 –

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”

Should we have any less faith in whatever our trial is than Abram did? This is exactly what he is commended for in Hebrews 11, the great Hall of Faith of the Bible, and it is what God will commend us for when we stand in front of him.

¹⁸ And Pharaoh called Abram and said, “What *is* this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she *was* your wife?

¹⁹ Why did you say, ‘She *is* my sister’? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take *her* and go your way.”

Regardless of whether Abram acted in faith or faithlessly, he gets rebuked by Pharaoh. God’s hand of judgment for having this prophet’s wife in his home must have been heavy on him. This is so evident to him that instead of killing him, which you’d think he’d do, he realizes that would be an even greater mistake.

So instead, he rebukes Abram and ensures him that he hadn’t yet done anything to her. “I might have taken her as my wife” means that to that point she hadn’t been violated by him.

Before we finish up this verse, let's look at the similarity in terminology between this account and that of the Exodus, 430 years later, when Pharaoh speaks to Moses –

[Pharaoh says to Abram] “Now therefore, here is your wife; take *her* and go your way.” Genesis 12:19b

[Pharaoh says to Moses] “Then he called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, ‘Rise, go out from among my people, both you and the children of Israel. And go, serve the LORD as you have said.³² Also take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also.’” Exodus 12:31-32

Two Pharaohs – 430 years apart – both bid the prophet of God to be gone.

²⁰ So Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had.

And so Abram left having journeyed to Egypt, gained more wealth, and was also delivered from the famine of the land of Canaan. God had protected him and blessed him in his pilgrimage and he would continue to do so all the days of his life.

In a spiritual application of what we've seen here today, I'd like to remind you from the sermon two weeks ago that Abram pitched his tent between Bethel, the House of God (a picture of heaven), and Ai, the heap of ruins (a picture of hell). After that, he headed south and then into Egypt.

In the same way, Jesus came and dwelt among us as a human being, living on earth between heaven and hell. From there, he journeyed into the land of chaos, pictured by Egypt.

You see, like Sarai who belonged to Abram, but was taken to the house of Pharaoh, we were all created by God, but we strayed into the land of chaos and sin. From that place though, we have been delivered by Jesus, our rightful husband.

By faith in Him and what He has done, we can be rejoined to God and He will safely take us back to the Land of Promise. Abram means “Exalted Father” and Sarai means “Princess.”

To our great and exalted heavenly Father, we are a princess and a treasure worth seeking out. And so He stepped out of His eternal home of heaven and walked among us. He keeps us safe – even when at times we might think we are left unattended.

This is why I believe Abram had faith during the entire episode. It's because his life and his actions only look forward to the greater salvation found in Jesus. May we never forget the great deeds God has accomplished on our behalf in the Person and work of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Abram in Egypt

Now there was a famine in the land
And so Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there
The famine was severe which came from God's hand
And so to a more fertile land, his journey he did prepare

And it came to pass as they closed in on their destination
Outside of Egypt, Abram told Sarai his wife
You really are a beauty, almost beyond imagination
And for a beauty like you, other people will want to take my life

Please my lovely bride; say that you are my sister
That it may be well with me for your sake
And that I may live, and not killed by another mister
Yes, for you certainly my life they will take

So it was when Abram came into Egypt finally
That the Egyptians saw the woman, she was very beautiful
And the princes of Pharaoh told him of her immense beauty
And so she went to his home, to Abram she was so dutiful

And Pharaoh treated Abram well for her sake
He gave him sheep, oxen, donkeys, camels, and servants too
What a trade it was, so much did Abram make
Why Abram could have started his own little zoo

But the Lord plagued Pharaoh with great plagues because of Abram's wife
So much so that Pharaoh feared even for his own life.

And so Pharaoh called Abram and asked him quite plainly
What is this thing which you have done, even to me

Why didn't you tell me that she was your wife?
Why did you say she was your sister instead?
I could have taken her and then lost my own life
Yes, because of you, right now I could be dead

Now therefore, here is your wife – take her and go your way
I don't want to see you any more, not another day

Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him
And they sent him away with his wife and all he had
Yes, they sent him away before things got too grim
And when Abram left, they were surely very glad

Now in the story of Abram there certainly is a lesson
For each of us to remember as we live out our days
We need to be sure of our convictions, not just a 'guessin'
That God is in control and He deserves all our praise

Live your life with faith like Abram had
And in the end, you'll see that life ain't that bad

Hallelujah and amen...

GENESIS 13:1-18 (THIS LAND I GIVE TO YOU)

Introduction: What does “being rich” mean to you? Today one of the points I’ll talk about is just that. If you walk from where we are right now to the public restrooms by the road, you’ll see those nice tropical looking picnic tables with the palm roofs by the lagoon.

On the last one, right where the view of the lagoon is best is where a guy named Wally lives. He’s lived there for years. You might have even noticed him at one time or another. He rides a tricycle around Siesta Key every day and enjoys life to the fullest.

He has almost no possessions and yet he’s one of the coolest cats in town. He’d tell you that he’s perfectly content with life. He has a place right on the water, takes a shower at public expense every day, gets a paycheck from the military and so always has enough for a steak, and he even has a grill that he can use for free.

There are hundreds of people within ¼ of a mile of us who have paid millions of dollars to live here and many of them are as miserable as they can be. Wally doesn’t pay a penny and he’s as happy as a lark. Which are the poor ones and which is wealthy?

Text Verse: *“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited and redeemed His people,
⁶⁹ And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of His servant David,
⁷⁰ As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,
Who have been since the world began,
⁷¹ That we should be saved from our enemies
And from the hand of all who hate us,
⁷² To perform the mercy promised to our fathers
And to remember His holy covenant,
⁷³ The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:
⁷⁴ To grant us that we,
Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear,
⁷⁵ In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. Luke 1:68-75*

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Returning to the Promised Land

¹Then Abram went up from Egypt, he and his wife and all that he had, and Lot with him, to the South.

As a reminder, last week we saw Abram's journey to Egypt which occurred because of a famine in the land of Canaan. While they were there, Abram had told his wife to tell anyone they met that she was his sister.

He did this in order to protect his own life in case someone wanted to kill him so that they could have her because she was an extremely beautiful lady. While in Egypt, Pharaoh's house eventually took her in so that she could become Pharaoh's wife.

But in the process of this, God afflicted them with plagues to keep her from being taken as his wife. When Pharaoh found out what happened, it says this –

And Pharaoh called Abram and said, "What *is* this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she *was* your wife? ¹⁹ Why did you say, 'She *is* my sister'? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take *her* and go your way." ²⁰ So Pharaoh commanded *his* men concerning him; and they sent him away, with his wife and all that he had. Genesis 12:18-20

And so in this first verse today we see the fulfillment of Pharaoh's demand. Abram and all who were with him headed northeast out of Egypt and back to the land of Canaan. The verse says they went up from Egypt to the South, but that doesn't mean they headed south.

Instead, they travelled to the South of the Land of Canaan which is an area known as the Negev, which means "south." This would be like saying we travelled from Sarasota to the Deep South, which is actually north from where we are because Sarasota, Florida is technically not a part of the Deep South.

Because of this, different translations of the Bible will translate this differently – they will either say the South or the Negev. It is a place and not a direction.

² Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver, and in gold.

Even before he had gone to Egypt, Abram was already wealthy and had servants and goods, but while he was in Egypt his wealth increased even more when Pharaoh took his wife Sarai. When he did, he treated Abram well and gave him a great deal.

The Hebrew term for “very rich” is *kaved meod*, and the words indicate heaviness. In other words, he was heavy in livestock, in silver, and in gold.

As people, we generally look at others who have a lot of stuff or expensive things as more important than people who don’t have as much. We want to be associated with rich or important people more than those who are less so. If we ever meet someone famous, we want to tell others about it – even years later.

But the Bible doesn’t teach this. If a person is rich or famous, it isn’t always an indication of divine favor. And if a person is poor it is no indication of divine disfavor. A good job that earns a lot of money or fame doesn’t guarantee happiness, and more often than not it brings about just the opposite.

Sports stars and movie stars make millions of dollars and yet they’re the ones who are continuously going through divorce after divorce or who put guns in their mouth because life is so crummy.

The heaviness of wealth, such as Abram had, is something that requires great care or it becomes a burden too heavy to manage and the blessing can easily become a curse. Solomon, the richest man ever to live, gives this thought on wealth –

¹⁰ He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver;
Nor he who loves abundance, with increase.
This also *is* vanity.

¹¹ When goods increase,
They increase who eat them;
So what profit have the owners
Except to see *them* with their eyes?

¹² The sleep of a laboring man *is* sweet,
Whether he eats little or much;
But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep. Ecc 5:10-12

Any of you who know me well enough know that I love to sleep. Outside of Jesus and my family, it is my favorite thing. If being rich will deprive me of my sleep, I’d rather not ever be wealthy.

And in Luke 16, it says this about the possessions we prize so highly, like big houses, fast cars, or expensive watches –

¹⁴ “Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. ¹⁵ And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”

Some of the people I hold in the highest regard are the people who live rather simple lives and who spend a lot of their time doing things for others, both nice things for friends and charity work for others. One of them is here right now and she’s surely not wealthy by the world’s standards.

But I’m sure that the life she lives is far more rewarding than if she were weighed down with wealth and status. I don’t know if she thinks so or not, but she is blessed because she is a blessing. What more could one want at the end of their life than to know that God was pleased with how they lived?

Something that will never impress me is how much money you have or how big the house is that you live in. I clean toilets in a mall and take out the garbage there every morning of the week except Sunday and I’m neither ashamed of it, nor do I mind a bit.

It pays the bills and helps meet our needs. What more should I ask for? Abram was blessed with a great deal and maybe someday you or I will be that way too, but what God favors is our faith, not stuff.

**³ And he went on his journey from the South as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai,
⁴ to the place of the altar which he had made there at first. And there Abram called on the name of the LORD.**

These verses take us back to Chapter 12, to the place where he had built an altar sometime soon after first coming into the Promised Land. If you remember, I said then that Bethel means “House of God” which is a picture of heaven and Ai means “Heap of Ruins” which would be a picture of hell.

Abram is living between these, both physically and spiritually, and for a second time he calls on the name of the LORD. While living on earth, between the only two possible destinations of the after- life, Abram sets his eyes and his affections on the Lord.

Despite being a man of great wealth and power, his eyes are right where they should be – focused on Him. If we can just learn from faithful people like this, then our lives will be so much better off. All the money, fame, and power in the world aren't worth doodly squat when we come to the end of our lives.

And so if you think about it, it doesn't hold any real importance now either. If honoring the Lord is all that matters at the end of our lives, and we don't know what moment will be the end of our life, then honoring Him is all that matters throughout our lives.

Think it through... any one of us could die as we leave here today. If the only thing of true value is our walk with the Lord at that moment, then it is the only thing of true value at any moment, because any moment could be our last moment. It's so simple to see, but most people never really see it.

II. If You go Right, I will go Left

When I was young, I heard about a town that had only two cars in it. This was when automobiles were just invented and there were no established road signs of any kind and even roads didn't really exist. Wherever the wagons went is where cars went. Despite having the entire town to drive in with only one other car on the road, the two cars had a head-on accident.

It seems funny now, but it's kind of the same things as walking down the sidewalk and getting into a "which way do I go" when running into someone else. You step right and he steps left and you're both still in each other's way. Then you step left and he steps right and the same thing happens again.

Another funny example is something I saw on TV just a couple weeks ago. I was watching a news story about the delivery people in New York who ride their bikes making local deliveries. Kevin Bacon did a movie about them called Quicksilver back in the 80s.

The guy in the story said that when he's going by a crosswalk, if a person starts doing what he called "the dance" he knew they would have an accident. If the person would just stop until he passed, things would go ok, but if not, then there would be trouble.

Abram and his nephew Lot are going to face "the dance" in the next few verses and we'll see how it turns out –

⁵ Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents.

⁶ Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together.

⁷ And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land.

Abram isn't the only one who has flocks, servants, and property. Lot has also been blessed with a lot too. In fact, together they've got so much between the two of them that living together isn't an option anymore. Depending on the time of the year and where they are living, there simply isn't enough grass to feed all the animals.

And so the dance begins. Lot and Abram are probably close to home and enjoying life, but their servants are out in the field. There's no real division of property and so whoever gets to a nice spot first gets the claim. And if they come to the same field from different directions, they will both claim they got there first.

As unlikely as this story may seem, especially considering that more than 6 million people live there today, it's not that tough to imagine. First, whatever lands a person moves into need to be cleared and they need to be maintained.

And also, it says that the Canaanites and the Perizzites lived in the land too. Any land they'd cleared would be land they claimed and Abram and Lot would do their best to not interfere with them. These people moved there before they did and would have established communities and more people than them.

And so they face the dance. The question is, will they both stand still, will one dance and the other hold fast, or will there be more trouble. Because they are relatives, we can only hope they get along and don't side with their own servants...

⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we *are* brethren.

⁹ *Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left.*"

Abram graciously stands fast and calms the situation deferring to his nephew Lot. He is the head of the clan because he is the son of Terah. But this is a good indication of something I said a few sermons ago.

Lot was probably older than Abram. Abram's older brother Haran was 60 years older than he was and Lot was probably born even before Abram. So even though he's Lot's uncle, he's probably younger than him.

And so despite being the head of the clan he shows respect to the elder family member by offering the choice of resolving the matter. If Lot goes to the left, Abram will go right, and if Lot takes the right, Abram will go left.

In these verses we can apply a few things to our own lives. The first is that there is an order in deferring to others in every culture and we need to learn that order and pay heed to it.

In the Bible we're taught to show respect in a variety of ways. We're to respect our parents, we're to respect those who are older than us, we're to respect those who are in positions of authority, and in fact in Philippians Paul says –

“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Philippeans 2:3-4

And how did Jesus Himself say it? “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” (Mark 9:35)

Abram may have been the head of the family because of his birth position, but he understood that sometimes deferring to another is the wisest choice and the one which brings about peace.

Another thing we can learn from these verses is what Abram said, “We are kinsmen.” If you look over your dealings with others in this light, then in fact everyone on earth is your kinsman because we all have one father in Adam.

When we lift ourselves above another person, we are really only showing contempt for God who created each of us. And this is certainly why Paul told us to act in lowliness of mind and esteem others as better than ourselves. It's not easy, but it is right.

And finally, we can look back to what God already promised to Abram – that **his descendants** would possess the land. So why should he worry about the decision Lot made, whatever he decided wouldn't affect what God had already determined. And this is true for each of us.

God has already promised eternal life to anyone who has called on Jesus... it's done. He's already given us the sealing of the Spirit and the Lord is already building us a home that we can rest in.

Just as Abram knew that the land would be his, every one of us who has accepted Jesus has a better promise – one of glory that will never fade away. So why should we strive about temporary things that have no true importance? But strive we do...

¹⁰ And Lot lifted his eyes and saw all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered everywhere (before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go toward Zoar. ¹¹ Then Lot chose for himself all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east. And they separated from each other.

Lot probably didn't take long in making his decision. He looked toward the plain of the Jordan where the land was lush and well-watered. Unlike the other areas of the land which were highly dependent on the rain cycle, the plain of the Jordan received water and nutrients from the Jordan as it flowed south.

This would be especially true during the flooding season just like the Nile in Egypt, which Lot would have seen when they were there. Instead of worrying about famines, which sent them to Egypt in the first place, there would be a much better chance of having grass and crops even when there was no rain.

Kind of an interesting thought about this verse and one which I am pretty certain is correct, some scholars have taken the words "like the Garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt" ke-gan Yehovah ke-eret Mizrayim" not as two comparisons, but one. In other words, this is the spot where the Garden of the Lord was and the land of Egypt is being compared to it.

Having a Hebrew scholar on our staff at Church on the Beach, I checked with him and he verified that this is a possible translation based on other precedents set in the Bible.

Let's stand back and think about it. Adam was created and then was placed in the Garden of Eden. When he disobeyed, he was sent east of Eden and Cain went further east, to the land of Nod. After the flood, the same area that Cain went to is where Nimrod went.

But God called Abram back to the place where the Garden of Eden was and this is the same land where God's presence dwelt in the Temple and where Jesus walked. And it is

the same place which will look very similar to this period again in the millennial reign of Christ according to Ezekiel chapter 47.

Let's take a minute and read those verses –

¹ Then he brought me back to the door of the temple; and there was water, flowing from under the threshold of the temple toward the east, for the front of the temple faced east; the water was flowing from under the right side of the temple, south of the altar. ² He brought me out by way of the north gate, and led me around on the outside to the outer gateway that faces east; and there was water, running out on the right side. ³ And when the man went out to the east with the line in his hand, he measured one thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the water *came up to my* ankles. ⁴ Again he measured one thousand and brought me through the waters; the water *came up to my* knees. Again he measured one thousand and brought me through; the water *came up to my* waist. ⁵ Again he measured one thousand, *and it was* a river that I could not cross; for the water was too deep, water in which one must swim, a river that could not be crossed. ⁶ He said to me, “Son of man, have you seen *this?*” Then he brought me and returned me to the bank of the river. ⁷ When I returned, there, along the bank of the river, *were* very many trees on one side and the other. ⁸ Then he said to me: “This water flows toward the eastern region, goes down into the valley, and enters the sea. *When it* reaches the sea, *its* waters are healed. ⁹ And it shall be *that* every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live. There will be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live wherever the river goes. ¹⁰ It shall be *that* fishermen will stand by it from En Gedi to En Eglaim; they will be *places* for spreading their nets. Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the Great Sea, exceedingly many. ¹¹ But its swamps and marshes will not be healed; they will be given over to salt. ¹² Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all *kinds of* trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for medicine.”

-Ezekiel 47:1-12

The Land of Israel is where all things started and it is the place where all things will find their completion. No wonder the whole world has and will continue to covet this land and to come against it. It is where the Lord dwells and where His favored people live.

¹² **Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched *his* tent even as far as Sodom.**

¹³ **But the men of Sodom *were* exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD.**

Back to our story –

Unfortunately for Lot, he didn't pay attention to the lessons of the past. Mixing with the ungodly is what brought about the Flood of Noah, and the world didn't yet have the words of Paul that said, "Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."

In the chapters ahead, we're going to see where Lot's wrong choice of moving into the land of Sodom would leave him in very sad straits and which would even cost him the life of his wife.

Again, we have a valuable lesson in these verses for each of us. We're told by James-

"Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

-James 4:4

Lot moved to Sodom and dwelt among those who worked in wickedness. He may have maintained his own righteousness, but it affected his life and his family in the same negative way that living like this will affect your own life and family. In the end, he thought he would find paradise, but instead he found hell.

We all have choices to like this to make and ultimately, the sad state of affairs we find ourselves in is more than usually brought on by our own bad decisions.

III. Read Your Bible More than Once

This is our final thought for the day and I'm going to tie in to it your responsibility as a Christian in a way which will, I hope, convict you of the thing you need to do in order to keep from making the same mistakes as Lot and so many others in the Bible.

You may know that I traveled around the country in 2010 and I preached at every capital in the US. When I did, I made a challenge to anyone following me to read their Bible for 30 minutes a day. God gives you a similar challenge as well, and we can see it in the following verses –

¹⁴ And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: “Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward;

¹⁵ for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever.

In chapter 12, we read this –

⁶“Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites *were* then in the land. ⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your descendants I will give this land.” And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

God has now twice promised the land to Abram. The Lord is repeating His word to him to remind him about what he had already been told.

Let me ask you, who here has read the book of Philippians at least once? Has anyone read it more than once? Now, can anyone here quote Philippians 4:6, 7? Let me give you the first four words of it – Be anxious for nothing. Can you quote the rest? Let me just quote it for you...

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7

Why did God remind Abram of the promise? Because he wanted him to remember it! Why should we read the Bible more than once, more than twice, even every day of our life? Because God wants us to know it and remember it!

In fact, long before Jesus came, when the people had only the Law of Moses, only the first five books of the Bible, God said this to the people of Israel in Deuteronomy 6 –

⁴“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶ “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

At the time when there were only 5 books in the Bible, God asked them to meditate on it day and night and during every activity that they were engaged in. How much more should we be meditating on the same word now that we have 61 more books than they had!

The Bible tells us of Jesus and Jesus reveals the Father to us. I could say this a thousand times and it wouldn't be enough. The only way to know God intimately is through His word. If you're relying on the Holy Spirit to reveal God to you, guess what – He has. He breathed out the Bible through His prophets... for you.

¹⁶ And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, *then* your descendants also could be numbered.

¹⁷ Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you."

There are two things going on in this promise to Abram. The first is that the land is being given to him and his descendants and the second is that his descendants will be like the dust of the earth in number. These two promises are connected, but they are different.

The promise of the land to his descendants is a physical promise, not a spiritual one. It is a promise to the physical descendants of Abraham – not to the church. This has become evident, not only from the Bible, but in history too. And the history confirms the precept. When Israel was exiled, the land laid fallow. Only when the people of Israel returned has the land again become usable.

The land promise which is made to Abraham is reiterated to his son Isaac and then his son Jacob. We are not physical descendants of Isaac or Jacob. On the other hand, the promise of a multitude of descendants is a promise concerning all people of faith in the work of Jesus. It is not a physical right, but a spiritual one.

The Bible confirms the precept in both the book of Romans and the book of Galatians. It is through faith that one becomes Abraham's seed. In Romans, Paul says, "For the promise that he would be the heir of the world *was* not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."

To be an heir of the land, one is born physically into the people of Israel, but to be an heir of the promises of God which lead to eternal life, one must be born spiritually through faith and the imputed righteousness of God through Christ Jesus.

18 Then Abram moved *his* tent, and went and dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre, which *are* in Hebron, and built an altar there to the LORD.

This brings us to the last verse of chapter 13. Abram walked throughout the length and breadth of the land and eventually pitched his tent by the terebinth trees of Mamre at the ancient city of Hebron. Hebron exists even to this day and it's the spot where Abraham's tomb is located.

In this area, he built an altar. This "altar" in Hebrew is a place of sacrifice. Abram is the patriarch of the family and so the responsibility for sacrificing belongs to him. This will continue up until the time of Moses when corporate sacrifices for the people of Israel are instituted under the clan of the Levites.

As God directs the nations and the people of the earth, His purposes are being worked out for all of us. Abram sacrificed to the Lord in anticipation of the coming Redeemer. Since Christ came, the sacrifices are done. We now have His cross as our point of meeting with the Creator. Let me explain how Jesus' life and death are significant to you...

The Lord's Promise to Abram

Abram went up from Egypt with all that he had
And his nephew Lot was with him too
From the land of Egypt many goods they did add
And they came to the South and kept on passing through

And he journeyed to Bethel where his tent had been before
To the place of the altar between Bethel and Ai
And there he called on the Lord, a duty he wouldn't ignore
Abram was a man of faith, and he was a faithful guy

Lot was with him and he had flocks, herds, and tents
And the land couldn't support them both they had so much stuff
And so fighting resulted, some very trying events
They realized the land where they were just wasn't enough

The Canaanites and Perizzites, they dwelt in the land
Abram had to tread carefully to avoid their fighting hand

Then Abram said to Lot, let us not live in strife
And between our herdsmen, let there be peace
For we are brethren, let us protect each other's life
Let us separate so that this fighting will cease

The whole land is before you, is it not?
Please separate from me, my handsome nephew Lot

If you take the left, why then I'll go to the right
If you take the right, then to the left I will go
Come nephew, let this not result in a fight
Let us part amicably, let it be so

Lot lifted his eyes and favored the Jordan's plain
The beautiful spot, the Garden of the Lord
It was like the land of Egypt, that didn't need the rain
It was watered from the river, when he saw it he was floored
And so they separated from each other, to the east went Lot
And Abram dwelt in Canaan, he really loved the spot

And the Lord said to Abram after Lot separated from him
Lift now your eyes north, south, east, and west
This land I give you forever, you will fill it to the brim
As the dust of the earth they will be, see how you are blessed

If a man could number the earth's dust
Then your descendants could also be counted too
This is a sure promise, one you can trust
It is a vow from your Creator to you

Arise and walk through the land, up and down and side to side
I'm giving to you everything that you have eyed

And so Abram moved his tent to the place of Mamre's trees
They are in Hebron which is still there today
And he built an altar to the Lord, an offering to please
And there in Hebron is where he did stay

Hallelujah and amen...

GENESIS 14:1-16 **(ABRAM THE HEBREW)**

Introduction: One of the things that I've noticed that really affects people – to the point that they never accept Jesus, or that unevenly affects their walk with Him to the point where they are always questioning His goodness and His love, are things like war, death, famine, suffering, etc.

These are also used by people who hate God, like self-proclaimed atheists, as an unwise basis for rejecting Him. I cannot tell you how many discussions or posts on the internet I've been in where people use these things to attack the very God that allows them to make their attacks against Him.

Think about it... I mean think it through. It is so stupid and so childish to blame God for the world's troubles and then expect you have every right to speak badly of Him, call Him names, or claim He must not exist. It is, really, the height of hypocrisy.

Anyway, I'm saying this now because today we're going to see the first war recorded in the Bible. And of course, along with war comes suffering, death, plague, pain, sorrow, etc.

The people who want to dismiss the God of the Bible will use these things in order to show how cruel He is or how incompetent He is because He allows these things to happen.

But then they turn around and exercise their free will by sleeping with someone's wife – something that will cause its own little war. Or they will do one of a million other things that will cause anger and division in another person or people without ever considering that God simply allowed them to work out their own life.

And if God did stop them, they'd say He was being unfair. Just keep thinking it through this week and you'll see that how things make much more sense when you're dealing with people who have free will. If not, then there would be no possibility of loving God either. Any love would be forced, which is no love at all.

Keep these things in mind and don't get sidetracked by people who are atheists or God haters who think they have a good argument against the God they claim they don't believe in. They don't.

Text Verse: *He shall judge between many peoples,
And rebuke strong nations afar off;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war anymore. Micah 4:3*

We look forward to the day when Christ reigns on earth and war is ended forever, but until that day we should accept that God is in control and that war – past, present, and future – happens, not because God desires it, but because He allows it. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name every be praised.

I. The Warring of the Nations

¹ And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar, Arioch king of Ellasar, Chedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of nations,

² that they made war with Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).

³ All these joined together in the Valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).

⁴ Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

There are times when you're reading the Bible and you may wonder to yourself "Why is all this recorded here? A good example of this is the account of the sailing journey of Paul which included a storm and a shipwreck in Acts 27 and 28.

It's a nice story, but why would God include it in there, especially when it takes up such a large portion of the book? These are the times we need to dig into the accounts and ask, verse by verse, "What are you trying to tell me Lord?"

The account today is like that. There are minute details of a battle. The details include the names of people, the countries they come from, and who they are fighting against, but when you're done, other than saying, "Ok," you may not have really come to any big conclusions about why the story is even given.

There have been billions of skirmishes and wars in history. Why did God tell us about this one? We note here that this is the first war recorded in the Bible, but not the first war in history.

I say this because these verses tell us that the rebelling nations served Chedorlaomer for twelve years before they rebelled. The logical assumption is that he waged war with them in the past and then subjected them to paying tribute. This battle is recorded because it affects God's people who have now entered the picture.

Any other wars happen as wars have happened throughout history. People want, people take, people die. God has allowed us to destroy each other and to exercise our free will. When we do and we are the victors, then we boast about our strength and how great our achievements are, but when we lose, we blame God... "How could he allow this to happen?"

Nobody ever questions why God allowed them to win the battle, nor do they question why He allowed their poor enemies to die. It's only when things go wrong that we question God. I'm bringing this up now so that you know it is the weaker in faith who question God's ways when things go bad.

He is sovereign over His creation. We are man and are a part of His creation. In the end, we have no right to hold our fist in God's face and tell Him how things should be done.

I'm not saying we don't all do it, but the stronger the faith, the less the complaining when tragedy strikes – just read the book of Job. Keep this in mind as things go well and as things get tough. Give God the credit for the victories and give God praise when you lose. If you do, you will be living the life of a faithful Christian.

We all have free will, just as the nations which war against each other. When things go bad, it's normally because of a bad decision – let's do our best to not blame God at these times, but to see His hand in the lesson we learn.

Another thing we see these verses is the beginning of a particular type of conflict which continues even to this day. These nations aligned with each other even though they were nations which were scattered during the time of the Tower of Babel.

In the conduct of nations, alliances are made and people who may not really like each other still work together for a commonly shared goal. As the world's superpower, America has alliances with many nations. We had a treaty with Kuwait in the 1990s. When Iraq attacked them, it was a test of our faithfulness to our treaty. Was it worth the paper it was printed on? If not, then all the other nations we'd signed treaties with would know they couldn't trust us either. We may or may not have agreed with the president, but he did the right thing by standing up for Kuwait.

This is the way of the world we live in and often people who are innocent will get caught in the crossfire. One of them in today's story is named Lot.

There are four overall points to be seen in this chapter. We won't finish it today, but we can break it down in anticipation of what's ahead. First, there is a war involving the king of Sodom and four other kings who rebel against their oppressors.

The second is that Lot, Abram's nephew is taken captive during the battle. The third is that Abram will rescue him from his captivity during a battle he wages over the conquering forces.

And the fourth item to note is Abram's return and his encounters with the king of Salem and the king of Sodom. This chapter will be the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promise to Abram that He would make his name great.

This battle is waged in the area of *Siddim* which is now where the Dead Sea is located. *Siddim* means "fields" or "ploughed lands" and to stand there today and look at the area, ploughed lands are the very last thing you could imagine.

The land is a barren waste and it drops down to the lowest spot on the face of the earth, 1388 feet below sea level. There are some plantations by the Dead Sea now, but they are either desert crops like date palms or things that are watered by modern irrigation.

But the Bible records that at the time of Abram, the land was a fertile valley and it was known for its ploughed fields. It's almost impossible to think that there was ever anything there the way the Bible describes. That only 4000 years ago, but this is what the Bible says and when it was written, people didn't dispute it.

⁵ In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that *were* with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim,

⁶ and the Horites in their mountain of Seir, as far as El Paran, which *is* by the wilderness.

⁷ Then they turned back and came to En Mishpat (that *is*, Kadesh), and attacked all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon Tamar.

So, these people had paid tribute for 12 years and finally got sick of it and rebelled in the thirteenth year. When they realized they weren't getting any benefit from them in

the 13th year, the four kings from the east gathered together in the fourteenth year and headed to Canaan to reestablish their authority over the people.

This scenario is played out time and again in the Bible. A nation will conquer another nation and tribute will be paid for a while until either the conquering nation gets soft or until the conquered nation grows strong enough to revolt or it makes an alliance with another nation so that together they can conquer the conquerors.

And this has been happening ever since biblical times as well. The Roman Empire overthrew nations as far north as England, but eventually it simply faded away under its own weight and because of the constant revolts which occurred and weakened the empire.

The same thing happened with England. At one time the saying was true, “The sun never sets on the British empire.” Eventually because of mismanagement, a lack of discipline, and over-extension, they too faded off the scene as a world empire.

America is heading in the same direction and the world is being lined up for the end times where Israel will again be the head of the nations. Isaiah looked forward to this glorious time 2700 years ago and His words march ever closer to their fulfillment –

²Now it shall come to pass in the latter days
That the mountain of the LORD's house
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,
And shall be exalted above the hills;
And all nations shall flow to it.
³Many people shall come and say,
“Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
⁴He shall judge between the nations,
And rebuke many people;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war anymore. Isaiah 2:2-4

As faithful believers in Jesus Christ, we're waiting for that wondrous day when He returns and sits on the throne of David, ruling in righteousness and judging among the nations.

Going back to our verses, it said that on the way to deal with the rebels in the land of Canaan they attacked the Rephaim, the Zuzim, the Emim, and the Horites. After this, they turned back and attacked all the country of the Amalekites and also the Amorites.

These kings didn't just come after the rebels. They attacked other nations as well. They probably did this for a few reasons. First, they were showing their strength to the surrounding nations as a warning not to make alliances with the nations they'd conquered.

They also probably wanted to increase the number of nations that would pay them tribute and keep them so busy so that they wouldn't even think of making other alliances. And a third reason is to plunder the people enough to keep their war campaign going.

This is a lot like what Hitler did in Germany. Sometimes he did it with false alliances like the agreement he made with hugely naïve Neville Chamberlain. Sometimes he did it with blitzkrieg raids like in Poland. And sometimes he did it with longer battles like his attacks against Russia. As he conquered nations, he used their resources for feeding his own military.

And believe it or not, this type of thing occurs in politics as well. The left has been waging all out war on the right. Anyone who disagrees with them or their policies is fair game in their attacks.

What they can't win through the vote, they win through their troops lined up in the media, the unions, and the courts by litigation. War never affects just the people directly under attack. It affects those who stand idly and blindly by and naively hope that things will turn out for the best.

By the time these kings had gotten to their main targets of attack, many other people groups had been affected by their cunning. May we in America be more willing to stand and defend our rights now, before they are gone.

⁸ And the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboiim, and the king of Bela (that *is*, Zoar) went out and joined together in battle in the Valley of Siddim

⁹ against Chedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of nations, Amraphel king of Shinar, and Arioch king of Ellasar—four kings against five.

The Bible returns to the account of the main forces lined up for battle which was mentioned in verses 1 and 2. But this time, the rebels are mentioned first and the attackers are mentioned last.

In other words, when you read both accounts, it is first from the vantage point of the four kings of the east – “we will attack.” Then the second time they’re mentioned, it is from the vantage point of the five kings of Canaan – “we will defend.”

The four kings from the east say –

- We will subdue you as we did 14 years ago
- You will be beaten and to us tribute you will pay
- When we are finished then you will surely know
- You shouldn’t have revolted; this is what you’ll say

And the five kings of Canaan replied –

- We will stand and defend our land
- This is the thing that we will do
- Many of you will die by our hand
- And we will be the victors over you

Who will win the battle and what will be the result?

¹⁰ Now the Valley of Siddim *was full of asphalt pits*;

If you want to learn the Indonesian or Malaysian language, both of which are very similar, one of the things you’ll notice right away is that instead of using a plural marker on a word the way we do when we add an “s” – such as in **star** in the singular or **stars** in the plural, they will often simply say the word twice to make a plural.

So to say “I see a star” you would say “Aku melihat bintang.”

To say “I see stars” you would say “Aku melihat bintang-bintang”

The verse we just read does this in the Hebrew – v’emek ha’sideem b’erot b’erot emar

Now the Valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits. Or “And the valley of the fields was pits pits tar.

So why am I bringing this up... so what, right? This verse, which is talking about tar pits, along with several other verses found in the Old Testament, have pointed to the great possibility of there being immense reserves of oil in the land of Israel.

One key indicator that oil is normally present is when asphalt is seen bubbling up from the ground. Another possible indication of this is the fact that the Dead Sea is there now, but there once was a fertile valley with ploughed fields as Genesis tells us.

What could cause trillions of tons of rock to be moved in order to make such a large rift in the earth?

Some people believe that an underground cavern of gas or oil exploded when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. This is as reasonable as any other explanation and very well may be what happened. And this verse is the first indication of the oil there.

If you want to track the oil and gas finds in Israel, there are a few sites which keep up to date on these things and some of the testing and drilling has been in the Dead Sea area. There are also indications of large amounts of oil and gas in other areas of Israel leading some to believe that Israel could at some point become a major source of both oil and natural gas.

If this wouldn’t get Israel’s enemies up in arms, I can’t think of what else would. This very well could be the impetus for the great battle of Gog and Magog which is recorded in Ezekiel 38 and which may soon be leading to another great Mideast war near you.

^{10 (con’t)} and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled; some fell there, and the remainder fled to the mountains.

Any place full of asphalt pits wasn’t the smartest choice for the five kings to line up for battle. They probably went there thinking that if things went bad, they could flee to the mountains, which is exactly what happened as the battle turned against them.

Unfortunately for them, some of the people fell into the tar pits as they fled. Kind of a goopy way to die...

¹¹ Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their provisions, and went their way.

¹² They also took Lot, Abram's brother's son who dwelt in Sodom, and his goods, and departed.

Exactly what the people of Sodom had hoped to avoid by going away from the city to fight is what ended up happening. As the men of the armies fled, the people who remained in the city, and all of their goods, were taken captive. Unfortunately for the conquerors, they took Lot, Abram's nephew too. This would cost them in the end.

II. Abram the Hebrew

¹³ Then one who had escaped came and told Abram the Hebrew, for he dwelt by the terebinth trees of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner; and they were allies with Abram.

This verse marks the first time the term Hebrew is mentioned in the Bible. It is tying Abram in with Lot and is showing a designation of what Abram is, just like the designation of Mamre when he is called an Amorite.

The term "Hebrew" is tied directly to Abram's great-great-great-great grandfather Eber in both Genesis 10 and 11. Eber means "he who crossed over" and it is signifying that he and his family are the ones who crossed over the Euphrates and away from Babel.

The term is used here for the first time to make the distinction between Abram and the attacking armies who came from the other side of the Euphrates and also from the people whom he was allied with – the Amorites.

He is of the chosen people and he is the center of focus in the Bible at this time. He is the one who will lead to the Messiah. The refugee from the battle knew that Abram was related to Lot and so he came to tell him about what had happened, probably hoping to get Abram to go after him, not only to rescue Lot, but to get back his own things which had been taken by the raiders.

¹⁴ Now when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his three hundred and eighteen trained *servants* who were born in his own house, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

Abram took no time in responding. As soon as he heard what had happened, it says that he armed his 318 trained servants who were born in his house and took off in pursuit. This shows how large of a company he must have had.

He had 318 men who were ready for battle, but he would have had many others who would stay behind to keep the camp from attack. And these are only the trained men. He would have also had women and children and young and old.

His company probably reached into the thousands. But the number 318 is very specific and the rule of the Bible is that every name, every number, and in fact every word is important. The question is, why is this curious number used? The answer probably comes from the name of a person who will be introduced in chapter 15.

He is the chief servant of Abram named Eliezer, whose name means “God is help.” Because Abram has no children, the next in line to inherit all he has is this servant Eliezer. If his name is turned into numbers, a science known as gematria, they equal 318.

As the chief of the servants and the heir apparent of the household, 318 fighting men are chosen from the same group within Abram’s home based on Eliezer’s name. It is a way of saying, “In this battle, God is my help. He is my right hand.”

And so off they go – Abram and only 318 men against many thousands of people who had just destroyed numerous kingdoms as they stormed through the land. The chances seem slim, but with many or few, the battle belongs to the Lord.

David knew and understood this when he went out as a young shepherd boy to fight the mighty Philistine named Goliath –

Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.

⁴⁷ Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle *is* the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands."

-1 Samuel 17:45-47

¹⁵ He divided his forces against them by night, and he and his servants attacked them and pursued them as far as Hobah, which *is* north of Damascus.

When America engages in a war, it is almost always begun in the darkest moments of the night, just before dawn. It is the time when the enemy is least ready to counterattack and the majority of them are asleep. Abram knew this 4000 years ago when he divided up the forces under him and attacked the armies at night.

This is something you will see happen again in the Bible on several occasions. Night attacks allow insignificant numbers to overwhelm opposing forces of great size. Gideon, the Judge of Israel, took 300 men into battle against 135,000 Midianites and with the Lord's help, he prevailed.

After attacking the armies, Abram didn't just stop and revel in his win, but he continued to chase the enemies and destroy them even farther north than Damascus in Syria. This was the wise thing to do because it depleted their numbers and gave them notice that they'd get more of the same if they tried to come back in the future.

Despite being criticized for pummeling the withdrawing Iraqis as they left from Kuwait, President Bush saved many American lives in future battles by continuing to crush them on the highway of death which lead from Kuwait all the way north deep into Iraq.

Countries or political parties which aren't willing to fight until the battle is won only show weakness to the enemy and cause more harm and damage to themselves. We need to remember this and not listen to doves in our government harp about the wars we fight.

In the end, they only set themselves up for much worse. By following the Bible in all matters, even the conduct of war, we will keep ourselves from many harms and troubles.

¹⁶ So he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his brother Lot and his goods, as well as the women and the people.

Victorious, Abram returns home. Just imagine the clan applauding and rejoicing over the return of him and his men. And in a note of the true completion of the task before him, Lot is mentioned by name. Abram had been faithful to his nephew and thus to his family name.

In the New Testament, Paul explains the importance of taking care of one's family –

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Timothy 5:8

We are to take care of those who are in trouble, unable to help themselves, sick, afflicted, or simply less well off than we are.

In Sodom, Lot certainly had many friends, but he found out the importance of family when he was carried away. As the Proverb says –

“A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Proverbs 18:24

Each of us probably has many friends as well, but they tend to fade out of the scene as our life unfolds. Even brothers and sisters can get on our nerves. And despite the idea of marriage being a life-long commitment, that doesn't always work out.

But the Bible says there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. That someone is Jesus and I'd like to take a few minutes and tell you about Him and His love for you...

Abram the Hebrew

In the days of Amraphel, king of Shinar
He along with three other kings went out to war

It was in the Valley of Siddim which is now the Salt Sea
That four kings faced off against another five
The five had rebelled and the four couldn't let that be
And so to the Land of Canaan they made their warlike drive

But before these forces met in this great battle
The four kings of the east fought against many other clans
And defeating each they gained stocks of war chattel

Everything was going well, according to their plans

After all their victories, before the rebels they stood
And looked across the plowed fields, yes life was pretty good

It was the five kings who faced off against the attacking four
But only one side could claim the victory, such is the way of war

Now the Valley of Siddim was full of asphalt pits
And the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah took off and they fled
Some fell into the tar and probably died in terrible fits
While others headed to the mountains, as the dying bled

The conquerors took from Sodom all the spoils they could find
Also they took along Lot, Abram's nephew too
He was relaxing in Sodom, he wasn't the warring kind
And so off to captivity he went wishing he knew kung fu

And one of the fugitives came and told Abram the Hebrew
He was certain that this great man would know just what to do

Abram was allied with the Amorites at that time
And when he heard about Lot and that he was taken captive
He got together 318 of his men and they took off on a dime
Abram was a man who was really quite adaptive

He went with his servants having counted every man
And they went off in pursuit even as far as Dan

He divided his forces against them by night
They attacked them hip and thigh, probably a bloody sight

Abram pursued them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus
And he brought back all the goods along with his nephew Lot
And all of Lot's stuff was safe even his little abacus
All the women and the people Abram back home brought

Are you also willing to step up for the fight
When lost souls are being carried off to hell

With you is the Lord infinite in power and might
And of His great works others you need to tell

Stand up and proclaim the good news to those who come your way
Please don't forget Jesus is coming soon, maybe even today

Without Him in their lives there remains no hope
Because all the world lies within the devil's scope

Be brave Christian warrior and proclaim the work of Jesus
Tell those you meet each and every day
Jesus came to purge our sins and from the devil rescue us
So please tell the world, He is the only way

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 14:17-24
(MELCHIZEDEK - GREATER THAN LEVI)

Jesus Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of every biblical picture and figure which looks forward to the coming Messiah. All the way back to the time of Eusebius who lived during the second and third century, the three-fold office of Christ is noted – that of being the prophet, priest, and king.

And this concept is believed to have been built on even earlier Jewish sources. But in the end, it's the Bible that reveals this for those who study it and peer into the beautiful gemstones which look forward to this coming Messiah.

In Deuteronomy, the great Prophet is predicted who would come in the manner of Moses –

“The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, 16 according to all you desired of the Lord your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, nor let me see this great fire anymore, lest I die.’” 18:15, 16

In Jeremiah, a great King is anticipated who is God incarnate –

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord,
“That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness;
A King shall reign and prosper,
And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.
6 In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell safely;
Now this is His name by which He will be called:
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS -Jeremiah 23:5, 6

And also in Jeremiah is the anticipation of a new High Priest –

“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— ³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. Jeremiah 31:31, 32

A New Covenant implies a change in priesthood. Many other times the uniting of the offices of prophet, priest, and king into one is alluded to in the Old Testament. Isaiah speaks of these three offices belonging to the LORD. Because they are fulfilled in Jesus, Isaiah's words are a veiled reference to the deity of Jesus Christ –

(For the LORD *is* our Judge,
The LORD *is* our Lawgiver,
The LORD *is* our King;
He will save us). Isaiah 33:22

Interestingly, this same concept of a judge, lawgiver, and king was used in the three-fold division of our own government. The king is replaced with a president because the true King of our nation is the Creator to whom our leaders were recognized as subordinate.

In the New Testament, we see the three-fold concept realized in the Person of Jesus. If we were to look for a first picture of this though, we don't need to even leave Genesis. Today we'll see a person show up in only three verses and yet these three verses are so important that the author of Hebrews will spend three entire chapters speaking about them.

Introduction: Our enigmatic figure is Melchizedek and he is mentioned 11 times in the Bible. All but two of these are in the book of Hebrews. The other two are once in Genesis and once by David in the psalms.

If you ever want to enter into the truly goofy, you can read all kinds of crazy stuff about Melchizedek, just like the crazy things people make up about the Nephilim in Genesis chapter 6.

But what we have recorded about Melchizedek is very clear and there's no need to make up a crazy theories when the Bible's purpose in introducing him is to simply prefigure our true Prophet, Priest, and King – Jesus.

Text Verse: *“Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, And He shall build the temple of the LORD; Yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”*

- Zechariah 6:12, 13

Yes, because of Jesus, there is peace between the offices of the King and the Priest. And also because of Jesus, we have the full revelation of God's word as is prophetically breathed out by the Holy Spirit. Because Jesus fills these wonderful roles for us... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Introducing and Explaining Melchizedek

¹⁷ And the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley), after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him.

Our last sermon covered the battle which occurred between the four kings from the east and the five kings who lived in the area of Sodom. When the battle was over, Abram's nephew Lot was captured and taken captive, but Abram marshaled together his troops, went off in pursuit of Lot and safely returned him with all the other captives, and their goods.

Now we see the victorious Abram being met by the king of Sodom in the Valley of Shaveh. This king is named Bera who was introduced in Genesis 14:2 and he's the same king who fled from the battle in 14:10. But now he comes forward to meet Abram and receive from him what he had lost.

The valley of Shaveh is where they met, which is also called the King's Valley. Shaveh means "level" and it's possible that the idiom that we use today "Meet me on the level" comes from this very phrase.

As Abram was returning from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and the other three kings, he may have sent a messenger to Bera with a note, "meet me at Shaveh" or as we would translate "meet me on the level." Anyway, this same "King's Valley is also the valley mentioned in 2 Samuel 18:18 and tells us the story of a sad figure in the Bible, Absalom the son of King David –

"Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up a pillar for himself, which is in the King's Valley. For he said, "I have no son to keep my name in remembrance." He called the pillar after his own name. And to this day it is called Absalom's Monument."

If you go to Israel today, you can see a large monument called "Absalom's Monument" off to the side of the Temple Mount. It's definitely not the same monument mentioned

in the Bible, but because it was given this name, its face is all marred up from people throwing rocks at it. If you know the story of Absalom, you'd understand why. He was the son who attempted to overthrow Israel's great king – his own father David.

¹⁸ Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High.

¹⁹ And he blessed him and said: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth;

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” And he gave him a tithe of all.

This is all that's recorded about Melchizedek. So why is it that he is mentioned again by David in the psalms and is referred to for three chapters in Hebrews? There's obviously a lot more in these three verses than may be apparent at first.

Because the entire point of these three verses is to introduce what is explained in Hebrews, I'm going to read you David's comment about Melchizedek from the psalms and then read you Hebrews 5-7 and attempt to explain them as we go. This may take a while, but hopefully you'll see why this account is mentioned.

Before we do though, I'll tell you that even in antiquity this great priest of God brought out and gave a blessing over bread and wine. This is something we do to this day and it prefigures the body and blood of the coming Messiah, Jesus.

Here is what David says about Melchizedek in Psalm 110 –

⁴ The LORD has sworn
And will not relent,
“You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek.”

This may not seem very instructive, but it's based on the introduction to the Psalm recorded in verse 1 –

¹ The LORD said to my Lord,
“Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”

² The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies! -Psalm 110:1, 2

Jesus used this very verse to explain something about the coming Messiah that the scribes of His day had missed –

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ⁴² saying, “What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?”

They said to Him, “*The Son of David.*”

⁴³ He said to them, “How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying:

⁴⁴ ‘The LORD said to my Lord,

“Sit at My right hand,

Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”?”

⁴⁵ If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?” ⁴⁶ And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.

-Matthew 22:43-45

Well, now let’s read Hebrews 5-7 and discover why Melchizedek is mentioned in these three verses in Genesis, but before I do I’ll tell you that if you want to witness to a Jewish person from the New Testament, the two best places to do it in my opinion are from the book of Matthew or the book of Hebrews –

¹ For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. ³ Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins. ⁴ And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron *was*.

⁵ So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but *it was* He who said to Him:

“You are My Son,

Today I have begotten You.”

⁶ As *He* also says in another *place*:

“You *are* a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek”;

⁷ who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, ⁸ though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹ And having been perfected, He

became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,¹⁰ called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,”¹¹ of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. – Hebrews 5

¹Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,² of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.³ And this we will do if God permits.

⁴ For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit,⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,⁶ if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.

⁷ For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God;⁸ but if it bears thorns and briers, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned.

⁹ But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.¹⁰ For God *is* not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.¹¹ And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end,¹² that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself,¹⁴ saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.”¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.¹⁶ For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute.¹⁷ Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath,¹⁸ that by two immutable things, in which *it is* impossible

for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.

¹⁹ This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil, ²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. -Hebrews 6

¹ For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, ² to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,” ³ without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

⁴ Now consider how great this man *was*, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. ⁵ And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; ⁶ but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. ⁸ Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. ⁹ Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, ¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

¹¹ Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? ¹² For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. ¹³ For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar.

¹⁴ For *it is* evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. ¹⁵ And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest ¹⁶ who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. ¹⁷ For He testifies:

“You *are* a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek.”

¹⁸ For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, ¹⁹ for the law made nothing perfect; on the

other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

²⁰ And inasmuch as *He was not made priest* without an oath ²¹ (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him:

“The LORD has sworn

And will not relent,

‘You *are* a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek”’),

²² by so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

²³ Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. ²⁴ But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

²⁶ For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; ²⁷ who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. ²⁸

For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints* the Son who has been perfected forever. – Hebrews 7

II. Abram’s Wisdom

Although we’ve covered a lot of ground, but there’s a few more verses in Chapter 14 before we’re finished. They demonstrate the wisdom displayed by Abram in dealing with the king of Sodom.

²¹ Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.”

The king of Sodom acknowledges Abram’s right to all of the booty recovered in the war and only asks for his people back. This is an ancient tradition and is, until recently, the inviolable rule of war. Any land or possessions won in war become the property of the victors.

Occasionally but very infrequently, a nation will give up that right. America, for example has defeated enemies around the globe, but has graciously granted freedom to the vanquished. They have been allowed to retain their own societies, cultures, religions, monetary systems, languages, etc. This is the exception, not the rule.

There is one other exception to this rule which is being forced on the victors by the nations of the world – the Land of Israel. The Jewish people defeated their enemies in war and gained right to Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, etc. In this case, and only in this case, are the nations of the world up in arms about the results of the battle.

What was rightfully won, is being slowly but surely stolen away from Israel and for this reason the nations will come under God’s judgment. But that is for the future to handle. In Abram’s time, the war booty was acknowledged as his.

**²² But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth,
²³ that I *will take* nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that *is yours*, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich’—
²⁴ except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.”**

Instead of exercising his right to the spoils of war, Abram made a vow to “the Possessor of heaven and earth,” meaning the One true Creator God, that he wouldn’t accept anything personally from the king of Sodom.

By using the same term about God that Melchizedek used – the Possessor of heaven and earth – he was acknowledging in front of the king of Sodom that the same God whom Melchizedek was loyal to was the God that he also was loyal too.

In his vow – which he made by an uplifted hand – Abram said he wouldn’t accept anything, from a thread to a sandal strap. The Hebrew word for thread – *khut* – was something women used to tie up their hair. A sandal strap was used by men to secure their sandals. He was saying he wouldn’t take even the smallest thing that belonged to a man or woman, from their head to their feet.

The only thing that would he would accept is what his soldiers had eaten along the way to, during, and coming back from the battle. Along with that, there were three Amorites who went with him to defeat the enemies and Abram allowed them to decide to take whatever they wanted.

There are probably three good reasons why he didn’t accept anything for his efforts. First is that Sodom was notoriously wicked and he didn’t want to have anything of theirs simply because of the principle of “guilt by association.”

Secondly, he received his nephew back alive and he was surely grateful to God for that. And thirdly, he had received Melchizedek's blessing. This was something of far greater value than any earthly goods.

If you look at what Abram did here, it should be a life lesson to us all, especially Abram's – "guilt by association" and the perception others would draw from it.

If you're looking to get into a business deal or accept anything from someone else, it's always important to have the highest moral ethics, especially when you bear the name of Christ Jesus.

As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6 –

"All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."

And when speaking to Titus about giving instructions to church members he said this-

"Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded,⁷ in all things showing yourself *to be* a pattern of good works; in doctrine *showing* integrity, reverence, incorrupt-tibility,⁸ sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you." -Titus 2:6-8

Despite the way the media portrays Christians, throughout the Bible – Old Testament and New – we are shown that living lives of integrity and holiness are the hallmarks of being faithful and obedient children of God.

And that brings me to the point where I'd like to share with you the way of becoming a child of God. Let me take a couple minutes and explain to you why Jesus came and why it's important to you.

Abram's Meeting with Melchizedek

The king of Sodom went out to the valley of Shaveh
To meet Abram after his return from the defeat of the eastern kings
And there Melchizedek over bread and wine, a blessing he did say
In the name of God Most High he accomplished priestly things

And Melchizedek blessed Abram, and this he said
Blessed be Abram of God Most High
Possessor of heaven and earth, our heavenly Head
Yes, he is the Creator of the earth and sky

And blessed be God Most High too
Who has delivered your enemies into the hand of you

And Abram gave him a tithe of all the spoil
All gained in war through the battle's toil

Now the king of Sodom to Abram said
Just give me my people and all the spoil you shall keep
But Abram declined as he shook his head
He knew his integrity was worth more than goats and sheep

I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High
Yes my hand to the Possessor of heaven and earth
I will take nothing from you be it low or be it high
Nothing here to me contains that much worth

You will never be able to say to a friend or to your brother
I have made Abram rich, yes, it was me and not another

Just what the young men have eaten
And the portion of the men who were with me too
All my gain comes from God's blessing and not from a'cheatin'
But let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre have what they wish from you

Let us remember Abram's example and trust in God, not in man
For the many blessings we receive each and every day
Let us praise Him for these blessings as oft as we can
And from our mouths, let us continually say

"Great and awesome God
In Your light I will trod
Thank you for all good things
To You my heart forever sings"

Above all I thank You for my Lord Jesus
Whose precious life He gave for us

And so in His glorious name I say
All of my praises to You, each and every day

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 15:1-6 **(THE SOURCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS)**

Introduction: I don't know how many of you have ever taken the time to tell someone about Jesus, but there are a million ways to get started. Once you do, it's good to watch their eyes and body motion and gauge whether your words are having an effect. If not, then you need to change tact.

Some people already know they're messed up. Usually all they need is to be told how to get right with God. You simply tell them of His grace, mercy, and love and explain the path to salvation from the book of Romans.

Others have the "I" problem. When you ask them, "Why should God allow you into heaven?" the first thing they say is "I." "I'm a pretty good guy." "I try to be good to others." "I'm not as bad as this person or that." If you hear the word "I" it is a sure sign that they are much further away from God than they realize.

In this case, you need to give them the law – God's standard. You need to explain His righteousness, His justice, His standard of morality and then show how they measure up against that. When a person, no matter how good they think they are, is measured against perfect holiness, there is nothing left but condemnation.

Jesus says that we are to be perfect just as our heavenly Father is perfect. And yet it's not possible for us to do. When we start doing things in an attempt to merit His favor, we actually move further away from Him because we start trusting in our own deeds. This actually becomes a source of idolatry and further separates us.

In a similar manner, when we give any other reason – and I mean any other reason – than Jesus Christ as our justification for being suitable for heaven, then we are actually making ourselves out to be gods. We have now replaced God's word and His decision with our own decision. Any person on earth who claims they will be saved – for any other reason than Jesus Christ's work – is actually committing blasphemy against God.

Today, we'll discover the Source of righteousness and how to obtain it. When we do, we can confidently say that we have access to heaven and God's eternal home.

Text Verse: *"Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness,
You who seek the LORD:*

*Look to the rock from which you were hewn,
And to the hole of the pit from which you were dug.
² Look to Abraham your father,
And to Sarah who bore you;
For I called him alone,
And blessed him and increased him.” Isaiah 51:1, 2*

Today we'll look to our father Abraham and learn to follow the true path to righteousness and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Our Shield and Our Exceedingly Great Reward

Over the last two weeks, we went through Genesis 14 which concerned the battle between the four kings of the east and the five kings of Canaan. It was during this battle that the kings of the east took Lot captive and carried him off toward their home.

But when Abram heard about it, he took his own men and chased after them, defeated them, and rescued Lot and everything he had. When he returned, he was met by Melchizedek, the King of Salem.

He also was offered the booty of the war he won, but returned it to the king of Sodom instead. This is where the account ended and it brings us to Chapter 15.

¹After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision...

This is the first time that the Bible says, “the word of the LORD came,” meaning that Lord has revealed Himself through His word. In the Bible there are several ways in which God revealed Himself.

Sometimes he came through a personal appearance, sometimes by an audible voice, sometimes by visions – either when awake or when asleep, sometimes through an angel, and sometimes by the Spirit of God clothing or moving a person. When these things happened, and however they happened, it is the word of the Lord which was being given and it is therefore a part of His very nature.

The word of the Lord reveals the Lord. Today, we have the word of the Lord which was, as the book of Jude clearly explains, “Once for all delivered to the saints.” In other

words, if you want to know the word of the Lord, go to your local bookstore, get a Bible, and read it. God has delivered His message to you through its pages.

¹ con't **saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram. I *am* your shield, your exceedingly great reward."**

Al tira Abram, anokhi magen lakh, sekhareykha harbeh meod.

In the Hebrew I just read, the word "I" is stated separately instead of being combined with another word. What this means is that the "I" to Abram is emphatic, I am your shield,,,, I am your exceedingly great reward.

The question that I'm sure each of you just asked yourselves, being the greatest congregation in the whole wide world, is "Why would the Lord say this emphatically to Abram?" "What does Abram have to fear and what reward should he anticipate?"

There are two things tied up in what the Lord says to him. First, being a "shield" means that He is the Protector from harm. Second, being an "exceedingly great reward" means that He is the giver of all that is good.

There are probably a few reasons why Abram needed to be protected from harm. First, he'd just defeated the four kings of the east and he may have worried that the people from there might gather an even greater force together to come and try to kill him because of his triumph.

He also was living in the land of Canaan and the people of the land might simply try to take what he had because he was becoming blessed more and more as time passed by. It's the jealousy factor that we see in the world to this day.

There are people who don't have who want to take from people that do have; along with blessing will often come jealousy. We see it in our society between individuals and we see it between societies too. People who don't have will thief and steal to get what isn't theirs and what they don't deserve.

There are also reasons why Abram would need to be promised all that is good. When living in the world, good and bad are often so inextricably tied together that when we get something good, it is inevitably tied to something which is or will turn out as bad.

In the previous chapter, Abram turned down all of the spoils of the war he won simply because he understood this very lesson. If he took the spoils, which would have

benefitted him a great deal, it would have ended in something bad because others could claim that the wickedness of Sodom is where his wealth came from. It would be like getting rich by being the lawyer for the mob.

From the Lord though comes infinite goodness and there is nothing less than good that comes from Him. This is why the Lord promises to be his shield and his exceedingly great reward. In this one verse then is both something tangible and something that transcends creation and reaches into the eternal and spiritual realm.

This verse is the first real hint which leads to the term which is finally found towards the end of the Old Testament in the book of Jeremiah, “The Lord our Righteousness.” It is He who redeems us from death – the shield, and He who grants us eternal life – the exceedingly great reward.

If you’re a Christian, then as we’ll look at more closely in a minute, you’re Abraham’s seed and heir. If there’s a better verse to start a sermon than chapter 15, verse 1, I can’t imagine it. Here we are, 4000 years after the time of Abram and the very promise which we just read, in essence, applies to us today.

The promise stands because it is God’s promise, spoken by His own mouth. The Lord Himself is our shield and our exceedingly great reward.

² But Abram said, “Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”

In this verse is something for all of you to notice and learn from. This is the first time in the Bible that the term “Adonai” is used. If you’ll take the time to look at verse 1, it will say “LORD” with all capital letters. In this verse, it is translated “Lord” with one capital and three small letters. There is one more “lord” used in the Old Testament which is with all small letters.

LORD with all capitals is translated from the divine name – Jehovah or Yahweh. Lord with a capital and three small letters is Adonai. This is always speaking about the Lord, but it doesn’t use His name out of respect. The lord, which is in all small letters is speaking of a human.

It’s important to know these for several reasons, but for now, just remember that all caps is the divine name. A cap and three small letters is speaking about the Lord or to the Lord without using His name, and all small is speaking of someone like “mister.” As

you're reading the Bible, take notice of these differences and you will better understand what is going on.

Abram, using the term Adonai, indicates that he knows he is speaking to the Creator God and yet, what may seem incredible is that he asks "what will you give me, seeing I go childless?"

This isn't a question lacking faith though. Instead, it is demonstrating the high importance placed on having a child and not someone merely born in, or in charge of his house.

To help you understand this thought, imagine God appearing to me and saying, "Do not fear Charlie, I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward." Maybe I'd say, "But Adonai, what will You give me, seeing as how I only have a teeny church on the beach, and we don't know if from week to week it's going to get rained out or not?"

Am I lacking faith in the question, or am I making an obvious statement that all I have is a teeny church on the beach and that I have no idea if from week to week it's going to get rained out.

The very fact that I'm calling Him Adonai means that I understand that He is sovereign and the supreme Governor of all that happens. He is the One who will take care of every matter concerning my present and my future welfare and His personal glory.

The Lord already knows I want to be a preacher and the Lord already knows Abram wants a child. The Lord is in charge of whether I get four walls or not, and He is in charge of whether Abram will get a child or not.

And guess what! Adonai is also in charge of everything you both want and need. He knows already what you will get, and if there is a promise to you, He will fulfill it.

And if there is a desire of your heart, tell it to Him plainly. "Lord, Adonai, I really want to be a preacher and I really want to be able to afford to eat and pay my bills as a preacher. But this is Your world, this is Your word, and these are Your people. Direct my steps and fill my needs according to Your wisdom."

³ Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!"

As Matthew Henry says so beautifully, “Though we must never complain of God, yet we have leave to complain to him.” A complaint isn’t a lack of faith. A complaint is that state of mind that says, “I am unhappy with how things are going.”

I complain all the time... I’m what you might call a whiner. And God hears every one of my sniffing little whines. My wife hears most of them too. I’m not sure why I complain to either of them. God already knows what I’m not happy with and my wife usually can’t do anything about the things I’m unhappy about.

But there is something about complaining that helps **us** unpackage the very frustration that we’re feeling. This might be what Abram is doing here. He’s feeling unhappy about not having a child, even after the Lord promised that his descendants will inherit the land.

By telling the Lord that he hasn’t been given any offspring, he’s looking at the other options available – which in this case is that someone born in his own house is currently his heir. He may be asking if in fact he should formally adopt Eliezer as his son.

Then Charlie said, “Adonai, you have given me no building; indeed it’s supposed to rain tomorrow morning!” And Adonai said, “It’ll all work out the way it should, Charlie.”

II. The Source of Righteousness

⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.”

Abram is now given the promise of a son from his own body. It won’t be an adopted son, a son of his house – meaning a servant, nor will it be a female. Abram is promised a son by the word of the Lord. When the Lord speaks, it will come to pass.

⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

Before I give my thoughts on here, I want to read you what Google Answers says about how many visible stars there are in the sky –

“You can’t count the stars directly. Due to the rotation of the earth,

more keep appearing on one side and disappearing from the other. As atmospheric conditions change, some stars become visible and some become invisible. Instead, people look through a tube, count the stars in that field of view, and scale that figure up to obtain an estimate for the total. If you want a specific number, The Yale Bright Star Catalog catalogs the “naked eye visible stars,” which they consider to be those with a magnitude of 6.5 or brighter. Those have been catalogued and listed, and there are 9110 entries in that list. But if you want to see all of them, you'll need ideal conditions: good eyes, several high altitude viewpoints in different parts of the earth, a moonless night, no aurora, and air that is absolutely still, clear, and dry.”

So a complete counting of all the stars in the visible sky, from every vantage point on earth is 9110 stars. Taken in context, this seems to make the promise suspicious and less than reasonable.

However, this is with the exception of the fact that it’s actually impossible to count this number at any one time, which would make the number unknown anyway. Because of this, there are both difficulties and possibilities, based on if you are a Bible believer or a Bible pessimist.

But I’d like to propose a possibility concerning this verse which might answer both dilemmas and actually point to the Person of Jesus at the same time. But mind you, this is so far from any other commentary that you should probably take it with a grain of salt.

The Lord took Abram outside and said,

^{5(cont)}“**Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.”**
And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.”

But in just a couple verses it’s going to say this – “Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram...”

This certainly implies that when the Lord was speaking to Abram about the stars it was during the daytime, not the nighttime. So in my mind, there are only two possibilities to answer this dilemma. The first is what comes from verse 1, “The word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision.”

The vision then showed Abram a display of the heavens that was beyond what we see with our naked eye. In other words, he saw what we get to see today with the Hubble

telescope. “I am the Creator of all of this. As immense as is this universe that I have made is as sure as the promise which I am giving to you.”

This is unlikely though because we wouldn't have the same reference as Abram. It would be mixing apples with oranges.

The second possibility, and the one I favor, is that Abram was taken outside **during the day** and told to count the stars if he could do so – which he couldn't because the number was hidden from him. “But Lord, I can't count them – it's daytime... it's beyond my ability to even try. I know they're there and in an astonishing number, but to count that number would be impossible.”

And the Lord's answer – “Just as impossible as it is for you to count them, so shall your descendants be.” But... if this is the case there is something veiled to the eyes of Abram but which is revealed later in the Bible. There actually is one star visible in the daytime sky – and that is our sun.

Abram, nor anyone else for eons, knew that the sun was just one of many stars, but the Lord did. In asking Abram to number the stars, He was giving him an impossible task and yet he was pointing to the ultimate heir of the promise – Jesus Christ. Is this possible?

In Malachi 4:2, the last page of the Old Testament, Jesus is called the Sun of Righteousness. No, Abram couldn't count the stars in the sky because it was daytime and during the daytime the sun is so brilliant that it blocks out all the other stars from view.

They are there, but they're hidden because of the sun's surpassing glory. And here we are, the children of Abraham in a number so vast it can't be counted, and above all of us – in surpassing glory – is the Son of Righteousness... Jesus Christ.

I won't be dogmatic on any of the possibilities. No matter what, the number is ultimately a number beyond comprehension, but I do think that the possibility I've given isn't just likely, but more than probable.

And this leads us directly to the last verse from Genesis 15 today –

⁶ And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

Abram believed in the Lord, and He, the Lord, accounted it to him for righteousness. What needs to happen for the rest of today's sermon is to define "righteousness" and then show where this quality stems from. By doing this, we will see that this verse, Genesis 15:6, is the principle key in our relationship with God.

This is only the second time in the Bible that being righteous is mentioned when speaking of a person. The first time was of Noah and it says he was righteous in his generation, but today is the first time that righteousness is said to be bestowed upon someone and it is done so because of his simple faith – His belief in the incredible.

The word "righteous" is mentioned 555 times in the Bible and we could spend eons evaluating each instance, but what I will do to keep things short today, is to quote you once from Jeremiah, once from Revelation, and then read you Paul's thoughts on Genesis 15 as are written in Galatians chapter 3.

In Jeremiah, we see the term Yahweh Tzidkednu, or – The Lord our Righteousness. This is Jeremiah 23:5, 6 –

"Behold, *the* days are coming," says the LORD,
"That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness;
A King shall reign and prosper,
And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.
⁶In His days Judah will be saved,
And Israel will dwell safely;
Now this *is* His name by which He will be called:
THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

In the Old Testament, if you look closely, righteousness stems from the Lord, not from us. He gives certain parameters by which a person can be considered righteous, but as Paul will explain, we fail to meet these parameters and therefore righteousness cannot come from us, but must be granted externally.

In Revelation 19, right there at the end of the New Testament, we read this in verses 7 and 8 –

"Let us rejoice and exult, and give him glory; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. ⁸And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright [and] pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints."

Most versions state that the fine linen given to these saints is the “righteous deeds” of the saints, but this is incorrect. It is the righteousness of the saints – it is a righteousness which comes not from our deeds, but from the Lord Jesus and faith in His deeds.

This might seem like splitting hairs, but it’s not. It is the fundamental distinction between Christianity and all other religions. The Christian is declared righteous, as Abram was, by faith alone. When that faith is exercised, a person is declared righteous and stands justified before God.

III. If By the Law

Paul, on several occasions in his writings, states that righteousness is an imputed righteousness and that our deeds have no merit in obtaining it. In fact, in Galatians 3, he very clearly explains how the Law of Moses fails to bestow righteousness upon us.

And so today, I’m going to read you Galatians 3 and explain it without getting into any great detail. Why Galatians 3? Because in this chapter, Paul uses Genesis 15:6 as a basis for the source of righteousness. To understand what happens to us when we exercise faith, we need to understand what happened to Abram.

¹ O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?

² This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

⁴ Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed *it was* in vain?

⁵ Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—

⁶ just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” [GEN 15:6]

⁷ Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” [GEN 12:3]

⁹ So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” [DEUT 27:26]

- ¹¹ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” [HAB 2:4]
- ¹² Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.” [LEV 18:5]
- ¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree”), [DEUT 21:23]
- ¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.
- ¹⁵ Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though *it is* only a man’s covenant, yet *if it is* confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.
- ¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. [GEN 12:7]
- ¹⁷ And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect.
- ¹⁸ For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise.
- ¹⁹ What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator.
- ²⁰ Now a mediator does not *mediate* for one *only*, but God is one.
- ²¹ *Is* the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.
- ²² But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.
- ²³ But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.
- ²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.
- ²⁵ But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.
- ²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.
- ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
- ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
- ²⁹ And if you *are* Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise. -Galatians 3:1-29

Now that we've determined the Source of righteousness, please allow me just a couple minutes to explain how you can appropriate that for yourself and stand right before God...

Abram – Declared Righteous by Faith

After Abram's great battle to rescue Lot
And then meeting Melchizedek next
A vision from the Lord Abram got
And at first he seemed a bit perplexed

The Lord appeared to him and told him this
Do not be afraid Abram, I am your shield
Your exceedingly great reward, so don't dismiss
What I tell you, great riches it will yield

But Abram said, "Lord God, what will you give me?"
Seeing as I continue without a child
I have no offspring as you can see
By your words, I feel interestingly beguiled

The heir of my house is this guy Eliezer
The one from Damascus will inherit my razor
Indeed one born in my house is my heir
He'll inherit everything, from my camel to my chair

And behold, the word of the Lord came to him saying
Nope, this one shall not be your heir
I know about this you have been praying
And from your own body, a son will come – do not despair

Then He brought Abram outside and said
"Look now toward heaven, count the stars if you can"
Close your eyes and try counting them in your head
It's something impossible for any man

And He said to Abram who was waiting to hear
"Thus shall your descendants be, so don't you fear."

And Abram believed the Lord and the promise he made
And to him righteousness was granted for his belief
From this one act came an eternal trade
And fallen man was given the hope of relief

Coming from Abram would be the Savior to all
The Messiah of the world who would give His life
So that to anyone that on His name would call
Would come to the end of all turmoil and strife

Peace with God, righteousness bestowed
By faith alone, nothing else owed

Such is the nature of God towards man
All He asks is faith in the things He has done
A little bit of faith is the heart of the plan
Because through faith in Jesus, the victory is won

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 15:7-21 **(THE LORD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM)**

Introduction: The Bible is full of stories about people, places, and circumstances. As we read it, we can often get so caught up in the story that we forget about what the purpose of it is and why it was placed in the Bible.

We all have a million stories about our own lives too. Although some of us are boring, just like some of the boring people in the Bible. And some of us live super duper exciting lives, just like the super duper exciting people mentioned in the Bible. The difference though is that they are in the Bible and we're not.

God has chosen these people and real events in their lives, boring or exciting, to help us understand what He is doing and why. Eventually, we'll get to the book of Leviticus and we'll be going through page after page of what seems repetitious, complicated, outdated, and to many people, downright uninteresting.

I've noticed time and again people start reading the Bible from Genesis, all excited about the challenge. The reading is easy and things go quickly. But after a few weeks, I stop hearing from them. I know they've gotten through some of Exodus and have quit.

The reason is that they don't understand the need for all of the things that are placed there and they fall back on, "Well, I know Jesus loves me... that's good enough for me." In one respect, that's true. But in another, it's the farthest thing from reality for the believer. Understanding what the Bible is trying to tell us is like understanding your computer better.

As long as you have the basics and the computer is working fine – "Well, I have the internet... that's good enough for me." Most people are content with that – "I have Facebook, a site with the weather radar, some news sites... I'm good." But when things stop working, then trouble begins.

And just like that, when things in your life stop going well, suddenly "Jesus loves me" doesn't seem enough. It didn't stop being true, but now you need to evaluate the process a lot more to understand why bad things are happening to the one Jesus loves.

There are a couple ways to do this. One is to ask your pastor, if you have one. He can brush you up on the whole, "It'll work out ok" thing. Or, you can post your troubles on

Facebook and hope people will keep saying nice things to make the problems fade away. Maybe you can post on a prayer group and the problems will disappear because people are praying for you.

Once again though – the pastor could be wrong. Most pastors disagree on even minor points of doctrine. How much more in the important issues that affect your “Jesus loves me” thinking? The people on Facebook are eventually going to get tired of saying nice things to you all day.

If you’re a constant bummer... well, no one wants to be around a constant bummer. And prayer groups are fine, but believe me – most people who promise to pray for you probably don’t and those who do may not even be saved.

I have news for you, if someone isn’t saved, they can pray all day and all night for you and the prayers are wasted breath. The Bible tells us that the prayers of the unrighteous are an abomination to God. If you think I’m kidding –

One who turns away his ear from hearing the law,
Even his prayer *is* an abomination. Proverbs 28:9

So what are you to do when your computer stops working? You figure out the problem, fix it, and get back to your computing. And when your life is having troubles, if you’re smart, you’ll say “I know where the answer is” and you’ll pull out your Bible, which you are already familiar with because you read it every day, and you refresh your memory about how to handle the problem.

Text Verse: *Those who fear You will be glad when they see me,
Because I have hoped in Your word.*

*⁷⁵ I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are right,
And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me. Psalm 119:74, 75*

Yes, we may have afflictions as faithful Christians, but those afflictions are because God is building us up in character and reliance on Him. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. How Shall I know, Lord

Today we’re going to look at a most unusual ritual recorded in the Bible. It’s called “cutting a covenant” and its significance is not to be taken lightly. Before we get into our

first verse of the day, let's read the first 6 verses of chapter 15 that we went over last week –

¹ After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not be afraid, Abram. I *am* your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”

² But Abram said, “Lord GOD, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house *is* Eliezer of Damascus?” ³ Then Abram said, “Look, You have given me no offspring; indeed one born in my house is my heir!”

⁴ And behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.” ⁵ Then He brought him outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” ⁶ And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

-Genesis 15:1-6

In these verses we discovered once again, the very Source of righteousness for the people of the world – the imputed righteousness of God which comes by faith in His promises and in what He has and will accomplish for His people.

When we get to those “tough to understand why they're there verses” in the Bible, we will be able to look back at Chapter 15 of Genesis and understand better that whatever these things mean, the problem has already been resolved for Abraham and so it must be resolvable for us too. And it will be.

All we need to do is finish up by reading the New Testament and then we'll see the larger picture,,, which leads us right back to Chapter 15 of Genesis. We are righteous by faith. But we will understand it more clearly because we will see that it is faith in Jesus and what He did. Genesis 15 is just looking forward to that.

Hold on to this knowledge I'm giving you right now, because the law and all of its tedious sacrifices and demands does serve a purpose. God doesn't waste breath or words. Every thing He says is for the purpose of revealing the greatness of Himself and the marvelous workings of Jesus Christ our Lord.

We will see that righteousness before God cannot come from us because we're already fallen and we are already separated from Him. We've learned this in Genesis chapter 3 and will continue to learn it until the last pages of the Bible. Only by an imputation of righteousness can we hope to be reconciled to God.

This “justification by faith alone” must be emphasized because if we somehow believe that what we do plays a part in our righteousness, we deny the perfect justice of the Lord and destroy the only basis by which we came before Him clean and forgiven.

If God were to declare us just and righteous based on our deeds, then Jesus was lying when He said in Matthew 5:48 “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Our deeds are already tainted with imperfection. So how can we be perfect, just as our Father in heaven is perfect? By faith alone.

I’ll explain this later, but remember that God declared Abram righteous simply by believing God. Therefore, it is faith in what God has promised and what God has done that made him righteous.

7 Then He said to him, “I am the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.”

In verse 5 we read, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” And then in verse 6 it says, “And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”

Nothing else is recorded here specifically because nothing else happened. God made a promise and Abram had faith in that promise – “Righteous...You are now righteous.” After crediting Abram with righteousness based on his faith alone the Lord now reminds him of who He is – “I am the LORD.”

“I am the self-existent Creator who spoke the universe into being. I heat the day with the sun and I call the stars into brightness at night. I am the LORD - Jehovah, the God of Power and Perfection.”

“I am also the one who saved you out of the greedy flame of hell when I called you from Ur of the Chaldeans. And not only did I call you, but I brought you – I carried you on eagle’s wings from the place of fire and destruction to this land...the land of your inheritance. I have brought you this far and I will be with you and guide you always.”

The Lord glories in what he has accomplished as both an act of power and of grace. Yes, Abram got on his donkey with his family and headed out, but it is the Lord who both told him to do so and who ensured he’d make it safely to the Promised Land.

And when He speaks about the land, He doesn't just say that He would give it to him, but that He would give it to him as an inheritance. This is the surest title to the action and we see that the providential hand of God has secret and yet gracious intents in all that He does.

Abram is a picture of us and the Lord is repeating what He has done to show us what He will do. We as humans stand in flames, represented by Ur where Abram was called from, and we are called out and brought out of those flames by the same God.

We can't conceive of the great workings of God until the events have come to pass and only then do we see what He was driving at. How many of you here have called on Christ. Before it came, did you see it coming? In my case I never could have imagined what God would do until it was done.

And every moment of history unfolds in the same way. It's all leading to an end which will be far more wonderful than even the promise to Abram. In what is only a picture of what's ahead, God uses Abram to show us of even greater glory to come.

⁸ And he said, "Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?"

The Lord just got done telling Abram of everything He's done for him so far and what He will do in the time ahead. And He's told it to him in a single concise and yet perfectly full explanation. This brings about Abram's obvious question – "Adonai God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?"

I mean, he's standing there speaking to God who has already fulfilled the first half of what He's said. Of course he should wonder about the rest. "Jesus, you said that you would forgive me if I called on you. And sure enough, you forgave me.

You've also promised that You would never leave me nor forsake me... How can I know this is true?"

It's the constant battle of believing God in what has been done while at the same time wondering if He's capable of following through on the rest. In Abram's case though, this shouldn't be seen as a question of doubt. Instead, he's looking for a confirmation of his faith which has already been expressed in the promise.

At other times in the Bible, people have asked God for a sign. In Judges 6, Gideon asked the Lord for one. Let's read it –

³⁶ So Gideon said to God, “If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said— ³⁷ look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and *it is* dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.” ³⁸ And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water. ³⁹ Then Gideon said to God, “Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.” ⁴⁰ And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground. -Judges 6:36-40

King Hezekiah of Israel was given a promise from the Lord and he also asked for a sign. And in Isaiah 7, the Lord spoke a promise to King Ahaz and then offered a sign to confirm His word.

Asking God for a sign isn't sinful, but demanding one is. And there is a difference. God has stated that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit the moment we believe in Christ. This is how God has spoken this truth to us –

In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:13, 14

We have every assurance this is true because God spoke it in His word. We can ask God for a sign if we wish. If He provides it, that is His prerogative, and if not, so be it. However, there are churches and seminaries which demand a sign such as speaking in tongues.

If you don't speak in tongues, then according to them you haven't been baptized into the Holy Spirit, which is both contradictory to the Bible and is a demand upon God. This is both presumptuous and sinful.

Abram has asked for a sign and the Lord agreed to give him one –

⁹ So He said to him, “Bring Me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”

In response to a request for a sign, the Lord tells Abram to bring five animals to Him. The heifer, goat, and ram are all three years old, meaning that they are fully grown and in the prime of life.

Abram might have expected a sign from heaven, like speaking in tongues, but God gives him a sign by requesting that he bring what he already had in his possession.

A good lesson here is that if you want to speak in tongues, go to language school and learn your Hebrew, Greek, Japanese, Korean, Russian, or whatever and then offer it to the Lord.

If you want the assurance of God's favor then attend to the things which will result in that favor. Only then can you expect to meet with God in and through them.

¹⁰ Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds in two.

The Bible doesn't say that God told Abram to do this. Instead, he just did it. This means that he already understood what was coming and how to get ready for it. The sign of God's promise is the confirmation of the covenant and it is accomplished in a manner he was already familiar with.

Instead of the innocence of youth found in later animal sacrifices during the temple times in Israel, these animals are fully grown and this indicates the mature and accountable decision of the coming sign. This sign will be binding to the point of death as is evidenced by the animals which Abram slaughters.

¹¹ And when the vultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

Abram is standing there waiting for the confirmation of the covenant and, as happens with dead animals, birds of prey came down on them. In order to maintain their purity and keep them from being defiled, Abram chases them away.

Are you going to learn from this verse? As Christians, we're waiting on the final completion of our covenant – made at the high cost of the life of God's own Son. As we wait, we are called "living sacrifices" by Paul. Here's how he puts it –

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

-Romans 12:1

The problem though is that as we wait on the Lord, the unclean birds of the world – our own impure thoughts and actions – fight against the holy sacrifice.

They come down and try to pollute our lives with wrong living and a morally impure lifestyle. But God has shown us that we need to chase these unclean birds away and wait quietly upon the Lord in holiness and purity.

II. Know With Certainty

How shall I know, Lord? Know with certainty...

¹² Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror *and* great darkness fell upon him.

This is an almost spooky verse to read and think about. The sun is going down, a deep sleep falls on Abram, and at the same time there is horror and great darkness in his mind. The word for “deep sleep” is found only 7 times in the Bible and the last time we saw it is when God put Adam to sleep in order to take out one of his ribs and make a wife for him.

The deep sleep, the setting of the sun, and the horror and darkness are being used to show the supernatural nature of the darkness and sleep and to set up a distinction between this vision and a regular dream. The reason for the horror and darkness is given next.

¹³ Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years.

Earlier Abram asked, “How shall I know?” And in response to his question, the Lord said to him, “Know certainly.” When you have questions of the Lord, as we all do, it’s only right to ask Him, “How shall I know?” And His response to you is the same as it is to Abram here – “Know certainly.”

After saying this, He speaks His word to Abram and expects Abram to believe it. And He

has also spoken His word to you and He expects you to believe it. How can you know? Read your Bible. It is God's word spoken to you as surely as he spoke to Abram.

The horror and darkness that Abram experienced are given to show him what it will be like for his descendants during a time of affliction. It's an important verse to remember because many people who study their Bible have misinterpreted this verse and one other in Exodus to mean that the Israelites would be in Egypt for 430 years. However, this isn't the case at all.

This 400 year period is speaking of Abram's descendants, from the birth of Isaac to the time of the Exodus. Israel was actually only in Egypt for 215 years, not 400. If you want to save yourself the hard work, I've already done it and have it on my website on a page called "Dwelling in Egypt."

¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions.

This is specifically speaking about the time in Egypt and the judgment they would receive, but it is not all inclusive of the previous verse. Rather the people of Israel were strangers in both Canaan and Egypt during the 400 period.

After their time in Egypt, as we'll see in the future, the Israelites will plunder the Egyptians and will come out with a great amount of wealth. Much of this wealth will be used by the people to build the tabernacle where God would meet with them, but some would be used to build a golden calf in place of God.

Having great possessions often leads to great mistakes. Only when we use our wealth properly is it of any true benefit to ourselves. God's gifts may be a blessing, but we can use them in ways which bring a curse.

¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.

Abram has been given the promise of a long life and a peaceful death. We'll see that in the end, he will live to be 175 years old and he will go to his grave in peace. Unfortunately for us, we have to wait to see how our end will come about.

Because of this, it's right that we live each day as best we can and spend our time focusing on living for the Lord. Any moment could be our last and so every moment should be lived that way.

Implied in the words that he would "go to his fathers in peace" is that they still exist – in other words, the immortality of the soul. If this sounds like this is a stretch, consider two things.

First, God said it in a comforting manner. In other words, death without continued existence has no comfort for us and therefore continued existence is implied.

Secondly, Jesus said this to the people of Israel –

But even Moses showed in the *burning bush passage* that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' ³⁸ For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him."

-Luke 20:37, 38

Because God is eternal, all are alive to Him. He speaks of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the present tense. If the dead are raised and they are always alive to God, then they are always alive.

¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

There are several times in the Bible that we see the concept of sin heaping up in a land. As sins are committed, they reach a point where there is no longer a remedy for the people of the land and at that time they are destroyed. We see this here.

We also see it in the conduct, destruction, and exile of Israel twice in history, and we see it in the rise and fall of nations. It is a truth that simply can't be ignored. In Numbers 35 it's said as explicitly as could be possible –

"So you shall not pollute the land where you *are*; for blood defiles the land, and no atonement can be made for the land, for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it." -Numbers 35:33

As I've said so many times in the past, the crime of abortion is a crime of blood. There is no atonement for the land which sheds innocent blood except by the blood of those who shed it.

At the same time, in this verse is also an understanding of the mercy of God. If one sin of Adam was enough to condemn the entire human race, then we can see the immense mercy of God in allowing 400 years for the Amorites to live, enjoy life, and hopefully search for God and find Him.

Instead of destruction and immediately granting the promise to Abram, he allows His own chosen people to suffer trials while the inhabitants of Canaan are given the benefits of enjoying His land. Anyone who can't find God's wisdom, graciousness, and mercy in this verse has both a warped and a deviant sense of who God is.

In this one verse is found the foreknowledge of God, His sovereignty in administering the affairs of nations, His mercy in sparing morally corrupt people until there is no remedy for them, and His justice in exercising judgment,

Finally there is something that we will only see later in the Bible – that the Amorite is the chief nation among those in the land who will receive first and full judgment for their deviant living.

¹⁷ And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark, that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.

When the people of the Mideast joined in a pact, they'd follow the same rites as we see here – slaughter an animal, cut it in two and pass through the pieces. In order to validate His word in a way which Abram would understand, He followed this ancient practice.

However, Abram didn't pass through the pieces, only the Lord did. This means the promise is one-sided and unconditional. Abram isn't bound to anything, but the Lord binds Himself to the promise.

The significance of the animals being cut in two is that it signifies the penalty for failing to keep the covenant. This is the purpose of cutting a covenant... it is a binding action with the severest consequences for failing to live up to it.

The smoking oven and the burning torch represent the protection of the promise by God. The smoke represents the destruction of those who would afflict the people to whom the promise is made and the burning torch is the consuming fire which would bring about the destruction.

At the same time as being an instrument of destruction for the enemies of the promise, they are an instrument of protection and light for the people of the promise.

At the exodus, a similar manifestation of God will be seen which will lead the people out of bondage. And this manifestation will, at the same, bring destruction on Israel's enemies.

¹⁸ On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates—

¹⁹ the Kenites, the Kenezites, the Kadmonites,

²⁰ the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, ²¹ the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

Ten groups of people are listed here. The land they possess now will be given to Abram's descendants. The covenant is made, it is unconditional, and it is absolutely binding. What God has spoken will come to pass. The land is for Abram and his descendants.

Just so you know, God has also entered into a covenant with us. It is through the glory of His only begotten Son, Jesus. It is He, like the smoking oven and torch which passed through the animals, who passes between God and us.

Like Abram, we also have a sign – it is a deposit, it is a guarantee of the good things promised for all believers. It is the sealing of the Holy Spirit. If you've never accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, let me explain how you can...

To Your Descendants I Give This Land

The Lord said to Abram, yes He did say
I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur
From the land of the Chaldeans where once you did stay
And this land I give you to inherit...that's for sure

And Abram being an especially inquisitive sort of man
Asked, "Lord God how shall I know that I will receive this from Your Hand?"
So the Lord said to Abram, yes, this He did say

"Bring me a heifer, a goat, and a ram each three years old
Also a turtledove and a young pigeon bring this way"
And Abram brought them all just as he was told

He cut them in two down the middle, piece opposite piece
But the birds he did not cut in two
As vultures came down on the carcasses Abram made them cease
He drove them away, yes, this thing he did do

Now as the sun was going down, he fell into a dark sleep
And the horror and darkness that came upon him was so deep

And the Lord said to Abram, "Know for sure what I say
Your descendants will be strangers in a land not their own
And they will serve them four hundred years from that day
But I will judge the nation they serve, my greatness will be shown"

They will come out with very many possessions
From the people who gave them so many oppressions

Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace
You will be buried when at a good old age your life will cease

In the fourth generation your people shall return here
For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete
And it came to pass as the night was drawing near
Abram saw something that probably raised him from his seat

Behold, a smoking oven and burning torch did appear
That passed between those pieces he had laid out
On the same day, the Lord made a covenant sincere
This promise left Abram without a single doubt

To your descendants I have given this land
Yes, it is a present from my gracious hand

And to this day He has been faithful to Abram's seed
They dwell in the Promised Land, yes even now
It is God's land to parcel out, so the nations should take heed
God promised it to them, He promised it with a vow

God keeps every promise, faithful is He
So don't worry about what will come, it will be ok
God sent His own Son just for you and for me
And He will finish his work in us, some glorious day

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 16:1-16 **(EL ROI – THE GOD WHO SEES)**

Japan is a country of great beauty and feeling. It's very different from the US and many of the things they do are quite foreign to our ideas about how things should be done. When I lived there, I made two friends not long after arriving – Minoru and Atsushi.

They worked at Fussa-dempo or the telecom in the town of Fussa. I used to go out with them or meet them at their work, or they'd come over and we hang out. One of the things I saw them do, and which I found out is the norm in Japan is that they would go out with their boss almost every night and buy him drinks at the bar.

And on holidays, they would buy him presents – not the other way around. In the US, we have special and not so nice terms we use for people that do it this way. But this is how things are done there.

Another thing that might seem a bit odd is that the cleaning ladies would walk right into the restroom and start cleaning the urinal right next to you as if you weren't there. They didn't knock or put up a sign that there was a lady in there.

There were all kinds of things like this that might seem nutty or odd to us, but that's just the way those things were. The problem wasn't with them, it was with us. We were in their culture and needed to adapt – not the other way around.

Today's sermon contains some things like this. They seem foreign, odd, and even down right sinful to many, but this isn't the way it was at all. It was a different culture with different views on the world and we need to understand that the things we think are wrong aren't always that way.

We are entering into their culture and we need to adapt to it or we'll end up finding fault where there is no fault.

Introduction: Some time ago, I said that if the Bible doesn't condemn an action, neither should we. Instead, we should accept it at face value and attempt to learn from it and not point fingers and act as if our values are so much more dignified.

The things we'll read about today are recorded for us to see how things transpired, why things are the way they are in the world even today, and how God's plan is being

accomplished in amazing ways – and all from people’s actions that often seem contrary to the way we may think things should have been done.

Text Verse: *Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. Romans 13:1, 2*

Sometimes submitting to authority is something we simply don’t want to do, especially when that authority is one that rules over us harshly. In times like these, we need to trust that God has placed us in that position for His own good purposes and we need to attempt to live under that premise to the extent that we will bring Him the glory and honor He’s due. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Different Culture, Different Time – Be Nice to Abram and Sarai

¹ Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him no *children*. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar.

Chapter 16 begins with the problem which has now afflicted Abram for right at 10 years – ever since he entered the Promised Land and was given the promise of his descendants possessing the land. He still has no children.

God made this promise to him in Genesis 12, 13, and 15 and the one in Genesis 15 is very specific –

“And behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, saying, “This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.”

-Genesis 15:4

It’s appropriate to note before we get into the coming verses that what was promised **doesn’t mention Sarai** at all. Let’s remember this as we go on in the story. At this point, Abram is now 85 and Sarai is 75. They’ve probably been married for at least 50 years and maybe even longer. It’s pretty evident to them that Sarai is barren and won’t have children.

Although the Bible doesn’t say this, we can make the logical assumption that the Egyptian maidservant came into Abram’s home at the time they were in Egypt.

If you remember what happened down there, Sarai was taken in to Pharaoh's home in order to become his wife. This happened because he didn't know Sarai was Abram's wife. When Pharaoh took her in, he gave Abram a great deal for her, including servants.

Hagar is probably one of those servants. After coming into their home, they named her Hagar as this is a Hebrew, not an Egyptian, name. Hagar's name means "flight" which is closely related to the term "the sojourner."

² So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the LORD has restrained me from bearing *children*. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai.

At seventy five, Sarai finally decided that she probably wasn't going to have children and she certainly wanted them as much as Abram expected them. He had been given a promise and she couldn't fulfill it, and so – using the customs of the day – she does the natural thing one would expect.

Hagar belonged to her, solely and entirely. She was her possession and anything that Hagar worked for or any children she had would be the possession of Sarai. Therefore, the child would belong to her as much as to Abram.

In what might seem even more unusual is the custom of the servant actually having her child in the lap of Sarai. By doing this, the child would symbolically be coming from her. Children born at this time came out while the woman was in a sitting position and so sitting in her lap would be just an added step in the process.

The term Sarai uses here when she said "perhaps I shall obtain children by her" is a word which means to build or lay a foundation. In other words, she's looking to establish the house of Abram through this union between him and Hagar.

After making the proposition to him, the Bible records "And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai." Ok,,, I'll do this difficult task for you my beauty...

³ Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan.

We can stand back and see in our minds what has happened here. Sarai certainly took Hagar by the hand and led her into Abram's tent and grabbed his hand and placed it on Hagar's. Thus the verse says she "gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife."

The two are joined in a rite that had probably been conducted many times in the land and would have been perfectly acceptable to everyone around them. It was a union without scandal.

The same thing happens in various cultures even to this day and we can't look down on them for it. We need to remember that it is their culture and their tradition. What we see as abnormal is, to them, a regular part of the society in which they live.

⁴So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

No sooner had Hagar conceived then she began to act harshly toward her mistress Sarai. She was probably much younger than her and thought she would now move into the presidential palace and move out the first lady because she now bore the child and would also find Abram's favor.

At this point in the narrative, most Bible scholars say that what's happening is a direct result of the mischief that had been conducted in the whole affair, as if there is blame on both Abram and Sarai for doing what they've done.

But this is a very poor analysis of the situation, particularly considering the culture and circumstances. The fault rests not in Abram or Sarai, but in Hagar's grabbing at the chance to usurp Sarai. And later in the Bible we see Solomon's words about this exact situation –

For three *things* the earth is perturbed,

Yes, for four it cannot bear up:

²² For a servant when he reigns,

A fool when he is filled with food,

²³ A hateful *woman* when she is married,

And a maidservant who succeeds her mistress. Proverbs 30:21-23

The earth simply cannot bear up under the injustice which has occurred because of Hagar's actions. Abram, as the head of the household will have to act judiciously in order to keep things from spiraling out of control.

II. Now Sarai, That's Just Not Nice

⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, “My wrong *be* upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The LORD judge between you and me.”

Sarai at this point is letting her emotions rule the day and she blames Abram for what's happening. According to the account, she is the one who initiated the action and set the entire thing up. Hagar is her property and at her disposal. But as soon as things go wrong, she turns around and blames him.

Truth be known, he probably didn't even know what was going on. Because Hagar is her maid, he would be completely uninterested in whatever they were doing. But in an almost hysterical note, Sarai exclaims “The Lord judge between you and me.”

Unfortunately, this is exactly the type of situation that causes grief in families, friendships, and even between nations. Instead of coming quietly and resolving a matter, we storm into situations with almost reckless abandon and end up paying for it in the end.

How Abram responds here will be really important because, as Proverbs says-

“A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger.” Proverbs 16:1

⁶ So Abram said to Sarai, “Indeed your maid *is* in your hand; do to her as you please.” And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.

Abram took the calm route and passed the matter right back to where it belonged. When he did, Sarai took it to an unnecessary extreme and caused even more trouble... Hagar fled.

Do you see the irony here? Abram allowed Sarai to go into the Egyptian Pharaoh's house in order to preserve his own life and when the ordeal was over, Pharaoh rebuked him and kicked him out of Egypt and so he heads home to Canaan.

Now Sarai asked Abram to go into the Egyptian servant who came from Pharaoh's house to continue on Abram's name and she ended up rebuking him and finally the maid runs away from her home, heading back towards Egypt.

In both instances, Abram is caught in the middle of a situation that was intended for good and which turned out to be a headache. Anyway, Abram did exactly the right thing. He handed it back to Sarai. Hagar is **her** maid, not his, and she needed to handle it.

There actually is a good life lesson for us here and something I need to be better at myself which is the proper delegation of authority. When something should be handled at a lower lever, then it needs to be sent back to that level.

If something isn't one's direct business, it needs to be sent to the right place to be handled. This will, in the end, save even more grief. Again to the Proverbs we go –

He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own Is like one who takes a dog by the ears. Proverbs 26:17

III. El Roi, The God Who Sees

⁷ Now the Angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.

This Angel is none other than the eternal Christ – our Lord Jesus. He has already appeared at other times and will continue to appear at specific intervals in the Bible. This is our Lord, directing human history which leads to Himself and all of which is intended to teach us spiritual lessons about His wonderful working in our lives.

As will happen time and time and time again in the Bible, it is by a spring or a well of water than many pivotal moments occur. This land is a dry and barren waste and water is precious.

Finding it in the open like this must have seen miraculous to her, but it points to the spiritual side of the account – that Jesus is our Water of Life and the director of our steps.

Abram, Isaac, Jacob, Rebekah, Rachel, Moses, Samson, Jesus

Having been brought into Abram's camp, she would have been familiar with his worship of God and this visitation would comfort her and assure her that the true life which springs from God would continue to uphold her.

⁸ And He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?” She said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.”

⁹ The Angel of the LORD said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.”

In this address, the Lord calls her as “Hagar, Sarai’s maid.” Before He allows her to speak, he preempts her by stating that she is the property of Sarai.

I’m guessing He did this and then asked His questions in order to keep her from saying something untrue. By telling her who she is and who she belongs to, He’s hinting that He already knows the whole story.

As parents, we do this quite often with our own children in an attempt to get them to fess up to the situation. It’s a way of building character while preempting someone from being caught in an unnecessary lie.

And in turn, because of the way He addressed her, she speaks honestly and without hiding anything – “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.” Because she acknowledged this openly and truthfully, He directly gives her His response – “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.”

Had he not appeared to Hagar like this, there would be a much less complete understanding of the doctrine of Divine Election and there would be a lack in our understanding of the Law versus Grace which Paul lays out in Galatians 3 & 4 and which uses Hagar and her son, who is yet to be born, as object lessons about the superiority of the ministry of Jesus over the Law of Moses.

After you’ve gone through the entire Bible and put together pieces like this, accounts which seem to have no real significance or purpose come into clarity of focus. God Himself is working out a plan and He is using these real people and their circumstances in the execution of that plan.

¹⁰ Then the Angel of the LORD said to her, “I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.”

I’m certain that this verse is placed here specifically to show us the superiority of the gospel of Jesus Christ over the Law of Moses. I said a minute ago that Hagar and Ishmael will be used as examples of this in the book of Galatians. They will be compared to the barren Sarai who will eventually have a child named Isaac.

Paul will compare Hagar and her son to the giving of the Law of Moses at Mount Sinai and also Jerusalem where that law was carried out through Israel – a law which Paul calls “bondage.”

He will then compare Sarai and her barren state to the work of Jesus and the Jerusalem which is above, which is freedom. After making this comparison, Paul will reach back to the words of Isaiah and say this –

For it is written: “Rejoice, O barren,
You who do not bear!
Break forth and shout,
You who are not in labor!
For the desolate has many more children
Than she who has a husband.” Galatians 4:27

The Lord promised Hagar that He would multiply her descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude. And yet, despite this vast number, it will be inconsequential to the multitude who will be received into God’s kingdom through the spiritual rebirth which comes by faith in Jesus.

¹¹ And the Angel of the LORD said to her:

**“Behold, you *are* with child,
And you shall bear a son.
You shall call his name Ishmael,
Because the LORD has heard your affliction.**

Ishamel means “God hears.” Again as has happened so many times and as will happen numerous times in the future, the explanation of a name is given in the very verse in which the name is given. The Lord has heard Hagar’s affliction and has responded.

I think anyone who has ever called on Jesus in their time of need could call out with confidence “Ishmael.” Once you’ve been through the valley of tears and poured out your heart to God, you know perfectly well when He responds that it was in the exact way you needed for the moment in which you were burdened.

As Matthew Henry so beautifully stated about this verse – “Even there, where there is little cry of devotion, the God of pity hears the cry of affliction: tears speak as well as prayers.”

**¹² He shall be a wild man;
His hand *shall be* against every man,
And every man's hand against him.
And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren."**

Here we have a comparison of Ishmael to a wild ass. The word for "wild man" is *pe-ray adam* which finds its comparison in the wild donkey. He will be against every man and constantly fighting with them and he will live in the presence or in the face of his brothers.

And 4000 years later, the sons of Ishmael who inhabit the world still fit this description. Ishmael is the son of Abraham that the Arab world traces its ancestry and culture to. What an apt description of much of the Arab world today. Job makes this comparison about the wild ass which fits them even now –

⁵ "Who set the wild donkey free?
Who loosed the bonds of the onager,
⁶ Whose home I have made the wilderness,
And the barren land his dwelling?
⁷ He scorns the tumult of the city;
He does not heed the shouts of the driver.
⁸ The range of the mountains *is* his pasture,
And he searches after every green thing. -Job 39:5-8

**¹³ Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees;
for she said, "Have I also here seen Him who sees me?"**

One thing we can't do without taking trouble into our own hands is to assign names to God. To assign a name to someone is to claim a type of ownership over that person. To name a baby is granted to the one who will raise the baby. To name a business is directly the choice of the principle owner. It can be delegated as a sign of favor, like to one's wife though, "Honey, you choose the name."

To name God is not within our right or authority and we need to be careful not to be presumptuous like this. In this instance though, Hagar – an Egyptian, is given the grace of bestowing upon Him a name which not only was accepted, but which is recorded for us today. She said, "You are El-Roi." You are the God who sees.

After saying this, she says something that is very difficult to understand in the Hebrew and is therefore translated many ways by various translators.

It is a type of verse that the translators of the King James Version would say, "...it hath pleased God in his divine providence, here and there to scatter words and sentences of that difficulty and doubtfulness ... that fearful-ness would better beseem us than confidence."

What she said is *ha-gam ha-lom raiti akharey roi*. Have I also seen Him who sees me? Or, "I have now seen the one who sees me." Or something like this. One scholar seems to have rightly seen in this the exclamation, "Have I here also seen the Latter Purposes or Designs of him who seeth me?"

In other words, because the Lord told her what her son's name would be and then explained all that would come to pass from his generations, she is saying "I have seen what you intend." It is an exclamation of His transcendence over time. He is the God who sees, not just now, but into the future and through all things.

Before we move on, we should look at 5 particular reasons why we can discern that this is, in fact, the Lord Jesus who is fully God and who was manifest in the flesh. It was He who spoke to Hagar and not just a messenger.

The first is that He promised to accomplish something that only God could accomplish and He foretold the future in a way only God can. He did this at the time of Adam, at the time of Noah, earlier with Abram, and elsewhere. He told her that she would bear a son and then described what he would be like, even throughout future generations.

Secondly, when she spoke to Him, she clearly identified Him as God – El Roi, the God who sees. Were this not true, then it would either be Satan trying to usurp God or if a good angel he would have refused the title just as the angel in Revelation refused worship. Scripture records neither and therefore this is Jesus who is God.

Third, when this was recorded by Moses, the writings designated Him as Jehovah. The record states, "Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her." "Lord" in this verse is the divine name Jehovah. This name is not ever, ever given to a created being. It is the divine name of the God of power and perfection.

We can compare this account and the Angel who appears with the Redeeming Angel in Genesis 48:16, the Angel of God's Presence in Isaiah 63:9, the Angel of the Covenant in

Malachi 3:1, as well as other appearances by this Angel which are always and only applied to the divine God.

Fifth, what we have seen cannot in any way be related to a created being. The knowledge, works, and authority belong to God alone. And because this Angel is visible to the human eye, it must be the second member of the triune Godhead, Jesus Christ.

We know this because the Bible on many occasions says that no one has seen God, that God is invisible, that God dwells in an unapproachable light, etc. Only when God united with humanity could man see the image of God in human form – Jesus Christ.

¹⁴ Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, *it is* between Kadesh and Bered.

The well at this spring of water is named because of the meeting and account which we've just seen. Again, in the coming pages of the Bible, we'll see wells named based on what occurs around the wells as they are discovered.

It is a tangible and permanent tie to the supernatural and spiritual light which has temporarily shone through the fabric of our temporal reality.

Beer Lahai Roi means "The Well of the One Who Lives and Sees Me" and it is located between Kadesh and Bered. Kadesh is the same location which will be seen again in the book of Numbers during the wanderings of the Israelites through the wilderness.

¹⁵ So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.

In fulfillment of the promise to Hagar, and in obedience to the name given by the Lord, the son born to Abram by Hagar is named Ishmael. God heard, God saw, God promised, and God delivered.

Before we go to our last verse of the day, I'd like to provide a spiritual application to you concerning this very thought. God gave Hagar a promise. He heard her cry, He saw her affliction, He made the promise, and He delivered.

God has done the same for each and every soul alive today. "I love those who love me, And those who seek me diligently will find me." says Proverbs 8. And I am sure that in the process, God will reach out to them to help along that road.

God has said that those who seek Him will find Him. And He doesn't make it hard to do. In Acts 17 it says that in Him we live and move and have our being. He is right here waiting for the lost soul and even more, He has given us His word which tells us of His Son and His Son reveals Him.

When we seek God with tears and afflictions, He responds and He delivers. This isn't only about salvation though, but about every good blessing that He desires us to have. He is there waiting for us to receive the fullness of the promises in His Son, Jesus.

¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

It's now 11 years since Abram entered the Promised Land and the year is 2095AM. He has finally had a son at the youthful age of 86. This is where the chapter ends and it leaves us in anticipation of more excitement in the lives of Abram and Sarai as they live in the presence of the God who sees and controls the destinies of man.

God is in control of your destiny as well and He may be calling out to you if you will only call on Him. Let me tell you how you can...

El Roi, The God Who Sees

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had born him no son
Getting old she figured her baby bearing chances were done

But she had a maidservant, an Egyptian named Hagar
So she spoke to Abram, words difficult to say
"Our chances of having a baby are surely gone by far
So please go into Hagar to have a child, yes... go this very day

Maybe I can bear children by her instead"
So Abram heeded Sarai and Sarai brought her to his bed

And when this came about, yes Hagar a child she conceived
But because of this, she despised her mistress in her eyes
Sarai felt now like the one who had been deceived
And she went to Abram so that Hagar he would chastise

My wrong be upon you – I gave her to your embrace
And now she mocks me, yes... mocks me to my face

The Lord judge between me and you
But Abram said, this isn't for me to do

So Sarai dealt harshly with her Egyptian maid
And Hagar fled her presence and took off for home
But in the wilderness she stopped for water and some shade
And it was here she met the Lord who spoke words of shalom

"Hagar, Sarai's maid whence come you, where are you going to"
I'm fleeing from the presence of my mistress, this is the thing I do

"Return to your mistress and submit yourself under her hand
I will multiply your descendants exceedingly you see
They shall not be counted for their multitude will be grand
In my hand is the future and I've showed it to you plainly

"Behold you are with child and you shall bear a son
You shall call him Ishmael because the Lord has heard your woes
He shall be a wild man, his hand against everyone
And everyone against him too, where he dwells and where he goes

Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her
"You are the God Who Sees and it is Him I did see"
And the well was called Beer Lahai Roi which does refer
To the Well of the One Who Lives and Sees Me

So Hagar bore Abram a son and his name was Ishmael
At 86 is when it happened, what a story to tell

Yes God keeps every promise which proceeds from His word
Because He is the covenant keeping, all knowing, all seeing Lord.

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 17:1-8 **(A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS)**

Introduction: In the Bible, certain figures are noted, above all, for one or two particular aspects of their demeanor and disposition. Job is the Bible's best known example of patience in suffering. Solomon is especially noted for his wisdom.

Moses is known for his humility and David for the depth of his emotion and often strong passions and his great heart for God. King Ahab is known for his mixture of weakness and wickedness, Korah for his rebellion, and Aachen for his covetous heart.

The Bible doesn't sugar-coat the faults of its heroes and it doesn't hide the evil that men have committed. If you could be remembered in a specific way or for being like one or two people, who or what would you choose? Personally, I'd like to be remembered as a mixture of Abraham and David.

Today, we're going to continue through the life of Abraham and in the verses ahead, we'll see where God changes his name from Abram to Abraham in conjunction with the continued unfolding of His promise to the Bible's great man of faith.

In both Testaments and in many passages, it is faith for which Abraham is noted. Of all of the things God looks for in His wayward creatures, the Bible speaks of those who live by faith as being the epitome of those who please God.

Text Verse: *See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them. Deuteronomy 1:8*

The Israelites wandered in the wilderness until all the disobedient generation had perished. Then, at Mount Horeb they received the final words of instruction from Moses and proceeded into the land promised them so long before.

The Lord has always kept His promises and He continues to do so even our time, and so ... May God Speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Blameless Walk Before the Lord

¹ When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.

In the past chapters, we’ve seen the promise of God on several occasions that Abram and his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan. The promises came in Chapters 12 and 13 and then in Chapter 14 Abram received Melchizedek’s blessing.

After that, in Genesis 15 the promise was again made to him. When it was, God told him “Do not be afraid, Abram. I *am* your shield, your exceedingly great reward.”

John explains fear for God’s people in his first epistle –

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. ¹⁹ We love Him because He first loved us. 1 John 4:18

Abram is now 99 years old and it has been 13 years since his maidservant Hagar bore him Ishmael. For all he knows, this is the son of promise that he had waited so long for and he is raising him in this fashion and without fear.

But now God appears to him again. Instead of “do not be afraid,” He states that He is Almighty God or El Shaddai. This revelation of Himself is one of existence and performance.

He is the eternally lasting, absolute, all powerful God. His nature is unchangeable and yet He causes change in His creation. In the books of Isaiah and Joel, He is the Destructive power which is transcendent over all things. In Isaiah, we read this –

Wail, for the day of the LORD *is* at hand!
It will come as destruction from the Almighty.
⁷ Therefore all hands will be limp,
Every man’s heart will melt,
⁸ And they will be afraid.
Pangs and sorrows will take hold of *them*;
They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth;
They will be amazed at one another;
Their faces *will be like* flames. Isaiah 13:6-8

In the day of the Lord, the workings of God are as “destruction from Shaddai.” There is both judicial and punitive power and performance in the terrifying name. Because of this, holiness is the hallmark of the name.

When man sins, His holy nature is violated. And so because of this act against His nature, He acts accordingly. And yet, at the same time, El Shaddai is also a reconstructive power, building new that which has been laid waste.

He is therefore the God of providence and abundant supply. All of this is tied up in God’s potency. When it is combined with a promise, such as has been given to Abram, it gives man a basis for faith – “If God be for us, who can stand against us.”

Because of His proclamation of being El Shaddai, he says to Abram “walk before Me and be blameless.” Before, He spoke comfort to Abram – “Do not be afraid...” but now He speaks words of admonition and resolute purpose. This is a command, a rule for the guidance of his life, and a direction for conduct.

During that past 13 years, Abram probably considered the promises as being fulfilled in Ishmael. He is now old and has had his child. He believed the promise of God and has rejoiced in it.

He has no reason doubt about any future promises because the past ones have come to pass. It is as if Abram says, “I have Ishmael and I know that God hears and responds. I am content in this.”

Now the Lord tells him to “walk before Me and be blameless” – *hit-ha-lech le-pha-nai v’y’eh tammin*. To walk before the Lord doesn’t mean just taking literal steps; it’s a metaphor for having a completely detailed accounting for every move one makes.

It includes the thoughts, the words which proceed from one’s lips, the very heart and intent of every action. “Before Me” is another metaphor – *le-pha-nai* – which translated literally would be “before my face.” El Shaddai doesn’t literally have a face.

He is the power and presence of God working through the Holy Spirit. He is omnipresent and so to walk before Him is an axiom. Every move is before Him and so an explanation is given – “and be blameless.” “

“Abram, you are to be always perfect before me. For you this is more than just a sincere and yet imperfect walk. You are to be perfect in your heart **and** in your actions. Be sincere in both through the upright and holy in the conduct of your life.”

Righteousness was credited to Abram for his faith when the covenant was established and now a blameless walk before God is needed for the continuation and confirmation of the covenant.

At my house is a bee-hive. When we take out the forms where the honey is stored and we have a process we go through to separate the honey from the comb, but there is always a bit of wax floating around in the honey and it will affect the purity if it isn't removed.

The word “sincere” is believed to have come from two Latin words – *sine* and *cera* – “without wax.” To perfectly purify the honey, we take a pair of pantyhose, which have the finest mesh possible, and we pour the honey through it.

The wax we couldn't even see before this process began accumulates into a pile in the middle of the funnel and what is left is completely pure and without wax. It is sincere. This is the state that Abram is being called to.

I can assure you that along with Abram, the Lord asks each of us to be likewise holy and upright. This isn't just an arbitrary truth because we have a little angel on our shoulder watching us, but because we – as Christians – bear the name of Jesus Christ.

When we fail to walk in a manner which is holy, then others see and perceive this as well. Abram walked among the Canaanites and Amorites and they could see his conduct and make judgments about God based on his actions. We too walk in the land of the Philistines and live among the pagan people of the world.

Their perception of our God and our Lord is derived from watching each of us. Do we serve a God who doesn't see? Our words and our actions often don't square up and therefore we're termed “hypocritical” by those who watch us.

And of course, there is always the person who would say this simply because they do see upright living and know they should live that way too. But normally it is our failings that others see and make their value judgments against. And so the Lord would ask each of us to walk before Him and be blameless.

Jesus said the same to His disciples in Matthew 5:48 –

“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

And Peter, in both of his epistles reminds us of the same –

“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, *as* in your ignorance; ¹⁵ but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.” 1 Peter 1:13-16

Yes, fellow Christian, walk before the Lord and be blameless.

² And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.”

A command followed by a promise – “I will make My covenant between Me and you.” Despite what most scholars on the subject say, I’m in complete disagreement about the birth of Ishmael from the union with Hagar. Here is John Wesley’s thought on it –

“Full thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael. So long the promise of Isaac was deferred; Perhaps to correct Abram’s over - hasty marrying of Hagar.”

A promise was made and appeared to be fulfilled in Ishmael. Even what the Lord said to Hagar seemed to reflect it – “I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.” This is very similar to what is said to Abram now.

When Hagar returned from running away, she would have told him this and it certainly would have seemed to him that Ishmael would be the fulfillment of the promise.

But now he’s told that the covenant would be established. Hearing this, Abram must have even been a bit confused. The promise was given and the covenant was made even before the birth of Ishmael. He must have questioned why it needed to be established when the boy was already born and 13 years old.

It would be like saying to your son, “I’m going to make your birthday great. It will be the best day of your life.” And so you take him out and give him a wonderful day full of fun and gifts. As you’re heading home he’s happy and content with what he has.

It's late in the afternoon, but you say again, "I'm going to fulfill my promise to you. I'm going to make your birthday great. It'll be the best day of your life." He may wonder what you're talking about. He thinks he's already been given that. But as you walk through the door, there is a surprise party waiting, keys to a Maserati, and you flew in his girlfriend who's been off at college.

Abram's surprise party is coming and God won't disappoint when He gives it. Today we will look at the set up for the party, but only next week will we be given the details. The promise of a seed comes forward again as the prominent benefit of the covenant.

II. A Father of Many Nations

³Then Abram fell on his face,...

This is the middle-eastern method of prostration used by many people even day. A person goes to their knees. After this, they lower their head to their knees, and then they touch the earth with their forehead. It's not a very comfortable posture, but it signifies great humiliation and reverence.

Abram fell on his face in reverence of the majesty of God and in acknowledgment of his unworthiness at the visit and the promise. He was probably completely overwhelmed because all along he had figured that Ishmael was the fulfillment of the promise, but now he's being told there is more than he realized.

³(con't) and God talked with him, saying:

⁴"As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations."

There are two parties in the covenant. God is the first party and says, "As for Me..." "As for Me, My covenant is with you." The Lord is making a guarantee based on His spoken word to Abram. If you remember, back in Genesis 12, God made this promise –

"²I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

God is now giving Him both a restatement of the promise and a refinement of it as well. The term "nations" is normally used when speaking not of the chosen people, but of the

other branches of humanity. He is told that he will be the “father of many nations” and it will be fulfilled in an amazing and unsuspected way – both physically and spiritually.

His literal, physical descendants will come from both Ishmael and the son Isaac who is yet to come, but he will also be the spiritual father of people from every nation group on earth. And Paul explains that this is finally realized in what Jesus did –

Therefore *it is* of faith that *it might be* according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all ¹⁷ (as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; Romans 4:16, 17

⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations.

In verse four, the Lord said, “You **shall be** the father of many nations.” Now, one verse later, He says, “I **have made you** the father of many nations.” The change from the future to the present tense came about by a single definitive act – renaming Abram to Abraham.

The giving of this name is a tangible pledge of the fulfillment of the covenant He has spoken. Any name which the Lord gives cannot be merely the sounds of the letters as they’re spoken, but they must be the very expression of something which is actual and tangible or that will be fulfilled in such a way.

The Lord has personally named him, signifying both His authority over him and His completion of the promise in one great act. Any doubts or anxieties about how things would transpire have certainly melted away from Abraham’s thoughts. He has received an inheritance that is as certain as the ground under his feet.

The Lord makes promises and He keeps promises. The Bible is the written testament of those promises and each will be fulfilled exactly as they have been recorded. In a similar mark of surety to each one of us, God has also given every person who has been saved by the blood of Christ a new name as well.

This is recorded in Revelation chapter 2 –

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it*.” Revelation 2:17

Although we haven't been told what our new name is, it is already recorded and engraved in stone if we have accepted Jesus as Lord. For those who haven't, other promises have been made as well and they will be fulfilled, just as the Lord has spoken them.

It is better, by far, to receive the promises which come through accepting Jesus than their alternative, so make sure of your own salvation before this day goes by.

⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

The promise of being exceedingly fruitful seems to be redundancy, but what I think is being relayed is a promise of actual children. He had Ishmael and now realizes that Ishmael isn't the only child to come, but with this verse is the promise of many children.

In addition to Ishmael and Isaac, we'll see in Chapter 25 that Abraham will have many more children in the days to come –

“¹Abraham again took a wife, and her name was Keturah. ² And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. ³ Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim. ⁴ And the sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoah, Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. ⁵ And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. ⁶ But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.”

From his wife Keturah, he would have six sons. He also had sons from his concubines as well and he probably had many daughters. These became even more nations, all with their own kings, just as he was promised. In all, Abraham was exceedingly fruitful.

This verse then is a physical fulfillment – an earthly, temporal blessing. The next verse will include the spiritual fulfillment – a heavenly and eternal blessing.

⁷ And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.

The covenant is established and it is what is termed in Hebrew “berit olam” an everlasting covenant. It will never fade away, it will never lessen or diminish, it will never fail. The Lord dealt with Adam, the Lord dealt with Noah, and the Lord is now dealing with Abraham. He will be his God and also of his descendants to come.

Matthew Henry’s commentary on this verse is so exact in its analysis that I’d like to quote it for you. He says this covenant is “Not to be altered or revoked; not with thee only, then it would die with thee but with thy seed after thee; and it is not only thy seed after the flesh, but thy spiritual seed. It is everlasting in the evangelical meaning of it. The covenant of grace is everlasting; it is from everlasting in the counsels of it, and to everlasting in the consequences of it; and the external administration of it is transmitted, with the seal of it, to the seed of believers, and the internal administration of it by the Spirit to Christ’s seed in every age. This is a covenant of exceeding great and precious promises. Here are two which indeed are all-sufficient, that God would be their God. All the privileges of the covenant, all its joys, and all its hopes, are summed up in this. A man needs desire no more than this to make him happy. What God is himself, that he will be to his people: wisdom to guide and counsel them, power to protect and support them, goodness to supply and comfort them; what faithful worshippers can expect from the God they serve, believers shall find in God as theirs. This is enough, yet not all.”

III. The Land Promise

We have one more verse to look at today. It is a promise which is misunderstood, misapplied, mishandled, and generally mistaken. All of the words which the Lord has spoken to Abraham have their own circumstances and their own ultimate fulfillment. Each thought needs to be looked at in the context of the rest of Scripture.

Oftentimes misapplications are made simply because God is still in the process of working things out in human history. They’re also made when people knowingly or unknowingly attempt to insert themselves into promises to which they aren’t entitled.

Sometimes, people knowingly twist things in order to personally benefit from others who aren’t willing to check things out for themselves. Understanding the promises of

God and how they find their fulfillment can be confusing and even tedious, but when the true intent of a verse is known, it must be applied as God intends.

This is the case with verse 8 of chapter 17. Regardless of what has been said or believed, a careful and thoughtful acceptance of the truth of this verse must be made, regardless of our personal biases, likes, or dislikes. Stand back and accept God's decisions as given.

⁸Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

This is a land promise and it is speaking specifically about the land in which he is standing and which is known today as Israel. There is no spiritual application here.

We can know this, one hundred percent because in this verse it's called the land of Canaan. This is the name of the physical land, the same land where Jesus walked and taught. It is given to the physical descendants of Abraham, not to the church or anyone else.

The promise is made by God, the Creator of the Land and the Sovereign Lord over the nations. Therefore, there should be no dispute over whose land it is. He has spoken and ended the discussion. Oh, but dispute we do.

In order to understand whose land it is today, we can't stop with this verse or we will have a rather large mess on our hands. How many people around the world trace their lineage back to Abraham? Billions is the answer.

So why aren't all of them included in the promise? The answer is because the promise is restated to only one of his sons – Isaac. Therefore only those who are physical descendants of Isaac are included in the promise. Here is what Genesis 26 says –

²Then the LORD appeared to him and said: "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you. ³Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. ⁴And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; ⁵because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."

After Isaac, the promise was again passed down to only one son, Jacob, who is Israel. This was in Genesis chapter 28 –

¹⁰ Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep. ¹² Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder *was* set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: “I *am* the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”

I quoted these verses when Abram was first given his promise in Chapter 12, but now the land promise is restated to Abraham. In order to avoid the confusion and misrepresentation of countless people who have gone before, and who exist today, these verses need to be restated and analyzed many times.

Our heads are thick and sometimes the only way to get something ingrained in them is to hear the same thing many times. The Promised Land, the Land of Canaan which is today the Land of Israel, has the same owner as it did in the past – God. And He has chosen to give it to one group of people – Israel.

When we fight against this, we are only bringing God’s wrath down on ourselves. In fact, the judgment of the nations is coming, probably soon, because of the world’s robbery of this very land from its rightful inheritors –

¹For behold, in those days and at that time,
When I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem,
²I will also gather all nations,
And bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;
And I will enter into judgment with them there
On account of My people, My heritage Israel,
Whom they have scattered among the nations;
They have also divided up My land. Joel 3:1-2

The captives have been brought back and the nations are working to divide God's land. And judgment is the only end the world will face because of it. Anyone in the church who doesn't understand this, or who disagrees with it, needs to spend more time studying their Bible and less time listening to bad theology.

Regardless of whether you like the Jewish people or not, God has planted them in Israel and planted they will stay. We are promised this in the very last words of the book of Amos –

I will plant them in their land,
And no longer shall they be pulled up
From the land I have given them,"
Says the LORD your God. Amos 9:15

Let us remember to pray for Israel – the land and the people – and to pray for God to deliver them from their enemies, both within the church and in the world at large.

Yes, God has been faithful to His unfaithful people and He will be faithful to you as well. Earlier we read that God told Abraham to walk before Him and be blameless. We're admonished to do the same. God directs all people to be perfect, even as He is perfect.

But there's a problem in our lives and it's called sin. Let's take a moment and see how that problem has separated us from God and yet how we still have the opportunity to make things right and be perfect in the sight of God.

A Father of Many Nations

When Abram was an old man of ninety-nine
The Lord appeared to him and there He said
"I am Almighty God the Creator divine
"I am the one whom Melchizedek blessed over wine and bread

Walk before Me and be blameless
And I will make My covenant between Me and you
I will multiply you exceedingly
This is the thing that I will do

Then Abram fell down upon his face
And God talked with him as he lay prostrate

As for Me, behold my covenant is with you
These words to you I once again restate

You shall be the father of many nations
And you will be remembered for all generations

No longer shall your name be called Abram
But now Abraham shall be your name
For I have made you a father of many nations
You will be great, a man of everlasting fame

I will make you exceedingly fruitful
And I will make nations of you as well
Kings shall come from you by the bowlful
From you, the nations of the earth will swell

I will establish my covenant between me and you
And your descendant in their generations
For an everlasting covenant, one you know is true
To be your God and theirs... eternal expectations

Also I give to you and your descendants after you
The land in which you are a stranger
All the land of Canaan, a promise I will attend to
It will never fail, of this there is no danger

It is an everlasting possession and I will be their God
It is given to Israel, it is their land on which to tread

Let us thank the Lord for His faithfulness
For He keeps every promise He has made
We have the surety of a heavenly promise
Because of Jesus, for our sins He bestowed His righteousness, a wonderful trade

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 17:9-14

(THE COVENANT OF CIRCUMCISION - SHADOWS OF THE COMING MESSIAH)

Introduction: I have to admit that there are times I find it hard to put together a whole sermon on a particular passage. But then there are times when I have only a couple of verses and I mourn over how much I have to leave out.

Every sermon I type is the same length so that it will take about the same amount of time to preach. But sometimes I wish I could go on for hours about a subject. Today is one of them.

The topic of circumcision is so vast and so important that we could be here until late tonight going over different avenues that it takes in the Bible. I apologize, in advance, for all we will skip over concerning the subject.

Text Verse: *Circumcise yourselves to the LORD,
And take away the foreskins of your hearts,
You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,
Lest My fury come forth like fire,
And burn so that no one can quench it,
Because of the evil of your doings.” Jeremiah 4:4*

You see, even in the Old Testament, circumcision was more than a physical sign. It was something that was to be accompanied with an internal change of the heart – away from the world and directed toward God and so... May God Speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Covenant of Circumcision

Last week we went over Genesis 17:1-8. Let me read those verses to you again so you have a context for today’s sermon –

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless. ² And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly.” ³ Then Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying: ⁴ “**As for Me**, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made

you a father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. ⁸ Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.””

So Abraham, with his new name and his new identity has had the promise from 25 years earlier restated once again with new details added. The Lord is moving in His perfect timing and He is preparing a great new beginning for His chosen servant.

⁹ And God said to Abraham: “As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.

In our sermon verses last week, verse 4 said, “**As for Me**, behold, My covenant is with you,...” After saying this, the Lord renamed Abram to Abraham and restated and refined His promises to him. In the process, we read the word “my” or “I” seven times. This was the Lord’s promises and His vow.

Now He says to Abraham, “**As for you...**” The conditions God expects are laid out in verses 9-14. The very first thing we see though is that the conditions apply not only to Abraham, but to his descendants after him through their generations.

¹⁰ This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised...

Circumcision is the sign of the covenant that God mandates. Last week we established that we are heirs of Abraham and we are his spiritual descendants by faith. If this is so, then what God mandates to Abraham could be interpreted as being mandated to us in the church as well.

The question before you is this: “If we are Abraham’s descendants by faith and all of Abraham’s male descendants must be circumcised, then are we in the church required to circumcise our male children in the flesh? It is a confusing issue for many.

In fact, certain denominations and sects, without taking the time to understand our position in Christ, do mandate that their followers be circumcised. Can you defend why this is wrong? Pay attention today and hopefully you’ll understand where the error in this lies.

Remember our great rule of interpretation – context, context, context. If we keep things in context, we'll keep from the error of heresy. And mandating circumcision to meet the requirements of the law is, according to Paul, heresy.

Just so you know what a heresy is, I'll explain it to you. Bad doctrine isn't always a heresy. The difference is that bad doctrine doesn't keep someone from being saved, but heresy does. Bad doctrine can lead to a loss of joy or simply looking stupid, but heresy will lead to hell. And teaching a heresy doesn't keep someone from being saved; it keeps the next guy from being saved.

Now, let's take a minute and think about the covenant God made with Noah and see the difference between that and the one made with Abraham. Noah's covenant was one-sided and unconditional. The sign of it was a natural phenomenon, the rainbow. A rainbow comes about without any help or intervention from man.

In the same way, the land covenant to Abraham's descendants was given on an oath. The physical descendants of Abraham are the recipients of the covenant. Regarding the land, there were no strings attached to it. However, God is now making a condition to the people who would receive the promises made to Abraham.

This doesn't change the land covenant, but it defines those who will qualify to receive it. So let's think of it like this to help you understand. A jillionaire comes to me and says, "I am giving to you and to your descendants the island known as Siesta Key." This is unconditional and one sided. This is what has come about since chapter 12 of Genesis with the land promise.

Later the same jillionaire comes to me and says, "This is the sign of the covenant. Every one of your male descendants will have a beard. Anyone without a beard is excluded from the promise."

The land promise hasn't changed. The land is still given to me and my descendants, but those who are actually entitled to it have certain obligations. If only one of my descendants grows a beard, then only one will get the land, but the land still belongs to me and my descendants. If they all grow a beard, they all can live here.

I hope this clears this up. Unlike the promise to Noah which was unconditional, and the earlier promises to Abraham which were also, this clarification of the promise defines the parameters. And they are voluntary.

In this verse, there is a responsibility in the individual toward the word of promise. An assent to the promise allows its fulfillment.

If one of my descendants doesn't want to be handsome like me, Then he doesn't get to live on beautiful Siesta Key.

¹¹ and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

Circumcision for the purposes of the covenant is to be in the flesh of the foreskins. This sign then is what brings males into the covenant and it is the longest continuously practiced ceremony pertaining to a covenant on the earth today. It is so inextricably tied to the covenant that in the book of Acts, Stephen calls it the “covenant of circumcision.”

But there is something to note. Not everyone who is circumcised is a member of the covenant. There have been and there are even today other groups of people who circumcise their children, but they don't qualify. We'll discuss why in the coming verses.

¹² He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.

Muslims circumcise their children, but they are not inheritors of the promise. Does anyone here know why? There are a couple reasons. First, the promise was later given to Isaac, not Ishmael and then to Jacob, not Esau. Only this line receives the promises.

But even if some of them did descend from these two, they still wouldn't be entitled because muslims circumcise their children without regard to a specific age. They do it anywhere from birth all the way up to 18 years old. They are excluded from the promise because they don't participate in it.

For the covenant sons of Abraham, circumcision of the foreskin isn't just mandated to bring someone into the covenant, but there are specific procedures which accompany the rite. The first is that it is to be accomplished on the child when he is eight days old. The number 8 in the Bible consistently signifies “new beginnings.”

For example, there were 8 people on the Ark of Noah, all of which entered the new life – a picture of the resurrection and a new beginning. The covenant with Abraham is

brought up 8 times and the 8th occurred at the binding of Isaac when he was asked to sacrifice him, a picture of the resurrection – the new beginning.

Joseph had 8 specific times he communicated with his brothers. The 8th time is when his brothers met with him in Genesis 50 – another veiled picture of a new beginning. We could go on with the number 8 for hours and hours, but it's clear that the number 8 has a special spiritual significance – new beginnings.

However, the 8th day also has physical significance – something not discovered until the 20th century. The Apologetics Press reports the following from 1953: “Holt Pediatrics observed that a newborn infant has ‘peculiar susceptibility to bleeding between the second and fifth days of life... Hemorrhages at this time, though often inconsequential, are sometimes extensive; they may produce serious damage to internal organs, especially to the brain, and cause death from shock and exsanguination.” Obviously, then, if vitamin K is not produced in sufficient quantities until days five through seven, it would be wise to postpone any surgery until some time after that. But why did God specify day eight? On the eighth day, the amount of prothrombin present actually is elevated above one-hundred percent of normal—and is the only day in the male's life in which this will be the case under normal conditions. If surgery is to be performed, day eight is the perfect day to do it. Vitamin K and prothrombin levels are at their peak.”

Dr. McMillen observed that “We should commend the many hundreds of workers who labored at great expense over a number of years to discover that the safest day to perform circumcision is the eighth. Yet, as we congratulate medical science for this recent finding, we can almost hear the leaves of the Bible rustling. They would like to remind us that four thousand years ago, when God initiated circumcision... Abraham did not pick the eighth day after many centuries of trial-and-error experiments. Neither he nor any of his company from the ancient city of Ur in the Chaldees ever had been circumcised. It was a day picked by the Creator of vitamin K.”

Even in the seemingly bloody ritual of circumcision we have a display of the wisdom of the Creator and His tending to the health and welfare of His covenant people. If this is how God treats the physical nature of His people, how much more sure and reliable will He treat the spiritual promises that He has made to us!

But there is something important for us to consider in circumcision that can help us with our own Christian families. Starting with Abraham, but following through every generation since, the parent...the parent is the one responsible for circumcising their child. The child is a passive recipient of the rite.

If we look at this example of the Hebrews, we can understand why they've held together and prospered for the past 4000 years. It's because they are acknowledging their responsibility to the covenant and demonstrating a hope in the promises it holds.

If we, as faithful Christians, act in the same responsible manner, we can trust that our families will be equally blessed. This isn't talking about physical blessing, but the blessing of knowing that our children will be a part of the spiritual heritage which Christ established for us.

We have the responsibility to raise our children in a godly manner, just as the Hebrews were to faithfully circumcise their children. When we do, we have the hope that Christ will take hold of them and carry them through to His eternal dwelling.

There are no ultimate guarantees because every person is an individual with free-will, but by following the guidelines of the Bible, we have a much stronger hope than if we neglect our responsibility as Christian parents.

¹³ He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

Him-owl yim-owl y'lid b'tekha or "in circumcising shall you circumcise." This repetition was given to denote the absolute necessity of doing it and the care to be followed in the practice. There was to be no uncircumcised male among the people.

Every male born in the house and every person who came into the house as a servant or a slave was to be circumcised. Unless you understand what circumcision symbolizes, this passage doesn't make much sense, but when – in a few minutes you learn – it will be something I hope you never forget.

This rule is the same concept of rule that's given by Jesus when He said that we were to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

It is for this reason that many churches base membership on having been baptized... and that by full immersion. Unfortunately too many churches put the cart before the horse and baptize infants as a sort of New Testament substitute for circumcision.

But... these children aren't members of the covenant of faith, nor are they members of Israel – which is a covenant in the flesh. Baptism can in no way be considered a replacement for circumcision in the family life of Christians as you'll see.

The only way to become an adopted child of God is by the mental assertion and vocal pronouncement that Jesus is Lord. Only after this is baptism a recognizable tenet of the inner conversion. The only thing baptism of infants does is promote false security in a person that may not have accepted Jesus as Lord.

A second problem with comparing infant baptism with circumcision is the obvious overlooking of women in the rite of circumcision. If we were to carry the concept through as much of the church has done, then we would simply skip the baptizing of women. But this would be as unscriptural as baptizing infants.

The entire purpose of circumcision has a greater fulfillment in the Person of Jesus Christ and looks forward to Him. It, therefore, cannot be equated with infant baptism. To understand this ancient rite more fully pay attention in a few minutes and we will discover the symbolism which points back to the Fall of Man and forward to the restoration from that Fall in Jesus Christ.

¹⁴ And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

The law for the people was circumcision, but it was the parent who had the child circumcised on the 8th day. In this verse, we see the consequences of the parents' decision affecting the children and the owner's decision affecting the servant.

In such a case, we'd also see the failure of the society at large because anyone who knew the child was uncircumcised, including the priests who were to perform the rite, would be guilty of negligence. This is actually a way of keeping the entire corporate body accountable to each other.

And this, once again, finds a parallel in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians in particular addresses the handling of people within the church that aren't meeting the requirements that have been laid out. There is in the church a corporate responsibility of ensuring that we act in the manner that the Lord has laid out for us.

About this verse, Adam Clarke says, "it was impossible for a person who had not received the spiritual purification to enter into eternal glory. The spirit of this law

extends to all ages, dispensations, and people; he whose heart is not purified from sin cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

II. Shadows of the Coming Messiah

The questions that we should ask now are, “Why was there no requirement on women?” “Why is circumcision given and it only pertains to men?” “What is God doing this for?” In other words, “Why wasn’t a physical sign given that could have been more obviously seen by others like a tattoo or a certain hairstyle and why cut males only and in such a personal way?”

The answer to this goes all the way back to Genesis 3:15, a verse known as the Protoevangelium, or the “First Gospel.” When God cursed the serpent, He said this to him –

And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”

We learned right in the first pages of the Bible that a human being would come to redeem man, but that He would be from the seed of the woman. What is implicitly stated here and explicitly stated in the book of 1 Corinthians is that sin came from one man. What is implicit in circumcision is that it also comes through man. In other words, sin is transferred to us **from Adam through man**.

By cutting the male organ in the rite of circumcision, a picture was being made of the cutting away of sin. This is why even those who were purchased as slaves were to be circumcised. It was a picture of cutting away the transfer of sin within the covenant community.

But as like so many things in the Bible, this is only a picture. The sin still transfers from father to child. And all people – males and females alike inherit that sin from the father – thus the need for a Father without sin in order for there to be a Child without sin.

This is the reason for both the virgin birth and the incarnation. If these didn’t come about, then there would be no salvation – ever – for any human. Man would be

eternally lost and separated from God. But God in His infinite wisdom solved the problem.

Sin transfers through the man, but Jesus was born sinless because He was born of God the Father and Mary. However, in order to prevail over sin, He would have to live a sinless life as well. If He failed, He wouldn't have been a qualified substitute for Adam.

It is the resurrection that proves that Jesus was born of God. It also proves that He was not only was born sinless, but He also lived a sinless life, fulfilling the law. You see, the resurrection is 100% conditional upon the virgin birth.

No virgin birth equals no resurrection. We can know this – 100% – because babies that die don't resurrect. If this weren't true, then babies, who have never sinned when they died, would come back to life. Sin is inherited from the father.

However, the virgin birth **doesn't guarantee** the resurrection. Nor does living a sinless life if one **isn't virgin born**. Both the virgin birth and a sinless life are conditions for the resurrection. If Jesus wasn't born of a virgin, then He would have inherited Adam's sin. But even though He was born of a virgin, He still needed to live perfectly sinless throughout His entire life.

- 1) The resurrection **is conditional** upon a sinless life.
 - A sinless life **is conditional upon** the virgin birth.
 - Therefore, the resurrection **proves** the virgin birth.

- 2) The resurrection **proves** the virgin birth.
 - The virgin birth proves Jesus was born of God and of Mary.
 - Therefore, Jesus **is** God's Son – the God/Man.

If you can grasp this, then you can see why God gave the people who would usher in the Messiah a picture of what was coming –

- One who would be born without sin. And hopefully you can see why baptism **did not replace circumcision** as a sign for the covenant community and why infant baptism is a pointless gesture.

As one final validation of this, that infant baptism is not a New Testament sign comparable to circumcision, all we need to do is go to 1 Corinthians 10 –

“Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ² all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

Paul says that these Hebrews, whose men were circumcised, were also baptized into Moses. Therefore these are two distinct and separate concepts and baptism cannot be a replacement for circumcision.

Both men and women come from Adam and received his sin through their father, and therefore both men and women receive baptism and that – only after accepting Christ as Lord. Children of believers are already sanctified by their believing parent according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:14.

As Peter states in his 1st epistle when speaking of the regeneration by the Spirit, “There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,…” (3:21)

Baptism – the regeneration of the human spirit by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit – is what saves us. Water baptism is a picture of this regeneration and so it comes after accepting Christ, not before. If you’ve never been baptized since your conversion, now might be a good time to think about it.

Paul sums this up in Colossians chapter 2 –

¹¹ In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with *Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

III. The Blessedness of Grace through Faith

¹ What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has *something* to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” ⁴ Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.

⁵ But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, ⁶ just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

⁷ “Blessed *are those* whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
And whose sins are covered;

⁸ Blessed *is the* man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.”

⁹ Does this blessedness then *come* upon the circumcised *only*, or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. ¹⁰ How then was it accounted? While he was circumcised, or uncircumcised? Not while circumcised, but while uncircumcised. ¹¹ And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had while still* uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that righteousness might be imputed to them also, ¹² and the father of circumcision to those who not only *are* of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith which our father Abraham *had while still* uncircumcised.

¹³ For the promise that he would be the heir of the world *was* not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if those who are of the law *are* heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect, ¹⁵ because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law *there is* no transgression.

¹⁶ Therefore *it is* of faith that *it might be* according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all ¹⁷ (as it is written, “I have made you a father of many nations”) in the presence of Him whom he believed—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; ¹⁸ who, contrary to hope, in hope believed, so that he became the father of many nations, according to what was spoken, “So shall your descendants be.” ¹⁹ And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰ He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹ and being fully convinced that

what He had promised He was also able to perform. ²² And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

²³ Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, ²⁴ but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵ who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification. Romans 4:1-25

¹⁷ But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches. ¹⁸ Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. ¹⁹ Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God *is what matters*. ²⁰ Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.

-1 Corinthians 7

“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” -John 6:29

Stand fast...

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. ² Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ³ And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. ⁴ You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. ⁵ For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. Galatians 5:1-6

Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! ³ For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh [and isn't infant baptism such confidence!], ⁴ though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish [skybala – dung], that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be

found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Philippians 3:2-11

The Covenant of Circumcision

God said to Abraham, this is what He did say
As for you, you shall keep my covenant, this you shall do
You and your descendants, every generation shall obey
All of those in your house who are coming after you

This is My covenant which you shall perform
Between Me and your descendants in every coming year
Every male child, yes everyone bought or born
Shall be circumcised, make sure you get this clear

And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin
It shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you therein

He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised
Every male child in your generations
This is the rite that shall be exercised
And thus you will be holy among the nations

He who is born in your house or one bought for a price
Even if he is a foreigner and not your descendant
Both alike shall be circumcised the command is precise
And on this rite the covenant for you is dependent

Any uncircumcised male child that you have around
That person shall be cut off, on this you must stand your ground

Such a person shall be cut off from the people
He has broken My covenant and must be put away
Pass on this rule, shout it out from the steeple
The rule must not be broken, you shall do as I say
You see, the rite looks forward to the coming One

The Messiah of the world will be born free from sin
I am sending through your line My only begotten Son
To reconcile the world to me for fellowship once again

This rite is a picture of the Incarnation you see
When God will be clothed in robes of humanity

And He will walk among the people to fulfill the law
And in Him will be perfection, there will be no flaw

Jesus our God it all points to You
Every word and picture in the sacred scroll
All praise, honor, and glory – You alone are due
And so we proclaim Your worth with all our heart and soul

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 17:15-27

(THE PROMISED SON - A TIME FOR LAUGHTER)

Introduction: There are times when things occur in our lives and we may wonder why God has let it happen. Maybe a family member dies, financial troubles wipe out our life savings, our home may burn down, or any of another million bad things occurs.

I've seen people get angry at God, accuse God, blame God, walk away from church, go back to old, bad habits and the like when troubles come. But one thing we should remember is that there is nothing that happens to us – no matter how bad – that is unique.

The ungodly suffer and the ungodly receive blessings. God's people have suffered and God's people have received blessings and each of us too will suffer and we too will receive blessings.

But even more than God's people, we have the ultimate example of both suffering and loss – God's own Son, Jesus, shared in our humanity. He was tempted just as we are and He went through the same ordeals we go through, and many were far worse.

Throughout the Bible is a thread which weaves God's people into a great plan to heal what is broken, to right that which is wrong, and to replace sadness with joy. Today we will see another step in the unfolding of this plan and the thread which weaves together a tapestry of joy and laughter.

Text Verse: *Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." The Lord has done great things for us, And we are glad. Psalm 126:2, 3*

Yes, the Lord has done great things for us, just as He did great things for Abraham, the man of faith, whose life was adorned with laughter, and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. From a Princess to the Princess

Three specific entities are addressed in chapter 17 of Genesis in relation to the covenant between God and Abraham. The first is God speaking of Himself. This occurred in verses 4 through 8 –

“⁴**As for Me**, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. ⁸Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

We looked at those verses 2 weeks ago.

Next, last week we looked at the second addressee of the covenant, God speaking to Abraham. This happened in verses 9-14 –

“And God said to Abraham: ‘**As for you**, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰This *is* My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ¹¹and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. ¹²He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. ¹³He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

The third is to be found in our first two verses today, verses 15 and 16 and they are being spoken to Abraham about his wife –

¹⁵Then God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah *shall be* her name.

Sarah is the third one addressed by the word of God of whom something is expected. In His statement about her, God renames her from Sarai to Sarah, but when He does, it is done through Abraham. “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.”

Just as God works through Christ to meet with Christ's bride, so He goes through Abraham for the name to be changed. Over the years, feminists in particular have found fault with the Bible's use of family hierarchies and the submission of women to men.

But when we look at how God Himself developed the hierarchies and the purposes they serve, we realize that this is the appropriate way to handle these things. One thing is for sure, whether someone likes the way these things are presented in the Bible or not is irrelevant. They are the way God has ordained them.

People who want to pray to God outside of Christ can do so, and they do so all the time. But they are only wasting their efforts in the process. Without Christ to mediate our prayers, they dissolve into the ether, unheard by the ears of God.

In the same way, when the family hierarchy which has been established by God is rejected, it inevitably leads to an unprofitable family life. This has been born out through history and it is being born out now.

As America moves away from the traditional father-led family established by God, it may appear on the surface to be freeing women from some perceived bondage, but in the end, it only leads to disorder, societal breakdown, and a loss of morality.

Another thing about Sarai's name change... it's done in the same way that Abraham's name was changed – by adding a single letter to the name – a letter equivalent to our letter "H." Actually in the case of Sarai, the H replaces an I.

Both names basically mean the same thing, "Princess." But in the case of Sarah, it has a fuller meaning, like a noblewoman. It is like a transition from a local to a global meaning or something specific to something general.

Sarai is like "a princess" as if she is in a room with many princesses. But Sarah is like "the princess." She is over all the princesses and the mother of all people who would come from her. Sarah is noted by Peter in his first epistle for being the epitome of the submissive wife whom God favors –

Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, ² when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear. ³ Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel— ⁴ rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the

incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. ⁵ For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. 1 Peter 3:1-6

The significance of this H letter being added to both their names is believed to associate these two people more closely to the Lord Himself. The letters for the divine name Yahweh are YHVH. By adding the H to **their** names, it seems He is imparting to them a portion of His own nature.

This then is an elevation beyond the temporal to the spiritual realm. God has conferred a special dignity on them by this addition. It is a way of pointing out His eternal power and Godhead as it is working through them.

This notion is going to be borne out in the coming verses in the circumcising of the household.

Before we go on, I'd like to assure you that if you're in Christ, you also have moved from the temporal, earthly realm to the spiritual, heavenly realm (Eph 2:4-7). In fulfillment of that, in Revelation God promises you a new name. Your name is already selected and your destiny is already assured because of your faith in Jesus.

¹⁶ And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her."

The Lord promises to bless Sarah and He says He will "also give you a son by her." In other words, "Just as you have received a son through Hagar, so you will now receive a son from Sarah. But the son to be born will be the son of promise."

This is now the 5th time we see God working through the second son instead of the firstborn. This demonstrates to us the doctrine of divine election. We saw it when God accepted Abel's offering over the offering of his older brother.

We saw it when Seth, the son of Adam, replaced Cain his older brother. We saw it again when Noah's second son Shem was placed into the messianic line before his older brother Japheth. Again it occurred when Abraham replaced his older brother Haran.

And this pattern will continue and grow richly in the pages of the Bible. God is sovereignly choosing people and circumstances which lead to the Messiah apart from birth order. This doctrine ultimately finds its fulfillment in the Person of His own Son, Jesus, who replaces Adam and who is the true Israel.

As the Bible unfolds, we will continue to look at each instance and draw patterns out which will show us the wonderful hand of God upon time, upon humanity, and upon all variables which lead us to, and teach us about, Jesus.

In the promise of a son through Sarah, God says that she shall become nations – meaning many groups of people, and that kings shall come from her. Through Sarah will come King Saul, King David, King Solomon, and many other kings. And ultimately from her would come the King of kings, Jesus.

The thing that is hardest to get my mind around is that the Lord is working through time and people to bring about the incarnation of Himself when He will unite with humanity in Mary's womb.

Time is what keeps everything from happening at once, and God, who created time, is working in the stream of time to come to the point that has been in His mind since before creation.

Everything that we are experiencing, and everything that has ever been experienced, is happening simultaneously in God's mind and yet because of what He has created, it can happen in a sequence which we participate in. It's just too much to fully grasp.

¹⁷ Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Shall *a child* be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear *a child*?"

Every reasonable commentary that I've read about this verse says the same thing – that Abraham's laughter was of joy, not of unbelief. Any commentary which says otherwise has been made by someone who doesn't understand the context, the man, or the supporting Bible passages which clearly identify Abraham's laughter as that of faith mixed with Joy.

In Romans 4, it says this –

“And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰ He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, ²¹ and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. ²² And therefore “it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

In John 8:56, Jesus probably refers to this incident and Abraham’s surety that this son of promise would lead to the Messiah –

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.”

After laughing, his internal question has also been misconstrued –

^{17(cont)} **“Shall *a child* be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear *a child*?”**

Abraham was a man of faith and his question was a rhetorical one, not a doubting one. In fact, he will have many more children in the years ahead and so it’s obvious he’s not talking about *ability*, but rather what is reasonable. And this is absolutely certain because of his next words to God...

¹⁸ **And Abraham said to God, “Oh, that Ishmael might live before You!”**

Abraham has a son, and despite how we look at the way Ishmael came about in the modern world, it was a normal birth to Abraham. He was promised a son and the Lord gave him a son. Up to this point in time, Sarah hasn’t been mentioned in any of the promises.

By now, Ishmael is 13 years old and Abraham probably loves him very much. So instead of going through the whole process again, why isn’t Ishmael suitable for the task? But God’s ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts.

What God decides is what is right and perfect. But Abraham is thinking from a human perspective. There is nothing wrong with him making known his request to God and it is a parent’s duty to pray for their children, just as he is doing for Ishmael.

He is praying for him to be kept in the covenant and to have the grace of walking before God in uprightness. But God determines the “who” and the “why.” Ishmael will

participate in the earthly blessings, but it is Isaac who will participate in both the temporal and spiritual ones.

II. The Lord Brings Laughter

¹⁹ Then God said: “No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son..

Let’s look at how different translations read here for fun –

Then God said, “Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son...
And God said, Nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son...
And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed;...
God replied, “No! Your wife Sarah will give you a son,...
and God saith, ‘Sarah thy wife is certainly bearing a son to thee...

The word is *aval* in Hebrew and it can be translated in a variety of ways. This is what we call Translator’s Preference. Some say “no,” some say “Yes, but” and some say “indeed” or “certainly.” The reason for differences is what the translators feel is being relayed. People who stick to a single translation not only get myopia, but they miss out on what could otherwise be the correct translation.

And sometimes differences in translations can actually mean the exact same thing, but they stress a different point of view. In other words, “Yes, but” can mean the exact same thing as “No” in the ultimate sense, but it does it by stressing the immediate in one case, and showing the distinction at a later point.

To support any translation, the rest of the Bible needs to be taken in context. This is something you will never get from a topical sermon preacher. And so unless you’re willing to study the Bible, you will never come to these precious insights which God really wants you to know and think about.

¹⁹ (con’t) and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his descendants after him.

A son will come through Sarah and he will be called Yitsak – the exact same word that describes what Abraham did when he heard. Abraham laughed and laughter is his name – Yitsak. It is through this child of joy that the everlasting covenant of grace will continue.

Just as the promise was made to Abraham, it is being transferred through this coming child. Ishmael will live before Abraham and the Lord, but it will only be as a physical son lives in our world. To understand both the renaming of Sarah and the selection of Isaac, even before his birth, we need to look at Paul's explanation in Galatians 4 –

²¹ Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. ²³ But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, ²⁴ which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar— ²⁵ for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— ²⁶ but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. ²⁷ For it is written: “Rejoice, O barren,
You who do not bear!
Break forth and shout,
You who are not in labor!
For the desolate has many more children
Than she who has a husband.”

²⁸ Now we, brethren, as Isaac *was*, are children of promise.

²⁰ And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.

As you can see, the “Yes, but” of the NIV translators is not a bad choice of the previous verse after all. When Abraham asked that Ishmael would live before the Lord, he in fact would and indeed he would be blessed. Here is what Bishop Thomas Newton says about this verse –

“It was somewhat wonderful, and not to be foreseen by human sagacity, that a man's whole posterity should so nearly resemble him, and retain the same inclinations, the same habits, and the same customs, throughout all ages! These are the only people besides the Jews who have subsisted as a distinct people from the beginning, and in some respects they very much resemble each other – 1. The Arabs, as well as the Jews, are descended from Abraham, and both boast of their descent from the father of the faithful. 2. The Arabs, as well as the Jews, are circumcised, and both profess to have derived this ceremony from Abraham. 3. The Arabs, as well as the Jews, had originally twelve patriarchs, who were their princes or governors. 4. The Arabs, as well as the

Jews, marry among themselves, and in their own tribes. 5. The Arabs, as well as the Jews, are singular in several of their customs, and are standing monuments to all ages of the exactness of the Divine predictions, and of the veracity of Scripture history. We may with more confidence believe the particulars related of Abraham and Ishmael when we see them verified in their posterity at this day. This is having, as it were, ocular demonstration for our faith.”

²¹ But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.”

Despite the promised blessing to Ishmael, which has surely been fulfilled in an amazing degree, the covenant established in Abraham would likewise be established in Isaac through Sarah. This tells us with all certainty that the covenant is based upon what is spiritual, even if it includes the earthly.

This blessing will reach to the Messiah and then through Him to each of us, who, through His blood are brought near to God and in whose presence we will dwell. But at the time of Abraham and even until now, that isn't fully realized as we'll see from verse 22 –

²² Then He finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

As John Gill says, “The highest enjoyments of God here are not lasting; uninterrupted communion with him is reserved for another world.”

God has finished his discussion with Abraham and this highest enjoyment, filled with laughter and amazement, ends. As a sign that what was said was ironclad, this verse says that “God went up from Abraham.” The Lord who appeared to him wasn't merely a human being. In this single chapter He has been called Yahweh, God Almighty, and God.

At other times in the Bible Yahweh appears in a body in a human manifestation of Himself. To leave no doubt in the great man's faith, He ascends visibly, just as He will do at other times, even at the ascension of Jesus recorded in Acts. And now we move on to our final thought today.

III. A Sign in the Flesh

²³ So Abraham took Ishmael his son, all who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very same day, as God had said to him.

This verse is specifically given to us to demonstrate Abraham's obedience to the directive that was given in verse 12 and 13 which said, "...every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. ¹³ He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised."

God gave the directive and the next verse after He departed Abraham's obedience is noted. This confirms what I said earlier about the changing of Sarai's name to Sarah. The addition of H was an elevation beyond the temporal to the spiritual realm.

This is proven because all of the people in Abraham's household were circumcised, but only Isaac, who isn't even born yet, was given the promise. Think this through with me... The promise was made to Abraham before he was circumcised.

And then when the promise was made concerning Isaac, it wasn't just before Abraham was circumcised, but even before Isaac was conceived. Because this is so, the promise must be a spiritual promise and circumcision cannot play a part in it.

It also is another absolute indication that infant baptism, which we talked about last week, has no connection to circumcision and that it is an unscriptural procedure.

Later in the Bible we will see that through Isaac, the promise will be made again to his son Jacob, who is Israel. Therefore, there is an earthly significance to the circumcision, but there is also a spiritual one which applies only to those who are the elect of God.

Anyone who can trace his lineage back to Abraham is a son of Abraham by birth – and billions of people can do so. But only those who are of faith receive the nearness to God through adoption as sons. Paul makes this clear in Galatians 3:7 –

“Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.”

He makes the point and then spends several chapters defending it. And it's something we need to remember every day of our lives. Especially when we do something wrong or something that we know would really upset God.

He has made a promise, a spiritual promise, of eternal life to all who believe in the work of Jesus. If that promise is based on something we do after the promise is accepted, then it isn't really a spiritual promise.

The idea that a person can lose their salvation based on something they do or fail to do is so foreign to the Bible that it is almost impossible to imagine that people actually teach it. But they do. None of you should ever, ever, ever fail to understand this – you can never lose the salvation Jesus has granted you.

God's love for you, in Christ Jesus, is unconditional, just as His promise to Isaac before He was even born was also unconditional.

²⁴ Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

Abraham was born in the year 2009 Anno Mundi and therefore this circumcision occurred in the year 2108. If you want to know whether this was a painful process or not, it was. Other places in the Bible tell us of adults being circumcised and still being in pain three days later. For a 99 year old man... yeowch.

There are several traditions on who circumcised Abraham. One is that Noah's son, Shem, who was still alive and 549 years old did it. Another is that his head servant Eliezer did it. And a third is that he circumcised himself. If that's true, double yeowch.

²⁵ And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin.

For today's descendants of Ishmael, there is no specific age as to when they circumcise. Some do it at infancy, some at 13 in honor of Ishmael, and some at other ages. However, the covenant between God and his people requires it at the age of 8 days old.

If for no other reason than this, the descendants of Ishmael who have not called on Jesus are not only excluded from the spiritual blessings, but they are excluded from the earthly land blessing as well. The land of Israel belongs to a certain group of people and they follow this practice to this day.

²⁶ That very same day Abraham was circumcised, and his son Ishmael; ²⁷ and all the men of his house, born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

On the very same day that Abraham was instructed to perform the rite by God, he did so. There was no delaying, no contemplating, and no discussion. This rite, instituted in Abraham, would be performed again on the Son of God 1895 years later – when He was 8 days old. In his detailed account of the life of Jesus, we read this in chapter 2 of the book of Luke –

²¹And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

God asked nothing of Abraham, nor of any of Abraham's descendants, that He wasn't willing to ask of His own Son. Abraham was obedient to the call and performed it without delay. This is our last verse of the day and it almost begs the question of each of us...

Have we been obedient to the call of Jesus? There are several parts to this. The first is whether we have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior. If so, there are certain things He asks of us. One is that we be baptized as an outward demonstration of our inward change.

The next is to learn the Bible, to read it, and to be able to explain it to others. This isn't something God would call optional – it is an act of obedience, just as Abraham's circumcision was. In this word, we find how to live properly and walk in a careful and holy manner as we live out our lives. Is this something we're endeavoring to do?

For those who haven't called on Jesus, this is where obedience begins. It is where the circumcision not made with hands comes from. It is a circumcision of the heart which is performed by God. Let me explain how you can be obedient to this call...

Next Genesis 18:1-15 (A Time for Laughter – The Son of Promise)

The Princess, The Son, and The Sign

God said to Abraham, As for Sarai your wife
You shall not call her name Sarai
Even though you've called her it for most of Your life
Sarah shall be her name starting now and as time goes by

I will bless her and also by her give you a son
Yes, I will bless her, she shall be a mother of many nations
Kings of peoples shall come from her and from this one
It will be so forever, through all generations

Then Abraham laughed as he fell on his face
And as he did, he said in his heart
Shall a child be born to me here in this place?
To a man who is one hundred, shall this child's life start?

And shall Sarah who is ninety years old
Bear a son to me, O God, just as you've told
And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you
But God said "No, Sarah your wife shall bear a son... it's true!

You will call him Isaac, yes Laughter is his name
I will establish My covenant with him instead of Ishmael
It is an everlasting covenant which will bring Me fame
And one which will rescue many from the pits of hell

As for Ishmael, I have heard your request
And I have blessed him in several ways
He will be fruitful and multiply and so be blessed
He will beget twelve princes, yes 12 sons he will raise

But my covenant is with Isaac whom Sarah shall bear next year
It will be at the time I have set, so Abraham have no fear

Then God finished talking with him and so up he went
Then Abraham took Ishmael and all who were born in his home
And all who were bought with money, there was no argument
Every male among them was circumcised under the tent's dome

Abraham was 99 when he was circumcised and Ishmael 13
Along with everyone else, it must have been an ouchy scene

But obedience is what he was called to
And obedience is also what God expects of you

Jesus was obedient even to death on a cross
And we too should follow Him, no matter the cost

When we do, our rewards will be great
And nothing can keep us from the blessings of God
Wonderful promises His word does state
To those who will someday on heavenly streets trod

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 18:1-15 **(A TIME FOR LAUGHTER - THE SON OF PROMISE)**

I suppose I quote Acts 17:28 as much as any other verse in the Bible. To me, it's a constant reminder that the Lord is always near and always there for me – ready to respond to my needs and yet also watching over my actions, both good and bad.

The verse says, "...for in Him we live and move and have our being." God is right here with us, even now. He's checking my sermon doctrine; He's checking your heart. He's aware of every person on the beach and every bird in the air.

He's knows about every cricket which will interfere with the audio of this sermon, like they do every week. 😊

But because we can't see Him, it's easy to forget He's there. It's easy to come away with the notion that He may not really be watching... this time. This time I'll get away with it...

But what if there was someone right next to us who we could see, and we had a sneaky suspicion this person was checking out our actions? We tend to act differently when others are watching. Studies have shown that people who use the restroom wash their hands far more often when people are around.

When no one is in the room with them, mostly they just finish up and head for the door. But when others are present, they stop and wash their hands first. Did you know that? Someone could be watching – someone with a hidden camera. So next time,,, wash your hands!

Introduction: There are times that men receive angelic visitations. Do I believe this? Of course I do. The author of Hebrews tells us its so – "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels." Hebrews 13:2

How many of you would change the way you did things if you knew there were angels right there with you? Even more, how would your actions be affected if you knew that the Lord was in your midst?

I don't mean in the invisible, seemingly impersonal way that Acts 17 speaks of, but in the form of a man – one who has arms, feet, a face, eyes...that sees your every move. How then would you act?

Text Verse: *I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people.*

-Leviticus 26:12

God has appeared in human form. He didn't just do it for 30-some years 2000 years ago, but He walked among men since the time of Adam and He appeared throughout the ages to His people as the Bible records and so... May God Speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Lord Walks Among His People

In Deuteronomy 23, we read these words from Moses before Israel entered into the Promised Land –

¹² “Also you shall have a place outside the camp, where you may go out; ¹³ and you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse. ¹⁴ For the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you.” Deuteronomy 23:12-14

Some scholars look at these verses and think its only speaking of the Lord's presence in a non-physical way. In other words, He is spiritually present in the camp of Israel, but not physically there. And yet, this has to be inferred and it has to overlook the physical aspect of what Moses is saying.

Yes, at other times the Bible speaks metaphorically about the arm of God or the right hand of God, but this verse is far more specific and far harder to dismiss. It's the same as when the Lord appeared in Eden –

“And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” Genesis 3:8

Unless you're simply not willing to believe the text as written, you have to admit that the Lord God truly walked in the Garden. He walked there, He walked among the

Israelites, and guess what, He walked right up to Abraham. The text demands this as physical and literal – nothing else is possible as we'll see in the coming verses.

¹ Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

God doesn't have parts. To understand this, you can go back and watch my sermon on Genesis 1:1. The Bible bears this out as I mentioned just a few sermons ago. It says God is Spirit, no one has seen God; that He dwells in unapproachable light; etc.

It also says that God is unchanging on several occasions, including when speaking of Jesus. But it also says that Jesus does change – such as growing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men. So we have a mystery – the mystery of the incarnation.

God, who is outside of His creation and unchanging can't take on parts and remain eternal and unchanging. Therefore, we are left with only one possibility – that the Lord here, who is Jehovah God according to the verse, is the physical manifestation of God.

This is the uniting of God with human flesh in the Person of Jesus – eternal and unchanging and without parts in His divine nature and yet physical and changing in His human nature; having parts – even parts that move – and movement implies change. Great is the mystery of the eternal Christ.

This might not be a popular view, but it is the logical one. Jesus is the Master of time and space and He is here, as He has been several times already in Genesis, appearing in His own history and directing human events which will lead to Himself.

The Lord (all caps in your Bible, meaning Jehovah) appeared to Abraham. It then says that He did so by the terebinth trees of Mamre, and then that it was in the heat of the day. These are all physical descriptions and they demand a bodily appearance.

When the Lord came, Abraham was "sitting in the tent door." This is the prime spot which is occupied even to this day by tent dwellers in the region. They can watch the world go by while being shaded from the sun and they can possibly catch a breeze on their sweating skin.

It's the earliest and longest used form of air conditioning in the world and Abraham was a pioneer of the technique.

² So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground,

Abraham has already met the Lord on several occasions and he knows exactly who has come to meet him. As soon as he saw them, he ran right up to them and made the customary bow of obeisance. He is showing worship to the Lord and the Lord receives it as such.

This has to be soon after the time he was given instructions to circumcise the males because if you remember, the Lord promised that it would be at the same time of the following year that Isaac would be born. Abraham obeyed the order to circumcise and the Lord has returned after his display of obedience.

³ and said, “My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.

Abraham only addresses one of the three. He knows exactly which one is the Lord and it is it to Him alone that he speaks. The context demands that this is none other than Jehovah mentioned in verse 1 and he is completely aware of it.

When he speaks to him, he says something that will occur many more times in the Bible. It is the term “if I have now found favor in Your sight...” or sometimes “if I have found favor in your eyes.” It’s to what we would say today “if you really want to make me happy...” It’s a type of invitation to accept what’ said next.

In this case, it’s that they don’t just pass by, but come and be his guests before passing on. And the specifics are found next –

⁴ Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.

⁵ And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant.

Abraham is, as we’ve seen in the past chapters, an immensely wealthy man and his words here are words of extreme modesty. They fit the customs and pious nature of the people of God. He offers “a little water to be brought to wash their feet” and then they can rest under the tree in the cool shade.

While relaxing he says he'll bring them just a "morsel of bread" instead of bragging that he will offer them a big feast. This thought is found in the book of Proverbs and shows that Solomon's wisdom is built on these modest customs. There he writes –

When you sit down to eat with a ruler,
Consider carefully what *is* before you;
² And put a knife to your throat
If you *are* a man given to appetite.
³ Do not desire his delicacies,
For they *are* deceptive food. Proverbs 23:1-3

When someone boasts about the meal they're giving you, their offering is more often than not a pretense. There's a huge difference between sitting at a table full of food and hearing the host say, "Join me at my humble table" as opposed to "Enjoy the bounty of my wealth." The table is the same, but the spirit of dining will be vastly different.

⁵ cont **They said, "Do as you have said."**

The guests agree to his offer in a simple exchange of words. It's beautiful to imagine that the same Lord who has accepted a meal from Abraham stands and waits for each one of us to offer a similar invitation to Him. The opportunity may come only once in a lifetime, but when it does, we need to respond.

It is a standing offer and the only way to receive it is by opening the door, just as Abraham opened his home to Him here. Jesus tells us of this in the book of Revelation – "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

I would hope that each person will respond properly when the sound of the knock comes. The Lord of Creation doesn't force Himself upon His creatures. As amazing as it is, He allows us the honor of choosing life. Choose wisely.

II. The Lord Dines With His People

⁶ **So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead *it* and make cakes."**

He was probably so excited about the guests and their promise to stay that it says he "hurried" into the tent. He's 99 years old and probably skipped like a teenager at the

chance to entertain them. And his words to Sarah are as urgent as his steps. He tells her to “Quickly” make things ready.

Unlike today where we have refrigerators full of food and can zip together a meal in minutes, there is a ton of preparation for any unplanned meal at Abraham’s tent.

And what he tells Sarah to provide isn’t just a “morsel of bread” like he previously offered. Instead it’s about three times as much as each of them can eat in an entire day. Despite being humble about his offering, the bread alone is truly a banquet fit for a king, and there’s more to come...

⁷ And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave *it* to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it.

Not only did he have Sarah whip together the biggest loaf of bread in town, but he pulled out of his flock a “tender and good calf” as well. Knowing Abraham and the circumstances, he picked the very best one of all and got it ready.

There is a lesson in this verse that we should remind ourselves about. It’s a truth that we face in most meals we eat and yet it’s not something we think of very often. In order to live, something else must die. What the world of vegetarians sees as brutal and savage is actually a picture of our own salvation.

In order for us to live, there had to be death. Without Jesus’ cross, we would remain spiritually dead and in our sins, but because of His death, we now have a chance and an opportunity to receive life – not just for another 8 hours until our next meal, but life which will never end. Think about that as we continue today.

⁸ So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set *it* before them;

Bread, butter, milk, and a calf... It’s quite a bit more than a “morsel of bread” which he had spoken of when they came to him. If you want an idea of how much food this was, let me quote to you the words of Abbe Fleury – “We have an instance of a splendid entertainment in that which Abraham made for the three angels. He set a whole calf before them, new bread, but baked on the hearth, together with butter and milk. Three measures of meal were baked into bread on this occasion, which come to more than two of our bushels, and nearly to fifty-six pounds of our weight...”

Fifty-six pounds of bread, plus a calf, butter, and milk is a lot. Maybe they asked for a take home box for some of it.

^{8 (con't)} **and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.**

I have to admit that whenever I read this, I always laugh to myself. There is Abraham standing there watching these three eat. I don't know... it just gives me a mental picture that I can't quite place...

Anyway, in the customs of the mid-east, it isn't considered at all menial for the chief of a household to help prepare and serve a meal like this and it would actually be a breach of respect for him to sit and eat with them. Instead, Abraham stood ready to attend to any and every need the visitors might have.

These verses ought to bring up the obvious inspection of our own selves. He not only brought out the finest and the best, but he brought out much more than was necessary too. The question each of us has to answer individually is whether we are doing the same?

How much of what you **can** give to the Lord do you actually give? I'm not talking only about money, but praise, worship, time, personal inconvenience, etc. Abraham personally attended to them, not one of his hundreds of servants. He gave the best of what he had and he gave it in abundance, and he did it personally.

He, this man known for his faith, was also a man of deeds and actions. Let us, and I mean this sincerely, be sons of Abraham not only in faith, but in deeds of faith as well.

As a kind of side note to this meal, and especially in this world which is spiraling more and more toward the insane each day... "Yes, Jesus ate meat."

Kamran Pasha, [Was Jesus a Vegetarian](#), the Huffington Post, 3 Sep 2009 – "Indeed, human beings throughout history have questioned the morality of animal slaughter, and religious traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism have long been the home for those who believe that killing and consuming sentient animals is barbaric. Religious vegetarianism is commonplace in the East, but is not considered mainstream in most Western faith communities. And yet, after lengthy research into the historical record, I have become convinced that Jesus Christ himself was in all likelihood a vegetarian, and that vegetarianism was probably a central tenet of the early Christian community founded by his disciples. In fact, there is evidence that Christ's opposition to animal

sacrifice at the Jewish Temple may have been the triggering event that led to the Crucifixion. Yes, I know. This sounds preposterous. ...”

Preposterous? This is one of the most insane articles ever written. Only a dolt or a sub-dolt could come to this conclusion. This person did no research at all. Instead, he lied his way through the entire article. Instead of appearing scholarly, he proves himself an idiot.

⁹Then they said to him, “Where *is* Sarah your wife?” So he said, “Here, in the tent.”

If you want to elevate a friendship, you have a meal with that person. A meal is where the impersonal becomes personal. It is where the hidden matter becomes evident. It is where alliances are made, secrets are revealed, and where bonds grow strong.

Having a meal together, particularly at one’s home, is as close to intimacy as people come apart from a physical relationship which is supposed to be reserved for a man and a wife. The Lord has come, the Lord has eaten, and the Lord has been intimate with His friend, Abraham.

The Lord now asks about Sarah, who is actually the person that the meeting was principally designed to highlight. This is like watching a movie where the main actor actually doesn’t appear as the main actor until a surprising point in the movie.

Abraham has already been given the promise and he has been obedient, but Sarah has been on the fringes of the narrative. Now she comes into focus as the lens directs towards her. How do we know this, because the question is so direct, “Where is Sarah your wife.” The Lord asks for her by name.

This can only mean that the visit has been centered around her all the time and the formalities of the culture were merely relaxing and yummy weigh-stations on the highway to the destination.

Abraham’s answer to the question, that she is “here in the tent,” means that she was close enough to hear every word of the conversation. It is purposeful and intended to let them know they can call her if they want, but either way she is privy to their talk.

¹⁰ And He said, “I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.” (Sarah was listening in the tent door which *was* behind him.)

The Lord promises to return according “to the time of life.” This doesn’t mean that He’s going to come again personally, but that He will visit in the sense of fulfilling the promise. The question is, “What does it mean when He says, ‘according to the time of life?’”

I’m going to give you a couple options and let you decide, because I have no idea. It either means at the same time next year, meaning in 12 months. Or it means in nine months which is the duration of the pregnancy that will happen as soon as Abraham gets going. Or it means during the spring of the year – the time when life springs back into its productive cycle of life. Think and choose...

III. The Lord Knows His People Intimately

¹¹ Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.

We already knew this from 13 years before when Sarah, or Sarai at that time, offered Abraham her maidservant Hagar. However, the Bible is repeating this so that we know that what is coming is nothing other than divine intervention. By this time in human history, a woman who is 89 years old is too old to bear.

¹² Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, “After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”

Sarah laughs at the announcement, but not as Abraham did when he was told. Instead, the Bible makes a distinction – “She laughed within herself.” In other words, “Pshaw.” Maybe she made the sound along with a scrunchy face. Her doubt and laughter is then made clear in her words.

Her words don’t just implicate her own barren state, they also attempt to do so with Abraham by saying he’s too old too. But the miracle is in her womb, not his seed. It’s a picture that will be repeated several times in the Bible and culminating in the greatest miracle of all – the conception of Jesus in the womb of a virgin.

Sarah’s doubt will be replaced by Mary’s faith and the Son of God will fill the world with the laughter of joy, not incredulity. With God all things are possible. But to Sarah’s credit she states that Abraham is her “lord.” The faults are forgotten, but that which is noble remains.

The Holy Spirit, writing through Peter in chapter 3 of his first letter, gives us something good about Sarah from the account and made her an example of the godly wife through all generations –

For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, ⁶ as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord,...

It's good to know that when God forgives a transgression such as in Sarah, it's removed as far from us as the east is from the west, but our notable deeds He will remember for all eternity and adorn us with blessing because of them.

¹³ And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?’

¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”

Jehovah speaks. There is no other possibility left in the account than that this is God incarnate; it is Jesus. The name Jehovah belongs solely to the Lord and no created being, and because God is unseen, then this is Jesus. No other possibility exists.

His words here show both His omniscience and His omnipotence. His omniscience is seen when Sarah laughed and spoke silently, but her words are as if shouted from the housetops from He who searches hearts and minds – an attribute belonging to God alone and to whom it is ascribed to Jesus in the New Testament.

His omnipotence is seen in His exclamation, ha'yippahlay me'Yehovah dabar... “Is anything too hard for Jehovah?” The question is rhetorical and demands a negative response... “Nothing, O nothing, it too hard for Jehovah.”

Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh.

Is there anything too hard for Me?

Why, I spoke the universe into existence.

This child will come, Sarah, just wait and see...

¹⁵ But Sarah denied it, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. And He said, “No, but you did laugh!”

Sin comes at us from different angles and it is always seizing the opportunity to come out of us in words and actions. Sarah sins for a second time. First she laughed in disbelief at the promise of the Lord and then she lies. One sin often leads to another and in this case it was because of fear – she was afraid.

The Lord showed that He knew what was otherwise unknowable and she recoiled from it. And this doubt isn't unique in the world. Instead it's the standard. God has spoken out the pages of the Bible which verify – beyond a shadow of a doubt – that He is aware of all things.

But we add sin to sin by denying His word, even in the face of overwhelming evidence. The Bible is so absolutely accurate in all that it details that we are left without any excuse at all. But out of fear – fear because of our own sin – we try to hide the evidence and deny it exists.

Fortunately for Sarah, this is her final moment of unbelief. She crosses over to the side of light and truth and Hebrews 11 records the transformation –

By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Hebrews 11:11

Matthew Henry says that “One sin commonly brings in another, and it is not likely we shall strictly keep to the truth when we question the Divine truth.”

Fortunately for Sarah, her failure to keep the truth passed behind her and now she stands on that Divine truth as is recorded for us in Hebrews. Some of us here or watching by video might be hiding from the truth and in so doing are attempting to deny even the Divine truth – one lie compounding upon another.

This can only lead to eternal sadness, but there is a way to put these things behind you. Let me tell you how we can exchange our body of death, which is brought on by sin, for life which is available because of Jesus' death...

A Time for Laughter

The Lord appeared to Abraham in the heat of the day
Near the terebinth trees of Mamre as he sat by the tent door
While he was sitting the Lord passed by that way

And the Lord came with others, yes there were two more

Abraham lifted his eyes in order to see the sight
And behold three men were standing close by
So he up got to meet them, filled with delight
To them hospitality he would not deny

Bowing himself to the ground in respect complete
He asked them to stay if he had found favor in their sight
Let me bring water and let me wash your feet
And you can rest under the tree, this spot here is just right

I will bring you a morsel of bread refreshing to the heart
And then you may pass by, yes... then you may depart

You have come to your servant please stay to break bread
And their response came with a smile, "Do as you have said."

He instructed Sarah to make ready three seahs of fine meal
And then he ran to the herd and took a good and tender calf
He whipped together a banquet, and he did it with great zeal
He went all out for them, an entire measure – not just a half

So he took butter and milk and the calf he had prepared
And set it before them to eat as he stood and stared

Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?"
He pointed to the place, "Here, in the tent."
"I will certainly return to you according to the time of life
And behold she shall have a son, though her years seem spent

She was behind him listening at the tent's door
Trying to account for what had happened heretofore

Both Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age
And Sarah had passed the time for bearing a child
And she laughed within herself a laugh of doubt-age
I have grown old and what I hear is to me certainly wild

And the Lord said to Abraham, yes He did say
Why did Sarah laugh, why did she show dismay?

Is anything too hard for the Lord?
I will return, according to the time of life,
And then you will see the truth in My word
You will have a son, yes... a son from Sarah your wife

But Sarah denied *it*, saying, "I did not laugh,"
For she was afraid and so she told lie
But He saw through her words and her awkward gaff
Because with the Lord, nothing is hidden from His eye

Mercy is found in the Lord whether from one sin or a lot
If we accept His pardon, our relationship He will restore
And in His eternal home there He will reserve a spot
And He will safely lead us along to that distant shore

So let us give him all the glory He is due
For the gift of eternal life granted to me and you

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 18:16-33 **(PROCLAIMING RIGHTEOUSNESS)**

Introduction: Sodom and Gomorrah are the Bible's prime example of ungodliness and of God's judgment on sin. Today we'll look at events prior to the judgment on those cities. These events center on Abraham and his visit from the Lord and we will see how our action or lack of action as individuals can affect the society in which we live, even to the point that the judgment of God is necessary.

Every one of us who is a saved believer in Jesus Christ has responsibilities to others around us. Abraham exercises his responsibility by petitioning the Lord on behalf of His people. And we'll look into what Lot may or may not have done to fulfill his responsibility as a member of the society in which he lives. Only in the weeks to come will we see if he fulfilled his duties or not.

Text Verse: *Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; Let the sea roar, and all its fullness; ¹² Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the LORD. ¹³ For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth. Psalm 96:11-13*

The Lord is the Judge of all the earth and when He judges it is in absolute righteousness. The Bible proclaims that despite being a loving Creator, which He is, He is also holy and will not look favorably upon the sins of the people. Let us understand this and remember to view sin for what it is – a violation against His perfect nature, and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. An Outcry against Sin

Before we look at today's verses, we should consider what leads up to them. Let's review when Sodom and Gomorrah are first brought into focus and how Lot ended up there.

Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and herds and tents. ⁶ Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. ⁷ And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land. ⁸ So Abram said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my

herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we *are* brethren. ⁹ *Is* not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If *you take* the left, then I will go to the right; or, if *you go* to the right, then I will go to the left.” /// Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelt in the cities of the plain and pitched *his* tent even as far as Sodom. ¹³ But the men of Sodom *were* exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD. -Genesis 13:5-9, 12-13

In chapter 14, the 4 kings from the east engaged the 5 kings around Sodom in battle and took Lot captive. Abraham followed after them and defeated them and rescued Lot. After that time, Sodom isn't mentioned again until today's verses. Everything else has dealt with Abraham in one way or another.

In the first verses of chapter 18, which we looked at last week, the Lord appeared with two others and ate at Abraham's tent and then confirmed what he had already been told, that Sarah would have a son and he would be born within the next year. Now that this meeting has ended, we come to today's verses.

¹⁶ Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom,...

The meal is done and the promise of a son in the coming year is behind them. Sarah laughed about it in a mocking way and after that, she was caught in a lie. All of this was to show us that nothing is outside of the power of God and nothing is hidden from Him.

This is important to understand because of what lies ahead. By coming to Abraham before going to Sodom, the account is placed in the Bible chronologically and it allows us to understand more clearly the somewhat confusing things which lie ahead.

As they rise it says they looked toward Sodom. This is stated to show Abraham, and us, that judgment is coming. The very last words spoken about Sodom in chapter 13 were, "But the men of Sodom *were* exceedingly wicked and sinful against the LORD."

Because of their wickedness and the fact that they weren't wiped out by the invading armies in Chapter 14, the Lord will now have to act personally. What isn't accomplished by the hands of man will now be tended to by the Lord.

This is an indictment on all sin in all societies and at all times. Man has been given the authority to judge the affairs of each nation. When those affairs are handled properly, the nation purges its sin and remains free from the Lord's destructive judgment.

However, when a nation fails to prosecute and sentence wickedness, the Lord will step in. This was true with Israel, it's true with nations today, and it will be the case with the one-world government which is coming. If we don't judge sin, God will.

America has tasted judgment in several ways in the recent years – financially, through terrorism, and in famine, plague, and natural disaster, but we've failed to humble our hearts and prosecute the sins of the people. Paying attention to what lies ahead for Sodom will allow us to see what the result of what the same sins in America will be.

16 (con't) and Abraham went with them to send them on the way.

This is kind of an unwritten rule of humanity which is found in people around the world, Abraham went along with the three as they headed off. We do this for a number of reasons.

- 1) We want to make sure people are heading on the right road.
- 2) We may want to extend the visit as long as possible like in the Ephesians did with Paul in Acts 20 –

“And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. ³⁷ Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, ³⁸ sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.”

- 3) We may have things we want to show along the way, such as “These are my flocks.” “This is where my servant fell and broke his leg.” “There's a beautiful spring of water right on the other side of that hill... is that where you spoke to Hagar?”
- 4) We may want to be a part of what's coming and not be left out. This happened to Peter when he was asked to go to the house of Cornelius in Acts 10. Some of the people he stayed with came along as witnesses –

“On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.” -Acts 10:23

- 5) We may do it as a sign of respect for a person –

“Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, ⁶ who have borne witness of your love before the church. *If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, ⁷ because they went forth for His name’s sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.” 3 John -5-8*

In this universal tradition of sending others off, Abraham went along with the men as they departed.

**¹⁷ And the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,
¹⁸ since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?”**

Although stated in the form of a question, “Shall I hide?” it is meant in the form of an affirmative statement, “I shall not hide.” This type of question is found throughout the Bible and is commonly spoken by us today. It is rhetorical and it is a way of getting us to think through the issue at hand. Amos, speaking the word of the Lord asks a beautiful set of such questions –

“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? ⁴ Will a lion roar in the forest, when he has no prey? Will a young lion cry out of his den, if he has caught nothing? ⁵ Will a bird fall into a snare on the earth, where there is no trap for it? Will a snare spring up from the earth, if it has caught nothing at all? ⁶ If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done *it*?” Amos 3:3-6

The answer to each of these is obvious. After asking them, Amos follows up with another thought which completely and fully explains the Lord’s intent to tell Abraham –

“⁷ Surely the Lord GOD does nothing,
Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” Amos 3:7

Abraham is identified as a prophet in Genesis 20 and so this is to be taken as a rhetorical question. He is a prophet of God and a part of the Lord’s plan for bringing in the Messiah. He will become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. And so the Lord includes him in what’s coming.

But there are more reasons as well...

¹⁹ For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”

The Lord personally chose Abraham to be the father of all the people of God – both physically and spiritually. By showing him what He is about to do, the Lord is instructing him in the severity of keeping the way of the Lord and in doing what is right and just.

He is going to use the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as an object lesson of what it means to turn away from these things. It will be a permanent memorial concerning the punishments which come from violating the righteousness of God.

It will also serve as an eternal reminder to God’s people about the fate of those who are ungodly. It has been 25 years since Abraham entered Canaan and the people of Sodom were already there and known for their wickedness at that time.

He was told earlier that he couldn’t possess the land of Canaan because the wickedness of the Amorites hadn’t yet reached its full measure and that it wouldn’t do so for 430 years. However, the destruction of Sodom was coming because it had. God’s patience with this particular group of people had ended.

Two things are happening at once. The first is the Lord revealing His intended actions to an upright person and at the same time showing him why He is taking the actions in the first place. This two edged sword is perfectly noted in Proverbs 3:32 –

For the perverse *person is* an abomination to the LORD,
But His secret counsel *is* with the upright. Proverbs 3:32

And again, in the book of Hosea, at the time prior to the exile of Israel, the Lord reminds the people of these things in hope that they will remember, believe, and repent –

Who *is* wise? Let him understand these things. *Who is* prudent? Let him know them. For the ways of the LORD *are* right; The righteous walk in them, But transgressors stumble in them. Hosea 14:9

²⁰ And the LORD said, “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave,

What is the sin of Sodom? Pretty much everyone but sodomites agrees on what it is, but the Bible is clear on it. We'll look at it in detail when we get to the next chapter, but yes, it is centered mainly on homosexuality and sexual perversion which is a crime against the natural order which God intended for His creatures.

It also involves, according to Ezekiel, gluttony, laziness, and an unwillingness to help others in need. These are the grave sins for which the outcry is made. If you don't see America written all over these sins, then you're not looking. Day after day for years, porn has been the number 1 search on internet search engines.

Our president and approximately one half of our nation's leaders, represented by the democrat party openly support the gay agenda and it has become one of the party issues in their 2012 platform. They have sent openly homosexual members to congress and they have flaunted their perversion in the daylight.

They're demanding these rights for our military and in our schools. They are leading us to the sure and complete destruction which we rightly deserve for closing our eyes and electing these vulgar and perverse people with this twisted agenda.

We've become gluttonous and fat in this nation and our appetite has become unrestrained. Instead of moderation, we look to pills to take away pounds. Instead of work to keep healthy, we go to doctors for more pills, paying for them with welfare checks.

And not helping others in need...? We've killed unborn children to the number of 50 million... and we turn a blind eye. We've elected a president who once voted "in favor of legalizing infanticide," by voting "to protect doctors who killed babies who survived the abortion process." What is coming upon Sodom will be coming upon America unless we turn from our ways.

The Bible says, "That which has been *is* what will be, That which *is* done is what will be done, And *there is* nothing new under the sun." We are heading right into the same destructive Force which met with and destroyed Sodom.

Yes, the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah was great... how much more is it crying out against us in the land which has a Bible in every home and a church on every corner. With great knowledge comes great responsibility and surely great judgment.

²¹ I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.”

We read an interesting parallel in Genesis 11 at the time of the Tower of Babel. It says, “But the LORD **came down** to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built.”

The Lord is again descending to the level of man to test and see the situation. It is as if He is stepping off His throne, even in the presence of Abraham, to make His determination. And this has nothing to do with whether He already knew the situation of Sodom or not – He did.

This act of justice is for the sake of Abraham and is a lesson of instruction for judges of the future. We are to personally inspect a situation to determine a matter before judgment and not go by word alone. The Lord has set the example in judicial proceedings.

II. The Judge of All the Earth

²² Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD.

²³ And Abraham came near and said, “Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?”

The result of what is coming is inevitable and Abraham seems to know it. The two men who were with the Lord have turned toward Sodom and will carry out the sentence. He’s already been there and he knows the wickedness of the place.

And so he “came near” to the Lord. This is a defining moment in the Bible because it is the Bible’s first hint of a prayer to the Lord.

In the 73rd Psalm we read this –

But *it is* good for me to **draw near** to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD,
That I may declare all Your works. (vs 28)

Abraham is drawing near to the Lord in order to petition Him and to understand and declare all His works. There is only one hope in his heart and that is Lot’s *personal*

testimony. We won't know about it until we get to the next chapter, but by what Abraham says in the coming verses, we can guess he already knows.

Now he speaks to the Lord as if he were a free-born son in the house – openly and frankly, and he will continue to do so through the entire conversation. And yet he will do it with an air of humility. The book of Hebrews says this to the believer when speaking of our interactions with the Lord –

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” -Hebrews 4:16

I have no problem with people quoting this and trusting in it. It is an admonition to every believer that we should have the confidence to enter the throne of God's grace in our time of need. But as I've told people many times in the past, we need to be on our face once we get there.

One of the most appalling and arrogant things that I hear Christians say, and I hear them say it all the time is “**I claim.**” “I claim something in Jesus' name.” – be it a Porsche or healing, be it financial help or someone's salvation. We have **no right** to claim anything except that which the Bible speaks of and the Bible doesn't use the word “claim” ...**ever** for such things from God.

Abraham's boldness mixed with humility is the appropriate measure of how we too should conduct our affairs in the presence of the Lord. Let's watch as he speaks to his Creator...

²⁴ Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare *it* for the fifty righteous that were in it?

²⁵ Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

There are actually five cities that are included in the account. Sodom and Gomorrah are simply the principle cities of this group of five, and Sodom is especially noted because it's where Lot is. Could there be an average of ten righteous people per city?

If there are, then he is reminding the Lord that destroying the cities would destroy the righteous with the wicked. This is a problem and a question that not only fills the entire

Bible, but also the minds of almost every person who has ever lived. “Why do bad events happen to good people?”

It is something that Job deals with. It is something that Habakkuk deals with. It is something that Paul speaks about and it is struggled over and debated the world over. There is a wrong view to God’s justice which says there is a law governing fairness which is higher than God and therefore it is binding on Him.

In essence He must act in response to the law itself. When we believe this, we make our appeal to the law. Our prayers to, or our comments about God, reflect this. This is wrong.

The correct view is that God **is** the standard of justice. He is the Creator and therefore He is before His creation. Therefore anything about Him simply *is* – it doesn’t change, it doesn’t increase or decrease. His power is used *in conjunction with* His own moral perfection. Therefore, *whatever* God does is fair – whether we understand it or not.

When we see this, we make our appeal directly to Him and not to the standard which stems from Him or to which He is subordinate. This is what Abraham has done. He has appealed directly to the Creator, though he doesn’t fully understand the situation, he knows the Source of the justice and he acknowledges it accordingly.

Non-Christians and confused Christians don’t understand this concept and therefore they blame God for adversity, tragedy, and trouble. But the one who knows God’s character and His nature stands on the *assurance* that what occurs is perfectly just and fair.

Isaiah understood this as he penned these words –

The righteous perishes, And no man takes *it* to heart; Merciful men *are* taken away, While no one considers That the righteous is taken away from evil. ² He shall enter into peace; They shall rest in their beds, *Each one walking in* his uprightness. -Isaiah 57:1-2

There is one thing lacking in Abraham’s understanding of the pending judgment – apart from imputed righteousness, there is none righteous, no not one. Abraham may be making a plea based on a faulty premise. Man is fallen and inherently unrighteous and therefore whatever judgment falls on Sodom is deserved.

III. Pondering Lot's Witness

I hope you'll pay particular attention to this point and I hope you'll see yourself and your own testimony all over it – either meeting the needs or seeing that you don't. If you don't I hope you will endeavor to do so in the future.

²⁶ So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."

²⁷ Then Abraham answered and said, "Indeed now, I who *am but* dust and ashes have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord:

²⁸ Suppose there were five less than the fifty righteous; would You destroy all of the city for *lack of five*?" So He said, "If I find there forty-five, I will not destroy it."

Abraham is now facing a dilemma. He was counting on there being 50 righteous people there. But he already knew the wickedness of the place. It was morally bankrupt. However, Lot had moved there and he was a follower of the one true God. He had a large camp with many employees under him too.

We know from 2 Peter that Lot was a righteous man. So he obviously wasn't only a follower of the Lord, but also one to *share the news about Him*, right? He must have convinced 49 people about the path of righteousness. But... maybe not.

Lord, I am dust and ashes, but let me speak again. Dust and ashes is a reference to two concepts about the human being. First that we came from the dust when the Lord created us. Second, that we are ashes – beings deserving the judgment of fire in the presence of pure holiness. From dust we came and to ashes we deserve to go.

"I am dust and ashes, but what if there are only forty five?" You see, he'd been around Lot enough to know that he might not have told his shepherders about the Lord. Lot was a busy guy and so Abraham realizes that he can't count them in, so he'd better lower his number to forty five? And the Lord agrees – not for 45.

²⁹ And he spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose there should be forty found there?" So He said, "I will not do *it* for the sake of forty."

Abraham thinks it through again and he says to himself, "Hmmm, I never saw Lot talk to any of his camp's kitchen staff either. I don't think there's a single believer in the group." "Lord, what if there's only forty instead of forty five? And the Lord agrees – not for 40.

³⁰ Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: suppose thirty should be found there?” So He said, “I will not do *it* if I find thirty there.”

“Hmmm,” he says to himself the fourth time, “I never saw Lot give one family sermon in front of his harvesting crew. In fact, all ten of them cuss like the dickens and they drink beer all night. I’d better not trust in any of them either. Lord, what if there’s only thirty instead of forty? And the Lord agrees – not for 30.

³¹ And he said, “Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord: Suppose twenty should be found there?” So He said, “I will not destroy *it* for the sake of twenty.”

Abraham is running out of employees. He’s considered the shepherds, the camp cooks, the harvesters – Lot hasn’t talked to any of them. He’s been a backslider since he and Abraham separated more than 20 years ago.

The last time he visited Lot’s homestead, even the maids in the house were drinking and going out with the locals till all hours of the night. He can’t count on them either. Instead of being in church on Sunday morning, they’re sleeping in from hangovers. Lord what if there’s only 20? And the Lord agrees – not for 20.

³² Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy *it* for the sake of ten.”

Well, he can’t count on any of the hired staff and he’s at 20. After thinking about it, if he hasn’t talked to any of his own staff, then he probably hasn’t talked to any of his neighbors either. Lot has proved to be a major disappointment in his witness.

This leaves only four people in the house – Lot, his wife, and two daughters. The two daughters are set to be married and surely Lot would make sure they would marry godly men. That’s six people. And those men would be godly because of godly parents.

They would have raised them properly and punished them when they did wrong. Yes, there must be those four godly parents for those two godly boys who to marry his two godly daughters. Lord, what if there are only 10? And the Lord agrees – not for 10.

Six times Abraham pleads with the Lord and six times he sees the consequences of being a faithless witness for the Lord. Five cities stand in the face of destruction because one man failed to open his mouth and speak out.

I hope each person here is seeing themselves next to Lot in the mirror. We're heading for judgment and there's only one way to avert it – speaking out. And even that probably won't do at this point. The most we can do is pull those we meet out of the fire.

Are you willing to go to heaven while those around you are destined for hell? There really is an eternal consequence for your lack of witness. As Matthew Henry says **to you** – “Though sin is to be hated, sinners are to be pitied and prayed for. God delights not in their death, nor should we desire, but deprecate, the woeful day.” We need to witness and pray that they may be saved.

³³ So the LORD went His way as soon as He had finished speaking with Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

We all have questions of the Lord and almost always the answers are found in the pages of the Bible. When they're not, Abraham and others have been used as examples of how to interact with Him and what is and isn't appropriate in our dealings with Him.

“I claim salvation for those in Sodom.” “I claim that this destruction be averted.” Never, no never, speak those words again in the presence of Your Creator! Have a little humility...

Let's remember today's account and know that when things are troubling us, we have a right to question the Lord about what is happening and how it will be handled. But in the end, we need to remember that He is God and we are man. Abraham never claim diddly from the Lord, but trusted that what the Lord determined was ultimately right and just.

His decisions concerning a matter are infinitely wiser than our hopes about it and so let's remember to trust His decisions and His counsel as a just and righteous Judge. If anyone here has never understood their need for Jesus who is the Mediator and Advocate between God and man, let me explain this to you...

Next Week – Genesis 19:1-11 (Destruction is Coming – Shadows of the Rapture)

The Outcry against Wickedness

The men rose and looked toward Sodom
And Abraham went with them, to send them on their way

And the Lord determined to reveal his intentions to him
Even if Abraham in this would find dismay

“I have known him and instructed him in the life to lead
And this pertains to his descendants too
They shall keep the way of the Lord surely and indeed
To do righteousness and justice all generations through

And the Lord said, “Because the outcry is so great”
And because their sin is very grave
I go down to Sodom and Gomorrah, I will not hesitate
To see whether the rumor is true, of how they misbehave

Then the men turned and went toward this task so grim
But Abraham stood still before the Lord, waiting to talk to Him

“Would you destroy the righteous with the wicked also?
I am sure this won’t occur, tell me it is not so

“Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city
Would You also destroy the place and not spare it for them?
Far be it from You to do such a thing, it cannot be
Destroying the righteous with the wicked, like tearing a cloth with one hem

“Far be it from You! It can’t be so in my sight
Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what’s just and right?

So the Lord said, “If for fifty righteous within the city,
Then I will spare the place – for their sakes I will show pity

Then Abraham answered and said, “Indeed now
I who am but dust and ashes have spoken to the Lord
Suppose there were five less than the fifty somehow
Would You destroy all for lack of five?” Tell me your word

So He said, “If I find there forty-five
The people of the city will remain alive

And Abraham spoke yet again and this he said,

“Suppose there should be forty found there?” What will you do?
I will not do it for the sake of forty instead
I have spoken and you know My word is true

Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak
Suppose there should be only thirty found there?
“I will not do it if I find thirty. Though the number is quite weak”
Abraham, I can see how much you care

“Indeed now, I have taken it upon myself to speak to the Lord
Suppose that only twenty should be found there?”
“I won’t destroy for the sake of twenty. Thus you have my word”
But this number is getting pretty low, it will end just where?

Then he said, “Let not the Lord be angry
Let the Lord show kindness and favor to me”
I will speak again but it will be only once more
I have already spoken so many times before

Suppose ten should be found there?”
And He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of ten.”
For ten righteous souls the city I will spare
Yes, I will do it for them... Abraham, I’m glad you asked again

So the Lord went His way after speaking
And Abraham returned to his place
His curiosity was certainly piquing
What would befall the cities that lay south of his place

If you wonder about how the Lord deals with us
He is righteous and He is also just
To save us from sure destruction He sent His Son Jesus
Yes, He is completely fair, in this all souls can trust

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 19:1-11 **(DESTRUCTION IS COMING – SHADOWS OF THE RAPTURE)**

Introduction: One of the most disputed doctrines to be found in the Bible in modern times concerns the rapture of the church. There are those who deny it will even occur.

They take clear and concise passages from the Bible, which simply can't mean anything else, and they close their eyes to them, run from them, hide from them, pooh pooh them, belittle them when analyzed as they should be, and they laugh at those who believe them just as they're written.

And then, of course, there are those who believe in the rapture because of these same clear and concise passages, but they dispute over the timing of it. Will the rapture happen before the antichrist is revealed or after?

Will it happen before the tribulation period, in the middle of it, or at the end of it? Will there be a partial rapture? Will there be several raptures? Will this happen or will that happen? People argue, people fight, people cry "heretic" at those who disagree. It's a mess and it causes many to wring their hands and worry about the issue to the point of exhaustion.

People spend their time reading and quoting the Left Behind series rather than reading and quoting their Bible. Why? Because Left Behind is so much easier to read and someone else's opinion is a safe refuge from the overwhelming complexity of the Bible.

And of course there are those that take passages entirely out of context, and they apply them to the rapture. I'm sure you've heard this one a million times used in conjunction with rapture verses –

“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. ³⁷ But as the days of Noah *were*, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.” Matt 24:36-39

This isn't a rapture verse and it can't be applied to it. The truth of what is said may apply to the rapture – that we simply won't know the timing of it, but this is not a rapture

verse. Having said that, like most things in the New Testament, there are often pictures of what is coming in the Old. The rapture is such an event, and it's found in a rather unlikely place. Today we will discover it.

Text Verse: *After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." Revelation 4:1*

Yes, there is a Door standing open in heaven and its access is granted through the precious blood of our Lord Jesus and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Who is Righteous Among You?

Last week, we saw the Lord's intentions head to Sodom because of the outcry against it. After this, we witnessed Abraham's concern for the righteous within the city and his appeal to the Lord to spare it if just 10 people could be found. Today, we will discover whether that low, low number was actually attainable or not...

¹ Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening,...

The two men who were with the Lord and who met and dined with Abraham last week are the two who have now arrived at Sodom. Twice the Hebrew word used to describe these two is *malakim* or angels.

These two are being sent on a duty as messengers. In other words, it is describing their office, not specifically their nature. Because of this, whether they are actually angels or just divine messengers of some other sort cannot be fully determined.

Its evening time and it's probably still hot out. When these same two came to meet Abraham, he was sitting by the door of his tent and it said it was "the heat of the day." The time of year had Abraham sitting by the tent door to catch a passing breeze and the same is probably true with Lot because verse 1 continues with...

¹ (con't) and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom.

The gate and walls of ancient Middle Eastern cities were usually built out of stone and the gate normally had an arched entrance with deep recesses on each side. In these

recesses, they built seating where people could relax, conduct business, guard if necessary, judge cases, etc.

These recesses would be in the shade and catch any breezes coming through, just as Abraham did at the door of his tent. In Lot's case, he was probably a judge of Sodom. We'll get this from what somebody says to him later. On other occasions as we get through the Old Testament, we'll see that the elders and judges spent their time at the city gates.

Along with being a judge, he was probably also a nice guy who figured that anyone coming to into the city at evening time would need a place to stay. Sitting here like this might have been his daily habit. He could sit and watch the world pass by and wait on strangers while his family was whipping together dinner.

^{1 (con't)} **When Lot saw *them*, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground.**

When Abraham fell on his face before the Lord, it was in respect and humility **and** as a sign of worship. What Lot is doing here is the same, but without the worship. There are plenty of examples of people bowing down in front of others without indicating worship.

Let's look at one from 1 Samuel, where David meets his best friend in the fields before he flees from King Saul so you can see –

⁴¹ “As soon as the lad had gone, David arose from *a place* toward the south, fell on his face to the ground, and bowed down three times. And they kissed one another; and they wept together, but David more so. ⁴² Then Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘May the LORD be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever.’” So he arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city.” 1 Samuel 20:41-42

What Lot is doing by bowing to the two men who show up at the gates of the city is esteeming others better than himself and showing humility, even to strangers. This is exactly the same thing we're asked to do many times such as in the Philippians 2:3-4 –

³ Let nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴ Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

² And he said, “Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant’s house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.” And they said, “No, but we will spend the night in the open square.”

Lot doesn’t just greet the strangers with humility, but he offered them his home and hospitality as well. He’s demonstrating his own righteousness in the presence of complete strangers. Because of the time of day, these guys wouldn’t have had time to walk to any other city and they wouldn’t be safe sleeping on the open road.

This means that they’d sleep in Sodom. But this would be just as dangerous because the people of the town were especially wicked. To ensure their safety, he offers his home. Something similar happened in Luke 24 when two of the disciples met and talked with Jesus on the road, but didn’t know it was Him –

²⁸ Then they drew near to the village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. ²⁹ But they constrained Him, saying, “Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” And He went in to stay with them.

It’s generosity like this that the Bible asks from us. It’s tough to do though because the world is so full of wicked people that you never know if you’re inviting in an angel or a mass murderer. However, the Bible asks us to stand firm and even explains why –

Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels. -Hebrews 13:2

³ But he insisted strongly; so they turned in to him and entered his house. Then he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

I want to show you another set of verses from 2 Samuel 15 which is similar to this, but then point out the differences too –

¹ After this it happened that Absalom provided himself with chariots and horses, and fifty men to run before him. ² Now Absalom would rise early and stand beside the way to the gate. So it was, whenever anyone who had a lawsuit came to the

king for a decision, that Absalom would call to him and say, “What city *are* you from?” And he would say, “Your servant *is* from such and such a tribe of Israel.”³ Then Absalom would say to him, “Look, your case *is* good and right; but *there is* no deputy of the king to hear you.”⁴ Moreover Absalom would say, “Oh, that I were made judge in the land, and everyone who has any suit or cause would come to me; then I would give him justice.”⁵ And so it was, whenever anyone came near to bow down to him, that he would put out his hand and take him and kiss him.⁶ In this manner Absalom acted toward all Israel who came to the king for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

Lot was genuinely concerned about the people he was inviting to his home. There was no selfish ambition and there was no thought of getting paid for his efforts. He was simply a nice guy taking care of strangers.

On the other hand, Absalom met people at the same location – the city gate, but instead of being a nice guy, he had an agenda. He intended to overthrow his own father and steal the kingdom for himself. In the end, it cost him his life. On the contrary, Lot’s actions will save his life.

When the Lord comes at the rapture, He will save all of the righteous, just like Lot. Those left behind will face terrible times as the world spins into chaos and destruction. People have a choice to make about Jesus and that choice has real consequences. Lot made a feast for his guests and the Lord is preparing a feast for His. The question is, “Will you be joining Him?”

II. In a World of Wickedness

⁴ Now before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, surrounded the house.

⁵ And they called to Lot and said to him, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may know them *carnally*.”

I thought of the world we live in now when I got to these verses. It’s about bedtime and it says that “both young and old” came together. The sin of Sodom is so great that even those too young or too old to participate still came so they could watch. The people from every part of the city wanted to join this perverted party.

What these people are proposing is an offense of the deepest perversion and disgrace found in humanity. It is the sin for which Sodom is still known. Paul cites this depravity

as that which occurs when people have completely suppressed the knowledge of God. There is nothing left but animal sense and yet even animals aren't so disposed.

And yet... and yet... and yet – it is this perversion which the democrat party of the United States of America has added as coming under the protection of its party platform. The day barak obama was sworn into office – not even five minutes after that act, the homosexual agenda was placed as a priority on the home page of the White House website. I know because I checked personally.

The judgment of America will partially be meted out because of the sins of Sodom. This perversion, along with abortion and a refusal to support the nation of Israel will be judged unless we, as a nation, stem the unholy tide as it rolls across this land. Election year 2012 is as important as at any time in our national history.

It's true, today, we may not openly gather in the streets to rape every stranger that comes around, but young and old alike – perverts from every dark corner of the cities and towns of the world – can sit at home and peruse any form of filth they want, right over the internet. The porn business in America alone is valued at around 15 billion dollars a year.

Those who sit at their computer or TV and watch porn are no different than those who came to watch in Sodom. Without an audience the actors would be left to their own devices, but the more people who come out to watch, the more depraved will be the actions of those who are involved. How much more so when our president and our congressional leaders march at the front of the parade of perversion?

**⁶ So Lot went out to them through the doorway, shut the door behind him,
⁷ and said, "Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly!**

Lot, in an act of true bravery, puts himself between the visitors and these perverts. He could probably do this because of what happened in the past when there was a battle between the kings of the east and the king of Sodom. When Sodom was defeated, Lot was taken captive but Abraham rescued him and all the people of Sodom and destroyed the armies of the east.

Because of this, they were probably scared of harming Lot in any way and they also may have felt a debt to him. Had this battle not occurred, there is no way he could have faced the crowd as he did.

The custom of many of the people of the Mid East hasn't changed for thousands of years. When a person is invited into one's home, it becomes the highest responsibility to care for them and tend to them. Lot felt this responsibility towards the two men because they had come under his roof and therefore under his protection.

He will do absolutely everything possible to see to their care and safety, even by putting his own life at risk first and even at the expense of his own family as we'll see in verse 8...

⁸ See now, I have two daughters who have not known a man; please, let me bring them out to you, and you may do to them as you wish; only do nothing to these men, since this is the reason they have come under the shadow of my roof."

Lot offers his two virgin daughters in exchange for the two men and to this day he is hated by feminists, chastised by theologians, and thought ill of by Bible readers of all sorts. John Wesley says this – "...of two evils we must chose the less, but of two sins we must chose neither, nor ever do evil that good may come of it."

Unfortunately, people don't think things through and they go straight to emotions – "Oh, the poor girls!" The people were going to do harm and violence regardless of what Lot did. One thing is sure, evil was going to ensure. No matter what, he knew this and so he did the most logical thing one could expect – he offered his daughters.

Why was this logical? First, they were already engaged to men of Sodom as we'll see next week. If they accepted the offer, there would be strife within the crowd, and possibly save the girls.

Second, because they were his daughters, it would hopefully get the crowd to reason through Lot's offer and feel ashamed at their own actions. There is no proof that he actually would have given his daughters over to them.

Third, the girls were part of Abraham's extended family and so they would have to reason, before actually doing anything, that the man who destroyed four kings with their armies lived just a couple miles away and would be merciless in his destruction of them.

And finally, these people were perverts – homosexual perverts. An offer of women would be contrary to the very nature of the rule of the mob that he was facing. In all,

Lot's decision is by far the best course of action for the safety of all involved – including his girls.

III. Shadows of the Rapture

⁹ And they said, “Stand back!” Then they said, “This one came in to stay *here*, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them.” So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door.

This verse takes us back to verse 1 where Lot was at the city gate. He acted like a judge here because he was a judge at the gate. It is very probable, although not stated, that he was appointed a judge after Abraham defeated the kings of the east. This was an awarded position based on his relationship with his uncle. Whether this is the case or not, he sat in the gates and was noted as an authority.

But the crowd is no longer interested in set authority and has determined to cast it off. And so they do exactly what I said a moment ago, they reject his offer of the women. They are not only perverts, but they have become unreasonably violent by the conduct of their wicked lives.

The translators of the Geneva Bible make this comment about living too close to sin, as Lot is, “Nothing is more dangerous than to live where sin reigns: for it corrupts all.”

This is a lesson Lot learned the hard way...

¹⁰ But the men reached out their hands and pulled Lot into the house with them, and shut the door.

Lot is brought into complete safety, away from the wickedness of the people, and **into the presence of the Lord**. We don't know this yet, but the term used for someone he speaks to later indicates that it is the Lord there with him behind the door. Once Lot is pulled in, the door that was open is now shut.

¹¹ And they struck the men who *were* at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they became weary *trying* to find the door.

The type of blindness, or as the Hebrew says it “blindnesses” – is the word *basanveriim* and is found in only two accounts in the Old Testament. The other time it's used is in 2 Kings 6:18 –

“So when *the Syrians* came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, “Strike this people, I pray, with blindness.” And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.”

The blindness they are experiencing is a peculiar sort that has much less to do with the eyes than it does with the mind. The heads of the people in Sodom, just like those with Elisha in Dothan, were confused and their thinking was clouded. It’s a state of blindness which is more mental and spiritual than physical.

We know this because Elisha led the army of Syria all the way from Dothan to Samaria and they followed him. The people of Sodom grope for the door, even though it’s still there... right there... they can’t find it. In other words, the very thing they’re intent upon finding is the thing they can’t see.

It is as if they see a door and they find thorn bush, and when they see a thorn bush, they think it’s a door.

Have any of you seen how today’s verses picture the coming rapture? Let’s stand back and look at the whole scene as if it were the time before Christ comes and compare what we see with how the Bible describes that glorious day when we are called home.

Here is how Peter describes the wickedness of the world which will receive God’s judgment. In these verses, he tells about the righteousness of Lot. Notice, as I read, the similarity between the state of Sodom and the world which our liberal progressive leaders are rushing us towards –

⁴ For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; ⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, *one of eight people*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; ⁶ and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned *them* to destruction, making *them* an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; ⁷ and delivered righteous Lot, *who was* oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked ⁸ (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented *his* righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing *their* lawless deeds)— ⁹ *then* the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, ¹⁰ and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. *They are* presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, ¹¹

whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. 2 Peter 2:4-11

As you can see, the state that Sodom was in is the state of today's world. And later in that same epistle Peter says this about the destruction of the people he just described and about the hope of the believer. Remember these concepts are made in comparison to Sodom before and after its destruction –

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. ¹¹ Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? ¹³ Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” 2 Peter 3:10-13

In the time of wickedness which preceded destruction, Lot was physically snatched back through the door by the angels and rescued by them from the people's evil intent. And this is exactly how Paul describes our coming rescue in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 –

¹⁵ For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

The word Paul uses for “caught up” in the passage I just read is *harpagesometha* (har pah ge sah may tha), or in its more recognizable form *harpazo*. It means to seize or carry off by force, or to snatch away. This is exactly the picture we were given when the angels in the house seized Lot and pulled him behind the door and into the presence of the Lord.

If you remember, after Lot was pulled to safety, the door was shut and no one could open it. All outside were excluded from safety. Now listen to how Jesus explains this same concept to the church of Philadelphia and the result of being left out of His safe protection, just as Sodom was –

⁷ “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”’: ⁸ “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. ⁹ Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. Revelation 3:7-11

There is an hour of trial coming upon the whole world and the world will be destroyed because of the wickedness of the people, but we are promised safety from this, just as Lot was. Here is how Paul describes it in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 –

⁵ You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as others *do*, but let us watch and be sober. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. ⁸ But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him

We are not appointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation through Christ. And in his second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul explains the timing of this and what will occur after that moment. Listen carefully and see the amazing parallel to what occurred in Sodom.

⁵ Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? ⁶ And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He is taken out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. ⁹ The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, ¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹² that they all may be

condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

-2 Thess 2:5-12

Lot was pulled through the door to safety and only after that were the people given blindnesses or *basanveriim* in Hebrew. Remember how I explained it then. This was a mental or spiritual blindness, not a physical one.

This is exactly what Paul says will happen again. The world will be given a “strong delusion” so that they will believe the lie. They will look for the door and they will find a thorn bush. They will see a thorn bush and think it is the door... In reality, they will search for God and find the antichrist. They will see the antichrist and think he is God. And what is the door that Lot was pulled through? It was the same Door that we will be pulled through. Do you remember today’s text verse? Just prior to the tribulation, in Revelation 4:1 as the church age is ending, John saw a Door opened in heaven.

As he looked a voice called out to him “come up here” and to the presence of the Lord – just as Lot was pulled into the presence of the Lord. What door did he see? In John chapter 10, Jesus Himself explains what the Door in Sodom’s time was and Who the Door in the future is –

⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.

You see, everything points to Jesus – Old Testament and New. All people are either moving toward the Door or they are alienated from it. There is a spiritual blindness which covers the eyes of the people of the world, but when we call out to Jesus, the blindness is replaced with sight; darkness is replaced with light; condemnation is replaced with salvation; and death is replaced with life.

There is a time of evil coming upon the whole world and when the call is made for the righteous to come home to glory, there will only be suffering and death for those left behind. Isaiah tell us so –

⁶Wail, for the day of the LORD *is* at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. ⁷Therefore all hands will be limp, Every man’s heart will melt, ⁸And they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of *them*; They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth; They will be amazed at one another; Their faces *will be*

like flames. ⁹ Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. ¹⁰ For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine. ¹¹ “I will punish the world for *its* evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. ¹² I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, A man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. ¹³ Therefore I will shake the heavens, And the earth will move out of her place, In the wrath of the LORD of hosts And in the day of His fierce anger. ¹⁴ It shall be as the hunted gazelle, And as a sheep that no man takes up; Every man will turn to his own people, And everyone will flee to his own land. ¹⁵ Everyone who is found will be thrust through, And everyone who is captured will fall by the sword. ¹⁶ Their children also will be dashed to pieces before their eyes; Their houses will be plundered And their wives ravished. -Isaiah 13:6-16

Jesus holds the keys to life and death in His hands. We have a choice to make before that great day of wrath comes and I hope and pray you will make the right one before it arrives. Let me tell you how you can...

Next Week - Genesis 19:12-26 (The Destruction of Sodom - Wake up America)

Safety Behind the Door

Two angels came to Sodom late in the day
And Lot was sitting in the gate of the city
When he saw them he rose to meet them on their way
And bowed himself to the ground not caring if he got gritty

And he said, “My lords please turn into your servant’s place
Spend the night, yes... and wash your feet
Then you may rise early, just offer me this grace
After the night you can again hit the street

And they said, “No, we will spend the night in the open square.”
But Lot insisted strongly, “No, please don’t sleep out there.”

Then he made them a grand old feast
There was lots of food and drink and bread without any yeast

Now before they lay down to catch a little sleep
The perverts of the city, both young and old gathered at the place
Everyone from the town came, every single creep
To commit acts which are a complete disgrace

“Where are the men who came to you tonight?
Bring them out so we can abuse them, don’t put up a fight

But he went out through the door and the door was shut behind
And he begged, “My brethren, don’t so wickedly act.”
I have two virgin daughters if you have the mind
Let me bring them out to you, with them please interact

Do nothing to these men for they are under the shadow of my roof
I am obliged to their safety and my daughters are the proof

And they said, “Stand back.”
You came here acting as a judge
Now it is you we will attack
Against you we now bear our grudge

So they pressed hard against the man Lot
And came near to break down the door
But the men pulled him inside to their safe spot
And closed out the wicked perverts who outside cussed and swore

And they struck the men at the doorway with blindness
Both small and great became weary trying to find the door
But Lot was protected because of his righteous kindness
And he would be safe from them; they would bother him no more

A day is coming for the righteous walking in this wicked world
To be pulled into safety through the glorious Door
When at the rapture God’s beautiful plan is unfurled
We will be in the presence of the Lord from then and forevermore

Yes, it is through Jesus that our future is assured
It is through His shed blood that we are eternally secured

And so we praise You our precious King
And to You alone all our praises we sing

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 19:12-26 (THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM - WAKE UP AMERICA)

Introduction: Two battleships assigned to the training squadron had been at sea on maneuvers in heavy weather off the California coast for several days. As night fell, the captain noticed the patchy fog and decided to remain on the bridge. Shortly after dark, the lookout on the wing of the bridge reported, "Light. Bearing on the starboard bow." "Is it steady or moving astern?" the captain asked. The lookout replied, "Steady, captain," which meant the battleship was on a collision course with the other ship. The captain called to the signalman, "Signal that ship. You are on a collision course. Advise you to alter course 20 degrees." Back came the answering signal, "Advisable that you change course 20 degrees." The captain said, "Send another message. I am a US Naval senior captain. Change course 20 degrees." "I am a Coast Guard seaman second class," came the reply, "Change your course at once." The officer was furious. He spat out, "We are a battleship squadron. Change your course 20 degrees." The flashing light replied, "I am a lighthouse." The squadron changed course.

Today we're going to see how heeding or failing to heed warnings can affect the course of one's life, the course of an entire city, or even the course of history itself. It's funny to joke about battleships and lighthouses, but when eternity is at stake, the humor fades...

Text Verse: *But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. ⁶ And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day; ⁷ as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. -Jude 5-7*

Eternal fire, along with all of its associated pains is real. Hell is real and the Bible has given us examples of it to show us both how to avoid it and what the consequences are for not doing so. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Pay Heed to What's Important

Throughout history, there have been records of people being warned about coming tragedy which have been completely ignored – and this, for a host of reasons – stupidity, arrogance, disbelief, and denial among other things. The tide of wars has changed, empires have collapsed, space vehicles have fallen back to earth, lives have been lost – all because of unheeded warnings.

On April 15th, 1912, the Titanic sunk in the Atlantic after hitting an iceberg. The captain of the ship, Edward J. Smith, slid to the bottom with it, even after receiving several warnings about ice. The Bible is full of such unheeded warnings as well.

¹² Then the men said to Lot, “Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take *them* out of this place!

Although this isn't standard operating procedure with God, there are times when He saves people out of a coming calamity. When King Zedekiah asked Jeremiah the prophet to inquire of the Lord about the fate of Jerusalem, Jeremiah proclaimed doom upon the city in graphic detail – every type of disaster that was coming upon the city and the people.

But in a demonstration of mercy, He also gave this word to Jeremiah –

“Thus says the LORD: “Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death. ⁹ He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but he who goes out and defects to the Chaldeans who besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be as a prize to him. ¹⁰ For I have set My face against this city for adversity and not for good,” says the LORD. “It shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.”” Jeremiah 21:8-10

Many of us have known or heard about someone who had a feeling they should skip a plane trip, stay home instead of going out with friends, or having some other urge that leads them away from a disaster that otherwise would have ended them. Although this doesn't always happen, it shows us that God is in control of the details and everything that occurs is because He directs it.

¹³ For we will destroy this place, because the outcry against them has grown great before the face of the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it.”

I've lost favor with quite a few people over the years because I stand on the biblical truth that disaster never occurs apart from God's will. After the planes struck the twin towers on 911, several noted preachers stood up and said it was judgment on America.

Of course, the news media ate them alive and over time they either partially or completely retracted their stand. But they were right at the beginning – 911 was judgment upon sin, as are all tragedies. Calamity comes to either remove sin or protect from sin.

Not all our tragedies are **because of** sin, but some come to save a person from even worse. When a child dies, for all we know, God looked through time and saw that death was far better than what otherwise would have happened. We simply can't know what God knows and what we perceive as evil may have a very good reason.

The Bible shows very clearly that judgment upon Sodom was directly the result of their sin. And the authority ascribed to the judgment by the messengers was clear – “**the Lord** has sent us to destroy it.” “Yes, but – we're different than Sodom. 911 wasn't a judgment on us! It was because of the wickedness of Islam.”

And so we close our eyes and fail to see the truth of what's happening. Of course 911 was an act against America by Islam, but that has nothing to do with the root cause of it. If we were living rightly, no power could come against us. Who is it that protects the righteous and judges the sinner?

And the method and means of His judgment is as varied as the outcome of the judgment itself. Nobody who believes in an all knowing God disputes that He is aware of everything that occurs. This is the meaning of Omniscient... He knows all.

But when something catastrophic happens, we suddenly forget this truth and say that God surely wouldn't allow **that** – as if this all-knowing God let something slip. But Amos knew better –

If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid?

If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done *it*? -Amos 3:6

Disaster was to come upon Sodom and disaster came upon America. Sodom was destroyed and America was given the grace and the chance to repent just as wicked Nineveh was when Jonah was sent to them... but of course we haven't. Does anyone think God stopped watching? Do you think God isn't still warning...

The Titanic's first warning came from another passenger ship called the "Caronia." On the morning of April 14th, Captain Smith posted the message on the bridge before leading a religious service for the first class passengers. The second warning came in the afternoon from the "Baltic." Smith showed it to Joseph Ismay, the chairman of the White Star Line. In the evening, a warning made to another ship was overheard by the crew, and later, two more came in from other ships, but they were ignored by operators distracted by personal messages coming in for passengers.

14 So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who had married his daughters, and said, "Get up, get out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city!" But to his sons-in-law he seemed to be joking.

The most important news that these men would ever hear in their lives was met with disbelief. "Judgment? Here in Sodom? The flood was a myth and there's no Lord. I've taken philosophy and evolutionary science and I can assure you you're wrong. We're heading to the bar, come with us and drink it off Reverend Lot."

Many years ago, Billy Graham was writing a book and his wife Ruth was looking it over. She had just finished a section about the degradation of America's morals, the corruption of religion, and the abuse of the blessings God has granted us and she turned to Billy and said, "If God doesn't punish America, He'll have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah."

I heard him mention this in one of his crusade messages. He, along with many others, have led the call to repent and turn from where we're heading. The late Chuck Colson was another prominent voice. These men, along with pastors and preachers have been calling out, but nothing is turning the tide.

September 11th worked for about 2 months, but then it was forgotten and since then we've only gotten worse. We elect politicians who are openly gay, we watch television which promotes gay life, we throw money at gay musicians, Christians openly post on Facebook about their Starbucks coffee of the day, knowing full well that they are prominent supporters of the cause.

On Saturday, 18 August 2012, the democrat party's platform committee endorsed gay marriage for the first time and called for the repeal of the federal law that recognizes marriage as between a man and a woman. And yet,,, about ½ of our nation will vote for barak obama and many more will support lower level democrats for the congress, senate, or state and local offices.

But every democrat who runs does so on this platform. One cannot separate their vote for a candidate from the platform. To vote for a democrat, any democrat, is to implicitly support this platform.

And abortion... it's easier to get an abortion than to have knee surgery. Since Roe vs. Wade was upheld by the Supreme Court, 50,000,000 lives have been destroyed by abortion in America.

Almost 4000 will die by abortion today, and in the short time that we're meeting here on the beach 300 will die... little arms and legs being torn off of little bodies before being sucked through a vacuum cleaner for disposal in a landfill. And we turn our eyes towards barak obama and cheer on our national leader.

The warning from the angels rings today – “Get up, get out of this perverse place; for the LORD will destroy this nation!” The midnight cry was heard in Sodom and it will be heard again someday at the coming of Christ for His bride. Those who are left will receive the judgment of God upon their unrighteousness.

On the evening of April 14th, Captain Smith attended a private dinner party. While the captain rubbed shoulders with the wealthy diners, the crew overheard a warning from the “Californian.” After dinner, the captain had a conversation with his second officer, Charles Lightoller. It isn't known what they discussed. The captain went to bed without giving orders to change course.

¹⁵ When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, “Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.”

Four people...only four. Abraham had asked the Lord to spare the city if ten righteous could be found – not even half that came out alive. At dawn, when the city's eyes were heaviest and the smell of the previous night's debauchery still hung thickly in the air, Lot is urged to get his family up and move. Punishment is coming...

¹⁶ And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.

Amazingly, Lot lingered. He halted in his steps as the men implored him to move. The Bible doesn't tell why, but if we go back to chapter 13 we're reminded that he was a

man of wealth. He had flocks and herds, tents and servants. He had so much stuff that he and Abraham couldn't live together.

He was also a judge in Sodom. Lot had many things, he had status, and he had position, but he had little of value. He hadn't converted a single soul nor even convinced one person that their wicked life was wrong. He probably lingered out of remorse – both for the loss of his stuff and for the loss of those he failed to talk to. Lot would be, from this point on, a lonely and broken man.

You know, Jesus really is coming back. Why would you bother listening to a sermon if you didn't believe that? If you're here, then it's because you either believe the Bible or are curious about it. Either way, this book says that Jesus is returning and His return is imminent.

That means there is no moment when He **couldn't** come. And so it could be at any second. When He arrives, there won't be any lingering or thought. It will happen in the twinkling of an eye. So if you have work to do before then, I suggest you get it done.

That coworker you've been meaning to talk to about Jesus... the time is coming. Your family member that needs to hear again... the time is coming. The neighbor you wave to every morning... Jesus is really coming.

¹⁷ So it came to pass, when they had brought them outside, that he said, "Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed."

The words from the men's mouth are emphatic – "Escape for your life!" **Here** there is only destruction and death and there is only one means of escape.

This is so similar to what Jesus told the Nation of Israel in a prophecy about what is coming in the end times. After the rapture, when the entire world is gathered to destroy them, the Jews who are willing to heed will need to be ready –

¹⁵ "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand), ¹⁶ "then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. ¹⁸ And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. ¹⁹ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰ And pray that your flight may

not be in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. -Matthew 24:15-22

II. Mercy from the Lord

¹⁸ Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords!

Depending on what translation you use, the answer that Lot gives is either directed toward one or two – Lord or lords. And it is either God or man – Lord meaning Jehovah or lords meaning angels.

If you read the King James, it has the divine name, if you read the NIV it indicates two, but the divine name is footnoted as possible. If you read the NKJV, it indicates two. Pay attention to your footnotes, study the differences, and make your conclusions.

Based on what previous verses say, as well as verses ahead, it is the Lord – Jehovah, who is the likely addressee. He has appeared with the other two now in order to bring vengeance upon the sodomites. Our text verse today from Jude indicates this as does the great passage of God's judgment from 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 –

⁶ since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷ and to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, ¹⁰ when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.

Yes,,, it is the Lord and He really, really is angry at sin and He really, really will come to destroy sinners. The Lamb is also the Lion.

¹⁹ Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest some evil overtake me and I die.

It was probably a very long and sleepless night for Lot. He also has his daughters, his wife, and whatever stuff he had grabbed on the way out the door. When he looked at the distance to the mountains, he was probably overwhelmed. Abraham is 99 years old and Lot is older than Abraham. His old body couldn't take the stress.

When I was driving around the US, there were times that mountains would jut right out of the ground toward the sky many, many miles in the distance. I remember thinking to myself how tough it must have been on people first settling the land. The flatlands below the mountains would hold in the heat and were often devoid of any shade or water.

This is the way it is where Lot is as well. Although the plain of the Jordan at that time was well watered, as you got away from the Jordan, it would be parched and miserable. Along with the sleepless night and stuff to carry, he couldn't imagine facing another ordeal like this. And so he begs for mercy once again...

²⁰ See now, this city *is* near *enough* to flee to, and it *is* a little one; please let me escape there (*is it not a little one?*) and my soul shall live."

Instead of a long and tedious flight to the distant mountains, which would include a trek up them as well, he asks the Lord for divine mercy on himself and his family. While doing this, he's actually calling for mercy on a town that was set for destruction.

It was a one of the cities allied with Sodom during the war mentioned in chapter 14 and was probably similar in its customs, culture, and worship. However the Lord – who knows the future – also knew that this request would be made before it was asked.

Thus there is a demonstration of mercy even in divine judgment – apart from the righteous. A portion the wicked would be spared. Maybe this was God's way of giving Lot a chance to tell the people of that town about Him after failing to do so in Sodom.

²¹ And he said to him, "See, I have favored you concerning this thing also, in that I will not overthrow this city for which you have spoken.

²² Hurry, escape there. For I cannot do anything until you arrive there." Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar.

Before this, the city was called Bela – meaning "Destruction." Ironically, the very name it held was the thing it didn't receive. From this time on it would be known as "Little"

instead of Destruction, “Zoar” meaning “Little” – the little town which received the Lord’s mercy.

James tells us this about the petitions of a righteous person – “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Lot fervently petitioned the Lord and the Lord responded, saving an entire city. Zoar will remain not only for a while, but would still exist over 1000 years later at the time of Jeremiah.

²³ The sun had risen upon the earth when Lot entered Zoar.

²⁴ Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens.

Early in the day, at the time of the rising sun and at the same time that Lot enters Zoar, we read a most interesting verse – *v’Yehovah himtyr al sedom v’al amorah gophrit v’esh me-eth Yehovah min ha’shemayim*

The thought is that “Jehovah caused it to rain from Jehovah.” No distinction is to be inferred between the hidden and the manifested Creator. The Lord who is seen on the earth is the Lord who calls down judgment and He is the same Lord who sits enthroned in heaven, sending down that same judgment. Interesting, isn’t it...

We look at pictures of Jesus cuddling animals and we sing songs about God loving all the children of the world, but the same Lord who really cuddles cute little fluffy beings and who blesses little children is the same Lord who looks with wrathful eyes at the wicked sins of men – men who try to hide or men who openly flaunt their debauchery.

Both are exposed to His ever-seeing eye. People who look too intently on one aspect of Jesus – like His love while disregarding the others are only deluding themselves. The same type of destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah will be used on the unrepentant world someday – fire and brimstone – an eternal swim in the Lake of Fire.

These Old Testament pictures are given to us for warnings of what lies ahead.

²⁵ So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.

This is the end of all wickedness. Though men become rich, powerful, or famous, it is worth nothing when destruction comes. The book of Lamentations details the

destruction of God's own people because they rejected Him. All alike are bound under sin and all alike will be judged – either be in oneself or in a substitute.

And only one Substitute will satisfy the wrath of God – that of His only begotten Son. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of God, but it is inevitable. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, the plain was destroyed, and the all the inhabitants of the cities – all of them, young and old, male and female, wealthy and slave – all of them were destroyed.

Along with this, the lush and well watered land surrounding the Jordan, with all its trees, fields, and crops was laid waste. Go there today and all you will see is heat, ruined land, undrinkable water, and shimmering mountains in the distance.

The people and buildings that are there now are entirely at the mercy of a supply line bringing in food, water, and provisions. Without that, it would be a miserable place left for only the hardiest animals and reptiles which call the area home.

Even bleaker than this is the prospect, and eventual reality, of the torment of hell. God has given us these examples as warnings and He has also provided the avenue to true life – overflowing with an abundance of Water. And He asks each of us to choose life and come to the Water of that Life... come to Jesus.

III. The Unheeded Warning

²⁶ But his wife looked back behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

One of the seemingly incredible stories from the Bible... this is on par with a donkey speaking and a prophet riding a chariot to heaven. And yet, it is what happened. Lot's wife, possibly named Iscah, became suitable seasoning for curry or maybe goat stew.

For whatever reason, be it out of curiosity, the memory of secret sins pulling her back, or sadness at the loss of possessions or friends, she turned back to look. The divine warning had been given and it was rejected.

In today's church, such a person would be called an apostate. This is a person who has made a profession of faith, lives among the righteous, and who probably even acts like a believer, but they never truly believed. When they called on Jesus, they were crossing their fingers, or maybe their toes, and lying in their heart.

Maybe you're just like her. You come out to Church on the Beach, you post nice things about Jesus on Facebook, you may even wear a cross – but inside, you just don't believe. Your eyes are looking back at the world in longing and your thoughts have never really fixed on the Lord. Today would be a good day to change that.

If you go to the area where she was crystallized today, there is a pillar called Lot's wife. It isn't really her though. One intellectual soul determined the amount of erosion on a pillar of salt based on the wind and rain conditions of the area and determined that she would have melted back into the earth many centuries ago.

Capt. Smith was awakened by a member of his crew after the ship scraped an iceberg. At 2:20am on 15 April 1912, Captain Edward J. Smith sunk with his ship – taking along 1516 others – precious human souls with him – into the watery deep.

Divine warnings are posted along life's highway. Some are more easily noted than others, but they're there. The Bible says that the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows forth His handiwork. It tells us that His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that we are without excuse,

Just like the warnings for Capt. Smith, God warns us through His creation, through His prophets, and through the cross of His own Son. How many warnings do we need to show us that God really, really is angry at sin? But we turn around and ignore the signs.

I mentioned Billy Graham a while back. Recently, he posted a prayer letter on his website which he addressed to "deceived America." Will his words go unheeded? If so, we will find an unhappy ending to our American experiment. Here's what he said—"Some years ago, my wife, Ruth, was reading the draft of a book I was writing. When she finished a section describing the terrible downward spiral of our nation's moral standards and the idolatry of worshiping false gods such as technology and sex, she startled me by exclaiming, "If God doesn't punish America, He'll have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah."

She was probably thinking of a passage in Ezekiel where God tells why He brought those cities to ruin. "Now this was the sin of . . . Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy. They were haughty and did detestable things before Me. Therefore I did away with them as you have seen" (Ezekiel 16:49–50, NIV).

I wonder what Ruth would think of America if she were alive today. In the years since she made that remark, millions of babies have been aborted and our nation seems largely unconcerned. Self-centered indulgence, pride, and a lack of shame over sin are now emblems of the American lifestyle.

Just a few weeks ago in a prominent city in the South, Christian chaplains who serve the police department were ordered to no longer mention the Name of Jesus in prayer. It was reported that during a recent police-sponsored event, the only person allowed to pray was someone who addressed “the being in the room.” Similar scenarios are now commonplace in towns across America. Our society strives to avoid any possibility of offending anyone—except God.

Yet the farther we get from God, the more the world spirals out of control. My heart aches for America and its deceived people. The wonderful news is that our Lord is a God of mercy, and He responds to repentance. In Jonah’s day, Nineveh was the lone world superpower—wealthy, unconcerned, and self-centered. When the Prophet Jonah finally traveled to Nineveh and proclaimed God’s warning, people heard and repented. Proverbs 16:18 says that pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. What we need to do is to let go of our pride, shun our haughty nature, and with humility and remorse petition the Lord to be merciful upon us for our many, many sins.”

Next Week’s sermon – Genesis 19:27-38 (A “Lot” of Mistakes? Rethinking the Time in the Cave)

The Wages of Sin

The messengers said to Lot, “Have you anyone else here?
Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, anyone in this city
Take them out of this place! For its destruction is near
Because the outcry against them has ended the Lord’s pity

He has sent us to destroy it, and this we will do
So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law
But they just laughed him off thinking he had a loose screw
And so sadly Lot made his withdraw

When the morning dawned, the angels urged Lot to hurry
“Arise, take your wife and your two daughters... you’d best scurry

Lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city
Because the outcry against it has ended the Lord's pity

But he lingered, so the men took hold of his hand
And the hands of his wife and his two daughters also
The Lord was merciful to him and gave the command
To get away before on Sodom destruction would blow

"Escape for your life! Do not look behind you as you flee
Don't stay anywhere in the plain. In the mountains there is safety

Then Lot said to them, "Please, no, my lords!
Indeed now, your servant has found favor in your sight
You have increased your mercy through your life saving words
But I cannot flee to the mountains... man I've been up all night

See now, this city is near enough to flee to, and it is a little one
Please let me escape there until the Lord's destruction is done

And he said to him, "See, I have favored you concerning this thing
I will not overthrow this tiny little city
Hurry! Escape there, for I cannot do anything
Until you arrive there. Yes, I will show pity.

Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar
It received the Lord's mercy and there Lot went
But when the sun rose and Lot had gotten that far
The Lord's wrath on Sodom and Gomorrah was to be spent

Then the Lord rained from heaven brimstone and fire
On Sodom and Gomorrah came the wrath of God
Everyone in the city was consumed in the pyre
Because by wickedness all the people had trod

So He overthrew those cities and all the plain
And all the inhabitants who resided there
Never would they be rebuilt, no never again
Because the people wouldn't the Lord's name declare

But Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt
With no one to blame, it was only her fault

What about us living today?
Will we turn from our grievous sin
Can our land repent and God's wrath allay?
Or is it too late, have we done ourselves in?

With the Lord mercy can be found
If we will humble ourselves from city to city
But if we don't turn our hearts around
The outcry against us will end the Lord's pity

Oh sinful land turn once again to Jesus
Let us give him honor and praise
When we do, He will show mercy on us
And we will walk in His light all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 19:27-38

(A “LOT” OF MISTAKES? RETHINKING THE TIME IN THE CAVE)

Introduction: How many of you here today have ever made a mistake? Anyone? Now, how many of you here have made a mistake which involved disobeying God? Anyone? Ok, how many of you have disobeyed God since you became a Christian?

Now let me ask you, despite having made a mistake, and it having involved disobeying God, and it happened after you became a Christian... did anything good come out of what you did?

Maybe you had a child out of wedlock. Well, that was probably a mistake, certainly in disobedience to God, and maybe even since you became a Christian. But did good come out of it? Do you love the child? Has he or she become a Christian? Would you trade that child for anything on earth?

I bet if you think through all of the crummy, disobedient, and evil things you've done in your life – even in your life as a Christian, you'll still be able to find something good that came out most of it. This is how God works.

However, Preacher Charlie is NOT telling you to be disobedient to God so that good may result. Paul warns us of that attitude in Romans 3. What I am saying is that God is aware of our limitations and already knows where we will fall even before we do.

You see, even when we are disobedient, God can and does bring good out of evil. Today, we'll look over something that almost every Bible scholar in history has found sinful. If that is true, then God made something good come from it.

If, as I believe, that's not correct, then we have another example of people living by faith in what they believe and which ultimately brings about an amazing sequence of events leading directly to the Messiah.

There are times as you read the Bible you might ask, “Why is this story here at all?” Can someone please explain to me what the relevance of this is? Today may be one of those stories. And because we can't figure out why it's there, we find reasons to find the bad in the story, even when good may be hidden deep within it.

If it's in the Bible, it leads to Jesus... even when it involves incest, drunkenness, and possibly wrong thinking. Let's review this story which is so covered in these things that we close our eyes and try to hide from them as we read through it...

"Oh God, I would never do that. Thanks for the lesson of how **not to act.**" But this isn't at all what we're to learn from this... as we'll see in the next hour.

Text Verse:— *"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!"* ³⁴ *"For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?"* ³⁵ *"Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?"* ³⁶ *For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. Yes, all glory to this wise and wonderful Creator! And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised."* - Romans 11:33-36

I. A "Lot" of God's Mercy

²⁷ And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD.

Just one day earlier, the Lord and the two messengers arrived to announce the coming birth of Isaac. After their meal and assuring Sarah that a child would come through her, the Lord told Abraham of His intent to go to Sodom, determine its state, and destroy it.

Before He left, Abraham received a promise that if 10 righteous people could be found there, He would spare the entire city. It was probably a very sleepless night for Abraham, wondering if Lot had met even the most basic example of being a faithful witness to his wife, children, and six others.

If he simply had 9 converts the destruction would have been averted. But Abraham seemed to know better because he got up early in the morning and went to the exact spot where he had met and talked with the Lord. From that spot, he could overlook the entire region to the south where Lot lived. It seems his fears about Lot were well founded...

²⁸ Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace.

If you go to Israel, this spot overlooks the entire region to the south just as is described. God had chosen a time when Abraham would be living at this particular location to destroy Sodom.

The lesson is one for Abraham and the record is also given as a lesson for us. Sin will be judged and it will come at a time when God's people can see that judgment first hand. The Bible presents many acts of judgment against both Israel's enemies as well as against disobedient Israel herself.

September 11 wasn't done in a corner. It came on one of the nicest days of the year. That wasn't by chance, but by the hand of God. If you pay attention, things like this seem to always happen on nice clear blue days. As great as God's love is for His people, so is His hatred of sin and rebellion. It's a lesson we shouldn't forget.

Imagine what Abraham thought. Unlike a volcano or an earthquake which is an unplanned event, he was seeing something that he had been foretold would happen. There was no doubt that this was an act of God. We can debate the significance of 911, but there was no doubt in Abraham's mind about this.

He must have been upset **for** Lot, thinking he was dead, upset **at** Lot for not being able to drum up nine righteous people, and sad **about** Lot because he was his relative and friend. Looking at the smoke must have been a sad, sad moment in this guy's life.

The term for furnace used here is *kibshan* and it's only used four times in the Old Testament. The only other time it's used in a similar manner is when the Law was received at Mount Sinai –

Now Mount Sinai *was* completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. Exodus 19:18

The New Testament has one such example as well. A time is coming when the judgments of God will come upon the world. In one of them, the very pit of hell will be opened –

Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. ²And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. Revelation 9:1, 2

²⁹ And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.

This verse uses the term “God” or “elohim” rather than “Lord” or “Jehovah” to describe the one who administered the judgment, even though when it was actually happening it said that it was the Lord who did it. The difference between the uses of these two terms is who is mentioned in this verse – Abraham.

God is the judge of all the earth, and He is elsewhere described as a consuming fire, but He is also a friend of the righteous. And so God remembered His friend Abraham and rescued Lot in the midst of the overthrow. There is no contradiction because the Lord is God and God is the Lord. The terminology changes for our benefit and understanding of God’s nature.

II. Not a “Lot” of Choices

The narrative now changes focus. Lot is still the center of attention as he was during the preceding verses, but judgment is no longer coming... it has come.

³⁰ Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains, and his two daughters were with him; for he was afraid to dwell in Zoar. And he and his two daughters dwelt in a cave.

Lot has been reduced from a man with a wife and daughters, a seat among the judges, and a vast amount of wealth and servants, to a man with two daughters and no more than he could carry.

On the night before Sodom’s destruction, he was told to take his family and head for the mountains. Instead of doing this, he asked to be allowed to enter the little town of Zoar. What he should have done in the first place he failed to do. Now that he’s been given refuge in Zoar, he is afraid to dwell there even though the Lord granted him to do so, and so he moves to the mountains.

Both of his choices show an unwillingness to simply take the Lord at His word and to be obedient to that word. And so off he goes to a cave to live with his daughters. It doesn’t say why he was afraid to live in Zoar, but several possibilities come to mind.

First, he may have figured that its destruction was coming sooner or later than and they were spared only because he asked for it. He may have thought this was temporary. He also may have been worried about the rising of the waters.

Because the topography changed, the Dead Sea had replaced the fields of the area and the rising waters may have seemed to be a threat. And third, he might have feared because the people of Zoar may have actually thought that the judgment of Sodom would follow Lot to them – as if they thought he were the cause of it.

Whatever the reason, Lot decided to do what he had been told in the first place and move to the mountains.

About this, Adam Clarke says – “Foolish man is ever preferring his own wisdom to that of his Maker...”

³¹ Now the firstborn said to the younger, “Our father *is* old, and *there is* no man on the earth to come in to us as is the custom of all the earth.

It’s just Lot and his two daughters in the cave. When the older daughter says “there is no man on the earth to come in to us” there can only be a few options as to why she would think this. The first is that they believed the destruction of Sodom had killed everyone on earth and they are the last two left to carry on the human race.

This is a popular opinion, which covers almost every commentary available, some going back thousands of years. But, it’s not likely because they had lived in Zoar and there were people there when they left. Plus, even an idiot can look in the distance and see the destruction was isolated.

A second option is that because they were the only survivors of an entire group of people who were destroyed by God, no one would want to be associated with them. This is more likely and it reflects the attitudes of people all over the world – “I’m just not good enough. God hates me and everyone else will too.”

A third option – the one that I favor – is that “no man on the earth” has nothing to do with availability but rather accessibility. It is a general term, not a specific one. Lot moved to the mountains which are not a place where people would normally live. These mountains and the surrounding areas are especially inhabitable. Because of this, there are no guys coming by for lunch.

When I drove around the US a couple years ago, I drove past houses that were so remote that I wouldn't pass another house – going 70mph – for an hour. I'd see children playing in the yard and I thought "how are they ever going to meet someone to marry. Imagine before there were roads and cars!

These two girls are like them. They are so removed from anyone else that they cannot imagine ever meeting a man. And so they devise a plan to have children, even if they can't have a husband...

³² Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him,

The very fact that they want to get dad drunk first tells us that they know their father wouldn't agree to this, but it also tells us that there certainly were other men on earth, and they knew it. If not, they would have simply told dad what they wanted and why.

In the previous verse, the daughter said "our father is old." Not only are there no other men around, but dad may kick off at some point too before **he** could get married again. If so, then his name will die out. This is surely what she's thinking because...

³² (con't) that we may preserve the lineage of our father."

And here is a second proof that there are men available, but just not accessible. They have a distinct purpose in what they're doing. It is "to preserve Lot's lineage," not the human race and not their own heritage.

Without the ability to trace our lineage, we lose touch with the very marker which God has identified us with. In the Bible, this marker comes through the father. If you heard the sermons on Genesis 10, The Table of Nations, you can understand this.

What's really important here is that the word for "lineage" is the Hebrew word *zara*. This means "seed." These girls want to preserve the seed. Why? Because they believe that what they are doing is saving the line of the Messiah. Think it through...

They are from the line of Shem, Noah's son in the line of promise. They are from the line of Haran, Abraham's older brother and they'd have every reason to believe that because he is the oldest brother that he the one in the Messianic line, and Lot is his son.

And now they see that they've been miraculously saved from the Sodom. Their conclusion is that this was God's will to keep Lot's seed alive as it led toward the Promised One the Messiah.

This idea stands even more likely because they were virgins even though they lived in an especially wicked place like Sodom. They had lived pure and upright lives and were saved because of this. This isn't mere speculation either. We'll see in a little while that the very names they give to their children bear this out.

What we need to do is look at exactly what the girls said – *ūn·ḥa·yeh me-avinu zara (oon ha yeh may-aveenu zara)*

This verse has two possible translations –

1. "And we will make the seed of our father alive."
2. "And we will live from our father's seed."

Although most translations use the first, the second, when taken in the overall context of the Bible makes much more sense. The only other time the word *nehaya* is used in the way the girls are using it is in 1 Kings when speaking of animals that were running out of hay and dying. In order to revive them, they needed to find food.

Although this might all sound tedious, what's happening with these two girls is as important as any doctrine found in the Bible and it points directly to the work of Jesus. It's not at all what most people think – that a couple of girls were lonely and wanted children for themselves. Think it through...

The Bible teaches that we are dead in our sins, but that Christ makes us alive. He is the one who revives our dead spirit. And this is what the Bible teaches from the first pages of Genesis all the way to the very last page of Revelation.

The coming Messiah would restore life, eternal life, to fallen man. Eve knew it as we noted in a sermon about Cain and Abel. And so did every faithful person since then. In anticipation of this, the daughters said, "So we may **live** from our father's seed."

This isn't speaking at all about carrying on their name. It is speaking about being born again through the coming Messiah. In support of this, ancient Jewish writers interpret this to be speaking of the Messiah because they aren't speaking about a son, but rather

the seed, the same seed found back in Genesis 3. And what is this seed? It is the Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

These two girls honestly believed that they were a part of the Messianic line. If you doubt this, hold on for a few more minutes.

And as a side note, there was no law at the time to forbid what they are proposing. Abraham, who is of the chosen line and living at the same time as them married his own sister. This is something the law specifically forbids, but at this time, there was no law. Here is what the law says concerning Abraham's type of marriage –

The nakedness of your sister, the daughter of your father, or the daughter of your mother, *whether* born at home or elsewhere, their nakedness you shall not uncover. Leviticus 18:9

As Paul says in Romans 4:15, "Where there is no law, there is no transgression." Therefore, what they have done – these two girls, cannot... cannot be counted as sin just as Abraham marrying his own sister also cannot be counted as sin.

³³ So they made their father drink wine that night. And the firstborn went in and lay with her father, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.

I have to be honest here, if the Bible didn't say this, I would never believe it. It takes the responsibility entirely off Lot by saying he didn't know when she lay down or when she arose.

The act is placed completely on the daughter. But if someone is so drunk that that they don't know what's going on, they are also usually to drunk to perform any other actions as well. Like I said, if the Bible didn't say this, I couldn't believe it.

³⁴ It happened on the next day that the firstborn said to the younger, "Indeed I lay with my father last night; let us make him drink wine tonight also, and you go in *and* lie with him, that we may preserve the lineage of our father."

Daughter number one did her thing and so to make sure that dad's line will continue on, daughter number two does the same thing the next day. Once again, the action is placed solely on the daughters.

³⁵ **Then they made their father drink wine that night also. And the younger arose and lay with him, and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.**

The only thing that Lot **might** be blamed for is getting drunk, but even that – when taken in the context of the Bible – is a **dubious** accusation. In fact, Proverbs says this –

Give strong drink to him who is perishing,
And wine to those who are bitter of heart. -Proverbs 31:6

Lot is old and perishing and he is also certainly a soul who is bitter in heart. Fault, from a biblical perspective is not to be found where most people try to find it. He is an old man, in a cave with his two virgin daughters, and with no evil intentions toward either of them.

Later in the Bible, Lot is termed “righteous” and so the fault that so many try to find in him and what he’s done is simply not there. What is evident is the foreknowledge and providence of God in the story. This is as clear as any other passage in the Bible.

Both of these girls were virgins, both had sex and became pregnant on the first try to a drunk man, and both of them had males to carry on the name of the family. You will not find a clearer account than this for seeing that what occurred did so in order to meet God’s purposes and plans in the unfolding pages of redemptive history.

We can look back on these verses and see two sides of a coin. The first is that God gives us instructions to do things and He does so for very good reasons. He has our best intent in mind and His direction is exactly right for the situation. Think of Bible directives and how your life has gone just right when you’ve obeyed them.

God placed you in a particular place and time and reminded you of His word to demonstrate to you that following His way is best and that the outcomes will always be successful and happy.

However – and this may sound contradictory at first – when we **don’t** follow God’s word, we make mistakes which cause us grief, sadness, and loss. But despite this, God knew the choice we would make before we made it and therefore it must fit into His plan – even though it was based on disobedience.

This would be Lot's life summed up in a nutshell. It would also be most of our lives most of the time – either as individuals or as a nation. We don't obey God's word and we have grief, sadness, and loss, but in the end it is worked out for what is ultimately good.

Here is where the other side of the coin is seen. Lot moved to a wicked city – something that if he inquired of the Lord would have been met with a "Don't do it." Lot never converted anyone in Sodom, which directly led to Sodom's overthrow. Something the Lord wouldn't approve of.

Lot didn't head straight to the mountains as the Lord had told him to do, but instead he looked for another option. He didn't follow the Lord's recommended path. And later he left the city and moved to the mountain, even after the Lord allowed him to live there.

We could probably find 20 more things that Lot did wrong and we can look back on our own lives and find a million things we did wrong as well. And yet, good came out of what was bad...

III. A "Lot" of Joy

So here we have this story that is interesting, it's dramatic, it's enticing, and maybe even alluring in some way, but it's just a story about an old man who has a couple of daughters and off to the mountains they go – to live in a cave and do what is both inappropriate and unjustifiable for reasons that only make sense when we try to force the narrative... right?

Bad mistakes – our lives are filled with bad mistakes and we have to live with the results of those mistakes whether we like it or not. Isn't that why this story is in here? Two young ladies who will have to spend the rest of their lives regretting their bad choices? Isn't God mocking them, even today, by letting the whole world see how stupid and naughty they were?

³⁶ Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.

Both girls had sex for the first and maybe only time in their lives – with a drunken man, who is their father. Both of them got pregnant and now have to suffer the shame of it for all of eternity... right? We can laugh at these two and show the world through sermons about how immoral and stupid they were. God must think so... it's why the story is included here after all. Isn't it?

³⁷The firstborn bore a son and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day.

Oh! A bouncing baby boy... The older daughter has a son and she calls him Moab. The name comes from two words – *mi* which means “who” and *ab* which means “dad.” In modern language we’d call him “Who’s your daddy?” And the answer comes from the story itself and so it has another meaning – “From father.”

This daughter of Lot is letting the world know that the son is the result of inbreeding. This is obviously not something one would want known **unless** there was a very good reason behind it.

³⁸ And the younger, she also bore a son and called his name Ben-Ammi; he is the father of the people of Ammon to this day.

Oh, another bouncing baby boy – probably born at the same time as Moab, maybe on the same day. Lot’s a busy doctor in his little cave... The younger daughter has a son. His name comes from two words too. *Ben* simply means “son.” Benjamin, for example, means “Son of my right hand.”

The word *am* means people. When *am* is postfixed with the “i,” which is the letter yod, it becomes “my” ... “my people.” And so Ben-Ammi means “Son of my people.”

Again, like the older sister’s choice of name, this daughter of Lot is letting the world know that the son is the result of inbreeding. Again, clearly not something one would want known unless there was a very good reason behind it.

But both of these girls are proud of their accomplishment, even if they’re not proud of the deed behind it – getting Lot drunk. They both have a bundle of joy and they both believe that their son may be an ancestor of the Deliverer promised 2108 years earlier when God spoke to Adam, Eve, and the serpent in the Garden.

They have preserved the line, they have baby boys who they wouldn’t trade for all the gold in the world, and there is dad scratching his head and wondering what the end of it all will be.

As I said at the beginning of the sermon, maybe in your life you’ve done something which is clearly wrong. Maybe it’s been since you were a Christian, and maybe it was in direct disobedience to God. Can it still work out for good? The answer is “Yes.”

Let's not diminish what we've done wrong though. Sin is sin and sin has consequences. Sometimes those consequences can affect our health, such as drugs; our relationships, such as adultery; and maybe even cost the life of us or someone else, such as getting shot when we hold up bank. But in any or all of these, God can work through our evil to bring about good.

How do I know? Because the Bible proves it, even in the account of these two daughters. You see, in the book of Matthew in the genealogy of Jesus, we read this in Chapter 1, verse 5 –

Salmon begot Boaz by Rahab, Boaz begot Obed by Ruth... Matthew 1:5

Ruth, if you've ever read the story, is from Moab. She was brought into the covenant people and eventually became the great-grandmother of King David and an ancestor of Jesus, the Lord.

And what about the other daughter? What is her mark on history? Two verses down in the same genealogy we read this in verse 7 –

Solomon begot Rehoboam,... so what, right?

Rehoboam, the son of Solomon is in Jesus' genealogy as well. And guess what we learn about him in the book of 1 Kings...

And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king. He reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. His mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess. -1 Kings 14:21

Naamah the mother of Rehoboam, was from the line of the second daughter of Lot. The Ammonites came from her son Ben-Ammi.

Clans from both of the sons born to Lot through his daughters became great enemies of Israel. In fact, Solomon is rebuked for having married women from these countries because they stole his heart away from the Lord and led him to worship false Gods. But despite this, women from both tribes, the Moabites and the Ammonites, became ancestors of Jesus. Think about it... The Lord of all creation is descended from a man named Lot and from both of his daughters when each of them was united in incestuous sex.

And if that isn't amazing, wait as the Bible unfolds. Jesus descends from another incestuous union, and also from an adulterer and a murderer, and from many other men and women who were filled with flaws and weaknesses. Jesus isn't calling the perfect to His family – He's calling you.

You see, He can even take the evil in our lives and turn it out for good. If He can do this in a plan which started 2108 years earlier and took another 1896 more to be realized, He can do it for you too.

No matter how stupid your past mistakes, no matter how terrible your future mistakes, no matter what anyone else on earth thinks about you, if you have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord, you are His child and you are forgiven, free, and recorded in the Book of Life.

Yes, mourn over your sins, turn away from them and be obedient to the Lord and I can assure you that your life will be far more rewarding and pleasing to Him. But, stop beating yourself up over past mistakes and know that despite them, God has a plan and a purpose for you which has already figured them into the equation.

Despite your flaws, failings, and fumbles, He has accepted you and He will never forsake you. Through Jesus Christ He has cancelled out the evil and turned it into good. So be of good cheer.

Next Week – Genesis 20:1-17 (Walking in the Land of the Philistines)

Beauty From Ashes

Abraham got up early in the morning
To the spot he had stood with the Lord
He wondered if Sodom heeded the warning
And had accepted God at His word

He looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the plain
He saw smoke like a furnace, God – His wrath did not restrain

He destroyed all of the cities, but He remembered Abraham
And He sent Lot out of the midst of the overflow
When He overthrew the cities with a bang and a bam
God protected His righteous, the one He did know

Then Lot went up out of Zoar and dwelt in the mountains
And both his daughters were with him too
He was afraid to live in the city by its streets and its fountains
And so off to a cave in a hill he withdrew

Now the firstborn daughter said to the younger one
“Our father is old and there is no man around to marry
Come let us get dad drunk and by him we can have a son
And his seed through them we will be able to carry

So they got their dad drunk with wine that night
And the firstborn went in and lay with her father
Even though she knew what she did wasn't right
She went through with it, no caring nor bother

The next day she said, “See, last night I laid with dad
Now it's your turn to do the same as I did
We'll give him wine to make his heart glad
And so both of us through him will have our own kid

So the younger lay also with her father Lot
And he didn't know when she lay down or when up she got

So both the daughters by their father were with child
And today we look at this story as if it were wild

The firstborn named her son Moab, meaning “Who is your father”
And the younger named hers Ben-Ammi – “Son of my people”
And though this story many people it does bother
It is something to be taught beneath the church steeple

You see, these three – Lot and his two daughters
Became great peoples like the spreading of waters

And eventually through them came the Savior of the world
Through them came Jesus as God's great plan has unfurled

Have you done something so wrong in your life?
Maybe been a drug addict or a prostitute

Have you committed adultery on your husband or wife
Is the hurt in your heart painfully acute

Let God use what has happened in the past
To bring Him glory now through an obedient life
The good things that can come will for eternity last
When Jesus as His bride calls us His wife

Great is our God therefore let's give Him great praise
And let us live our lives for Him, all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 20:1-18 **(WALKING IN THE LAND OF THE PHILISTINES)**

Introduction: Today we get to look at an exciting story about Abraham which, on the surface, seems to mirror a previous story when he went down to Egypt. Until I started typing this sermon, I'd never noticed the differences, but there are a lot.

In fact, the entire story – from beginning to end, is different and serves a different purpose in our understanding of why things are the way they are – even in the world today, such as with the modern nation of Israel. I'm glad to have learned this.

Text Verse: *The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry. ¹The face of the LORD is against those who do evil, To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. "Because God's eyes are on the righteous and because His ears are open to their cry we should give Him all the glory, honor, and praise He is due and so ... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.*

- Psalm 34:15, 16

I. That Which Has Been

¹ And Abraham journeyed from there to the South, and dwelt between Kadesh and Shur, and stayed in Gerar.

In Chapter 18, Abraham petitioned the Lord for the people living in Sodom. He asked the Him to spare the city if 50 righteous could be found, but he eventually reduced his request to 10. However, as we saw in the next sermon, Sodom was destroyed, but Lot and his family escaped. Right afterwards, we read this in Chapter 19 –

And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD. ²⁸ Then he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain; and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land which went up like the smoke of a furnace. ²⁹ And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot had dwelt.

This, for all intents and purposes, is where we pick up today in Chapter 20. We know this because our first verse today says, "And Abraham journeyed from there to the South..."

In other words, it's implied that we're to go back to before the account of Lot in Chapter 19, as it was an interlude in the life of Abraham.

The narrative thus jumps over Lot completely in its terminology. Let me remind you about the interlude. Lot and his two daughters moved to the mountains where the daughters got him drunk. They became pregnant with sons who would lead to Jesus.

One came through Ruth the Moabitess and the other through Rehoboam the son of Solomon. His mother was from Ammon. Now the narrative returns to Abraham where we're told that he journeyed from where he had been staying in Mamre to the South.

God inserted Lot's account, as He has done several times already in Genesis, for us to look deeper into it and understand that He is the God of the chosen line leading from Seth to Noah to Abraham and later to Isaac, Israel, and the twelve tribes, leading to Jesus.

But He is also the God of those outside this chosen line and He will use people from all groups and nations – not only to lead to Jesus, but to be used in the furtherance of the gospel now – a picture of the Church age. So much for racism! God is no respecter of persons and this is a lesson we're to see here.

With today's return to Abraham, we see him move from where he was off toward the South. Several reasons have been suggested for his move. One is that he couldn't bear to look toward the place where Lot had lived and which is now destroyed.

Another is that the ties he had to Hebron were weakened by the destruction of Sodom. Another is because of the incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughters would actually weaken his righteous testimony.

These don't make any sense – especially the last one since we just noted that the story about Lot and his daughters is only an interlude and that the narrative about Abraham actually skips over it. So there are two more possibilities.

The first is that his move will take him to a place of better pastures and living for his tribe, or secondly that Divine Providence is leading him there. Actually, these combined make the most sense. In Genesis 12, Abraham moved toward the South and eventually to Egypt because of a famine.

But famines come by the Divine Hand. This move, like the last, is God directing His chosen servant, Abraham, to teach us more about what He Himself is doing in human history.

I believe this particular move is to set in motion events which will eventually lead to establish fixed markers of Israel's rights to the land. Remember, it is the son of promise who will inherit the land and through him Israel's rights to the land will be secured.

God is working through all people to secure rights as sons of Abraham through faith, **but** He is working through the chosen people to establish land and other rights of the people of Israel. This is why we see both a main story and then interludes as well.

The place where he moved to is called Gerar, and is said to be between Kadesh and Shur. Kadesh was mentioned in Genesis 14:7 and Shur was mentioned in Genesis 16:7. If you look at a map, it's kind of between Gaza and Beersheba; a rich, well-watered land.

² Now Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister."

This is the same thing he did in chapter 12 when he was in Egypt and it results in exactly the same thing happening. Pharaoh took Sarah, and now Abimelech the king takes her again.

I'm not going to repeat my thoughts on Abraham's actions from that sermon, but if you want to watch it, I defend why this wasn't – as almost all commentators claim, "sinful" and "lacking faith." The Bible never rebukes Abraham for what he did, in either account, and therefore what God hasn't called into question, we need to determine why and not call it into question as well.

Here is one commentary which reflects most scholarly sentiment –

"Fear of the people among whom he was, tempted him to equivocate. His conduct was highly culpable. It was deceit, deliberate and premeditated-there was no sudden pressure upon him-it was the second offense of the kind. It was a distrust of God every way surprising, and it was calculated to produce injurious effects on the heathen around. Its mischievous tendency was not long in being developed." (Jamieson-Fawcett-Brown)

The shallowness of commentaries like this neglects to take into account two things. The first is that Abraham is never noted as anything but a man of faith throughout the entire Bible. Never, in any context, is he noted as lacking faith or being rebuked by God.

Secondly, in chapter 14, he had overthrown the 4 kings of the east. With his military prowess and noted name in the region, it was those around him who would fear, not him.

² (con't) **And Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.**

Sarah is now about 89 years old and Isaac is expected to be born within the next year. With her in the king's household this could be problematic. We have to note here though that it doesn't say she was beautiful like it did in Genesis 12 at Pharaoh's house.

Because it doesn't, the reason for Abimelech taking her is probably to align himself with Abraham, not because he wanted a beautiful wife. He may have even taken her without telling Abraham as the terminology seems to indicate later.

³ **But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, "Indeed you *are* a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she *is* a man's wife."**

It is God, or *elohim*, the Creator mentioned in Genesis 1:1, who comes to Abimelech, and He does it in a dream. He is expressing himself as the eternal power which is prior to the creation and He who formed man. In this expression of himself and in the next 3 verses, we'll learn a bit about how God deals with men.

Coming in a dream is something that happens throughout the Bible and when it happens, there is no doubt who controls the dream or who is speaking. When God speaks we should have no doubt who is communicating with us. Remember that as you read your Bible.

⁴ **But Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, "Lord, will You slay a righteous nation also?"**

This verse and one to come are put here specifically to let us know that the child to be born to Sarah in the future came from Abraham and not from anyone involved in her time away from his camp. He hasn't come near her since she was brought into his harem.

In his response he says, “Lord” using the term “*Adonai*.” In other words, he has knowledge of the true God. Not just one of many gods, but rather the One true Creator who is also active in the world since the creation.

“Adonai, will you slay a righteous nation also?” Why would he say this? Anyone? He said this because Sodom had just been destroyed. The sulfur was still stinking in the air and the smoke was still billowing out of the furnace.

He is making a contrast between Sodom and his own city and he is basing it on having an assumption that they had done nothing deserving of God’s wrath like the people of Sodom had, including in this matter as we now see...

⁵ Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister’? And she, even she herself said, ‘He is my brother.’ In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands I have done this.”

At some point after his arrival in the area, Abraham must have met with Abimelech and introduced his “sister” to him. It was probably right then – and for the purposes of an alignment with Abraham – that Abimelech decided to take Sarah.

To this point there wasn’t any fault because they both spoke the truth and Abimelech took Sarah, as he says, “In the integrity of my heart and innocence of my hands.” He tells God that he is guiltless.

II. The Lord’s Eyes are upon the Righteous

⁶ And God said to him in a dream, “Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her.”

In this verse, God, through the Bible, calls Himself *Ha-Elohim*, or “the God.” Verse 3 simply said Elohim, verse 4 Abimelech called him Adonai – the word used when speaking to God in a personal manner, and now it says, “And **the God** said to him in a dream...”

Only **after** Abimelech calls Him as Adonai does it say, “the God.” This then is noted in distinction to any other false god. There is one God and Abimelech understands this. This verse, like so many others in the Bible says, “So much for all religions being true.”

There is one God and there is one way to acknowledge Him. He isn't Krishna, He isn't Buddha, and He isn't Allah. He is "the God" and He kept Abimelech from sinning against Him by keeping him from touching Sarah.

In other words, God's plans and God's purposes are being carried out and nothing can thwart them. When we sin against God, it is because of our free-will choices which He has factored into His plan, but if a sin would interfere with that plan, then He keeps it from happening, either actively or passively, the result is the same.

⁷ Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he *is* a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not restore *her*, know that you shall surely die, you and all who *are* yours."

This the first time a person is called a prophet in the Bible, but it's not the first person in the Bible to be said to hold the gift of prophecy. That would be Abel as Jesus says in Luke 11. In other words, Abimelech would already understand what a prophet is and how he would operate.

God uses a prophet several ways. Two include – 1) He may use a prophet to speak of the future concerning what He intends, or 2) He may use him like a car. The driver of a car is in control of where and how it moves. Ultimately, God is in control of what happens, and Abraham is the vehicle through which He will act.

In this case, the first recorded use of his prophetic office is not going to be of him speaking to men about God, but rather to God for men. He will pray to God for Abimelech. Abraham's offices of priest and prophet are joined together here – a foreshadowing of the work of the great Priest and Prophet, Jesus.

⁸ So Abimelech rose early in the morning, called all his servants, and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were very much afraid.

Abimelech "rose early in the morning." I hope you see the destruction of Sodom being referred to here. It was destroyed as the sun rose and Abraham had gone "early in the morning" to watch. It is as if Abimelech knew what was coming if he didn't do something immediately.

He called them in order to make sure that nobody, and I mean nobody, touched her and probably because some of them told him to take her in the first place. Otherwise, there would be no reason to even consult with them. Let's go on to verse 9...

⁹ And Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, “What have you done to us? How have I offended you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? You have done deeds to me that ought not to be done.”

Some scholars look at this as a rebuke of Abraham because of the wrong thing he did. But the Bible doesn't even imply this and after the previous verse, we can see how stupid that would be. God has just threatened them and protected Abraham. Only a fool or a knucklehead would turn around a rebuke Abraham.

The plural “us” is used – “what have you done to us” because, as the Bible shows time and time again, the wicked actions of the king brings wrath and judgment on the whole kingdom. That's a good lesson to remember in the upcoming elections. If we continue electing the same wicked party that aborts babies and condones the sins of Sodom, we will be asking the same question pretty soon.

This is no rebuke but a plea of innocence done in a very pious way. They're are terrified and want to know what they've done to have Abraham set them up like this. They're speaking to him in a manner similar to how Jeremiah spoke to the Lord once.

“O Lord, you deceived me, and I was deceived; you overpowered me and prevailed. I am ridiculed all day long; everyone mocks me. -Jeremiah 20:7

Jeremiah wasn't rebuking the Lord and Abimelech wasn't rebuking Abraham.

¹⁰ Then Abimelech said to Abraham, “What did you have in view, that you have done this thing?”

Because of the supposed deception, Abimelech really wants to know why. Just imagine yourself, standing on the precipice of a piece of property that a friend sold you. He never said anything about a cliff that was in the process of collapsing and you wonder what you did to deserve him treating you like this.

Abimelech is standing at his own precipice. He's seen the giant pit in the ground which was once Sodom and he doesn't want this to happen to him too. “Abraham, why did you do this thing?”

III. Thus She Was Rebuked

¹¹ And Abraham said, “Because I thought, surely the fear of God *is* not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife.

I said earlier that the people of the land would fear Abraham and not the other way around. This seems to make that sound wrong, but if you think it through, there is a difference between raiding someone unexpectedly instead of when they're prepared for battle.

If they knew Sarah was his wife, they might abduct her or kill him and take her as a symbol of the victory over him, and by doing this his clan would be subject to them. This is going to be proven correct in a few verses.

As far as why he told them she was his sister, Abraham is as direct as an arrow in the heart, “...surely the fear of God is not in this place.” He's been in Canaan long enough to know that polytheism, and idolatry were the norm. When this is true, there is no fear of the true God because there is a reliance on the false ones. Abraham knew this and spoke accordingly.

¹² But indeed *she is* truly my sister. *She is* the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife.

It is astonishing to see how much confusion and misrepresentation there is on this single verse. Let me read it to you again... This is very clear. Sarah is the daughter of Terah, Abraham's father, but she had a different mother.

Nothing could be clearer. But in order to try to alleviate a supposed wrongdoing by marrying his sister, Jewish, and later Christian commentators have said that Sarah is actually Abraham's niece, not sister. This is because the law forbids marrying a sibling.

There are two problems with this – first, this is prior to the Law and so that doesn't apply. It's putting the cart in front of the horse. Secondly, it's not at all what the Bible says. Sarah is Abraham's sister – the daughter of his father, but of a different mother.

A second major problem that people find here is directly with Abraham. They find both fault and sin in him by only telling that she is his sister and not his wife. This elevates intent above reality and it also requires disclosing something that could cost him his life. Keeping the knowledge hidden is more important.

There are many examples of outright lies being told in the Bible in order to preserve life, but they're condoned and noted favorably. I'll give you one of many examples from the book of Joshua –

Then the woman took the two men and hid them. So she said, "Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they *were* from. ⁵ And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them." ⁶ (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.) -Joshua 2:4-6

Despite the lies, the Bible commends her for what she did, just as it does on numerous occasions.

"By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace." Hebrews 11:31

There is a priority in everything we do and there is a hierarchy of standards which we must submit to. The saving of life is more important than the telling of a lie in order to save that life. In the case of Abraham, he didn't even lie; He merely hid something.

There is a good life application here and one that we should stop and note. Faithful people have, in the past, lied and committed acts against oppressive governments and yet they were in the right. Think of those who hid Jews during the Nazi regime. Think of our own founders when they rebelled against the tyranny of England.

We need to contemplate and evaluate these things against the Bible so that we know how to act. If you don't think we need to know and be ready for these things in our lifetime, you haven't opened your eyes to where this nation is heading. If the left gets their way in the next four years strong moral choices will have to be made and unless you know the Bible, you won't know what to do.

¹³ And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This *is* your kindness that you should do for me: in every place, wherever we go, say of me, "He *is* my brother.'"

I'm going to give you an interesting note about this verse, which you may or may not care diddly about, but which to me is one of the great joys of going through the Bible in

detail. This is one of only a handful of times in the entire Bible where the term “elohim” meaning “God” is used in connection with a plural verb.

You see, your translation reads, “...God caused me to wander...” but the Hebrew says, “...the god’s caused me to wander.” It is plural, not singular. There are now two questions – “Why did he say ‘the gods,’ and why did your Bible translator say ‘God?’”

The premise of the Bible, from the first sentence to the last is that there is one God. This is unmistakable. And so either Abraham is speaking about the Trinity, or your Bible translator thought he was, **or** this verse isn’t speaking about God at all. I prefer the latter.

Abraham, just two verses ago, spoke of God with a singular verb – “I thought, surely the fear of God *is* not in this place,” meaning there is one God and He is the true God. And so what he is saying here is that “the gods” meaning “the false gods” of Mesopotamia, caused him to move from his father’s house. (See Joshua 24:2)

God, the true God, in order to establish Abraham called him away from the false gods. Abraham is the **material** cause; Abraham’s faith is the **formal** cause; getting Abraham away from the false Gods was the **efficient** cause; and a relationship with the true God for him and his generations is the **final** cause.

And so, based on that premise, he explains why he said that Sarah was his sister. The true God has actively called him to wander away from the false gods, but the false gods passively necessitated this. In order to preserve his life, he asks Sarah to say that she is his sister because there are false gods all over Canaan too.

¹⁴ Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and male and female servants, and gave *them* to Abraham; and he restored Sarah his wife to him.

Seeing that God, the true God, is on Abraham’s side he gave Abraham these gifts. Exactly the opposite of what happened in Egypt happens here. When the same thing happened there, the gifts came first as a payment for Sarah.

But here, they come afterwards. Why? In order to establish an alliance with him, which is exactly what he thought he would get when he took Sarah into his home in the first place. The proof of these things is found in the next verse...

¹⁵ And Abimelech said, “See, my land *is* before you; dwell where it pleases you.”

When Abraham was in Egypt and similar events occurred, Pharaoh sent Abraham away from them – back to Canaan. But here he offers him not only to stay, but to choose any place he wishes.

These two accounts seem the same when you read them, but when you study them closely, they are exactly the opposite from beginning to end.

The contrasts are to show the providential hand of God in his dealing with Abraham and how He is setting up the borders of the land now and establishing a permanent marker in the Land of Israel which exists to this day, 4000 years later.

Just for a moment, I'd like you to consider this. God is using these real events, full of real people, to ensure that His chosen people will rightfully have access to the land of Israel – that He has given it to them. And this didn't just happen the day they crossed Jordan with Joshua, nor did it just arbitrarily happen again in 1948.

Instead, God has worked, since the first man on earth to secure this line of people and to bring them to this land. If He has done this for people He knew would reject Him, not once, not twice, but continuously for thousands of years, don't you think His plan for we who have accepted Jesus is just as marvelous and binding?

I know I get long winded in sermons and often I pass on details that some people might find tedious, but in the end, every word which is here is given to us by God to show us how absolutely in control He is of all things. And thus, His promises to you are stronger than if they were set in concrete. Remember this as you struggle through your pains, sorrows, and losses.

In the end, they are a part of what He is doing and are intended, whether you realize it or not, for your good and His glory. Stand fast in this and be secure in your faith in Him and His word.

¹⁶ Then to Sarah he said, "Behold, I have given your brother a thousand *pieces* of silver; indeed this vindicates you before all who *are* with you and before everybody."

There are a certain number of words and sentences scattered throughout the Bible which are extremely hard to interpret, much less translate. If you read 10 Bibles, you will get 10 different translations here, unless one copies another. But there are a few things easy to note.

The first is that Abimelech said to Sarah, "Behold, I have given **your brother** a thousand

pieces of silver...” He calls him her brother, not her husband. In other words, he is saying that it was incumbent upon **her** to tell the truth once she was taken by him. Abimelech is placing the blame on her, not on Abraham.

And he gives the money to Abraham, not her. This payment is *kesut enayim* – a covering of the eyes. It is a way of having everyone involved overlook the entire situation. This is not a vindication of her actions as the Bible translates here. Abimelech is basically saying “The matter is over; let’ forget about it.”

16 (con’t) Thus she was rebuked.

It is Sarah who was rebuked. Abimelech disapproved of what **she** had done, but in order to get the matter resolved and forgotten, the money was paid. This is certain, because the money is brought in when speaking to Sarah about the situation. Abraham was given sheep, oxen, and male and female servants and his choice of place to live to cover Abimelech’s sin of having Sarah in his harem.

Once she was taken, it was her obligation to tell the truth about Abraham – that he was not only her brother, but also her husband. Instead of her doing it, God intervened. According to the Bible, the wrong appears to fall on Sarah, not on Abraham.

17 So Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech, his wife, and his female servants. Then they bore children; 18 for the LORD had closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife.

Once again, the term *ha-elohim* or “the God” is used. Abraham prayed to “the God.” This was his job as “a prophet” mentioned back up in verse 7 – “...he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live.”

This explains what that means. He would die literally, but probably also in the sense that no children would be born to him if he didn’t restore her to Abraham. Once he prayed for them, they were able to bear children and his name would live on.

This means God had taken away the *ability* for conception to occur, not prevent actual child-birth. When it says the Lord closed up all the wombs, it meant that they couldn’t even conceive. This could have been an affliction in Abimelech, or the women, or both.

For all we know, they may have developed some type of venereal disease, or tumors, or something else that kept them from being able to come together. And this is how God

kept him from uniting with Sarah as it said way back up in verse 6. God kept him from touching her because he was physically unable to do so.

Finally today, we have to mention that the very last verse we just read says the Lord, Jehovah, is the one who took this action. For the first time in this chapter, the divine name is brought in to show that He is the God of the work of salvation of humanity. This malady on the people came about to prevent any hindrance of the plan of salvation by having Isaac come from Abraham through Sarah. It was then healed by Him when it was resolved. Now His plan could go forward with Isaac's birth from Sarah and Abraham.

Once again, let me give you something to think about with this. God did all of this, even keeping these people from the ability to procreate, to protect His plan to bring Isaac and thus Jesus into the world. Every detail is minutely handled by a loving and observant God so that the Savior of you and me would come – and without whom we would be eternally condemned.

You see, without Jesus, there is no hope – no hope at all. What happened to Sodom and what would have happened to Abimelech and his kingdom, is what would have happened to us as well. But in these two stories is a picture. The first is of the unrepentant life of sin – this is Sodom and its destruction – a picture of hell.

The other is of restoration and alliance with the people of God – this is Abimelech and the mercy he received – a picture of our restoration through Jesus.

Next Week's Sermon –Genesis 21:9-21 (Cast Out the Bondwoman and Her Son)

Walking in the Land of the Philistines

Abraham journeyed to the South
And dwelt between Kadesh and Shur
There he did speak with his mouth
That Sarah was his sister, so his safety he would procure

And so Abimelech king of Gerar
Came and took Sarah from her tent
But God said to him by night, "A dead man you are"
Because you took her as yours, and this I will prevent

You see she is a man's wife
And now you've jeopardized your own life

But Abimelech hadn't come near her
And he said, "Adonai will you slay the righteous nation too?
Did he not say, "She is my sister?"
And she "He is my brother," otherwise, I would've said "adieu."

In the integrity of my heart this has come to be
And in the innocence of my hands this has happened, you see

And God said to him at night in a dream
Yes, I know you did this in integrity of heart
For I have withheld you from sinning, thus I did deem
That you would not touch her, right from the start

Now therefore restore the man's wife
You see he is a prophet who will pray for you to live
But if you don't, it will be the end of your life
You and all who are yours, for her your life will give

So Abimelech rose early in the morning
And told all his servants of God's stern warning

And the men were very much afraid
And they wanted the wrath of God to be stayed

Then Abimelech called Abraham and said right to him
What have you done to us, how have I offended you?
That you brought on me and my kingdom such a great sin
You have done something that you certainly shouldn't do

What did you have in view that you have done this thing
It is enough to make my head hurt and my ears to ring

Abraham said, "I thought, surely the fear of God isn't in this place
And they will kill me on account of my wife.
But she truly is my sister, it wasn't a lie from my face
She is the daughter of the father who also gave me life

She isn't the daughter of my mother though
And she became my wife, yes this is so

And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander
From my father's house to wherever I would go
That I said to her when we travel here or yonder
That in kindness to me she would say, this is my brother – it's so

Then Abimelech took sheep, oxen, and servants too
And gave them to Abraham and restored to him his wife
And Abimelech said, "See my land is set before you
Dwell where you find comfort and happiness in your life

Then to Sarah he said, Behold I have given to your brother
A thousand pieces of silver, to him and not another

This is a covering for the eyes
Of all who are with you and before everybody
Because of this unhappy guise
Thus she was rebuked because of deeds kind of gaudy

Next Week: Genesis 21:1-8 (He Brings Laughter and Laughter is His Name)

GENESIS 21:1-8

(HE BRINGS LAUGHTER AND LAUGHTER IS HIS NAME)

Introduction: We finally come to the birth of Isaac today. We've seen God's promise to Abraham about this son given and then given again. We've also seen that prior to him, came another son – Ishmael who was a picture of the bondage of the Law. Isaac, on the other hand, is a picture of freedom from that law by faith in Jesus.

Every story, and every detail within each story, is a wonderful testament to the faithful dealings of God with man and a picture of the coming Christ. When we feel like life is overwhelming us and things are spinning out of control, all we need to do is pick up the Bible and read and we can see God's hand of care and protection for us all throughout its pages.

By faith in Christ Jesus, we are brought near to God and we are adopted as His children. What great love has the Father lavished upon us that we might be called children of God. Hallelujah and amen!

Text Verse: *That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. ⁹ For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son." Romans 9:8, 9*

God is faithful to keep His promises, and He is abundantly pleased in those who have faith in them and rely on them in their daily walk. In fact, it's the only thing that we can truly offer Him – faith.

If we love Him, praise Him, or worship Him for who He is, it is because we have faith that He exists and that He has revealed Himself to us. When speaking of God, praise without faith isn't praise. Worship without faith isn't worship.

Everything about our relationship with God ultimately comes down to faith; it is based on faith – proper faith. Misdirected faith is, after all, wasted faith and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Lord Visits His People

In the Old Testament, there is a word used that we translate as “visit” or “visited.” It often indicates divine intervention on behalf of God’s people or for the fulfillment of His plan. The word is *paqad* and can mean to “visit graciously.”

Depending on the context, it can mean a host of other things as well, such as someone being an overseer. But even that hints at a watchful eye and careful attention. God has carefully watched over Abraham and Sarah and He has carefully attended to them thus far.

Today, we will see more attention doted upon His cherished creatures.

¹ And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken.

Here is the first use of the word *paqad* in the Bible. The Lord “visited” Sarah. It is a divine visitation to meet His perfect plan in His perfect timing. And how did He visit her? He “...visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken.”

She’s mentioned twice in a row because it was she who laughed at the promise and then she lied about having laughed. Here is the short account and it explains why Sarah is addressed and why twice in this first verse today –

“¹³ And the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, ‘Shall I surely bear *a child*, since I am old?’ ¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”

¹⁵ But Sarah denied *it*, saying, “I did not laugh,” for she was afraid. And He said, “No, but you did laugh!” Genesis 18:13-15

So what’s happened here is similar to what happens to Peter after he denied Jesus. He denied Him three times and was later asked if he loved Him three times. Sarah laughed and then lied and so today’s first verse is used as restoration for that fault.

Some of us here may have laughed at the promises of God in our own lives. I know firm believers in Christ who laugh at the concept of a rapture. When I met Christ, I smirked at it too. How could millions of people just disappear without it converting the rest of the world into Christians?

But then, after studying the Bible, I realized that the people will be blinded so that they

believe the lies of the antichrist. After thinking on human nature and some of the crazy things people believe, I realized this won't be any problem at all.

People deny the holocaust. I know people who believe we blew up the twin towers all by ourselves...even though we all watched the planes fly into the buildings. People believe Mormonism even though science through DNA, artifacts through archaeology, and the nature of God as the Bible reveals have all shown it to be false.

We will believe anything simply because someone in authority said it. It is as if our minds have a toggle switch which is set to "Don't believe God" and it has to be manually changed to the proper – "Yes, take God at His word" setting.

This verse is reminding us that Sarah had her toggle switch on the wrong setting. But despite her doubt, the Lord fulfilled His word exactly as He promised. Let us each remember that God's word is written, it is sealed with His stamp of authenticity, and therefore we have every reason to believe it without any hint of doubt.

As you wind through the Bible, you'll see God often reminding us of a promise fulfilled, or a petition granted. While in Egypt when Joseph was 110 years old and on his death bed, he called his brothers together and said this to them –

"I am dying; but God will **surely visit you**, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." ²⁵ Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will **surely visit you**, and you shall carry up my bones from here." -Genesis 50:24-25

About 200 years later, Moses received his commission from the Lord and came to the people of Israel who were by then reduced to forced labor and hard bondage and showed them the signs the Lord gave him to prove he was chosen to lead them out of the land.

In fulfillment of Joseph's prophecy, the Bible records-

"So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD **had visited** the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped." Exodus 4:31

God visited His people in fulfillment of the promise spoken through Joseph. And, many hundreds of years later, in a time of similar hardship and trial, we read another petition in the 106th Psalm about the joy of forgiveness of Israel's sins –

Remember me, O LORD, with the favor *You have toward* Your people. Oh, **visit me** with Your salvation, -Psalm 106:4

Zahkhreni Yehovah birtzon am-ekha, poqa-deni bi-shua-tekha

After the people had been brought out of captivity in Egypt and through the water of the Red Sea, they had forgotten the mighty deeds of the Lord. Eventually, they went into captivity again because of their faithlessness, but there the psalmist cried out to the Lord for Him to visit – “Oh, visit me with your salvation!”

Yes, Lord – visit me with your salvation. And the word for salvation? Yeshua, the name of our Lord Jesus! And once again, in fulfillment of that petition by the psalmist, we read where this was finally realized in the New Testament, Luke 1–

⁶⁷ Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

⁶⁸ “Blessed *is* the Lord God of Israel,

For He has **visited** and redeemed His people,

⁶⁹ And has raised up a horn of salvation for us

In the house of His servant David,

⁷⁰ As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,

Who *have been* since the world began,

⁷¹ That we should be saved from our enemies

And from the hand of all who hate us,

⁷² To perform the mercy *promised* to our fathers

And to remember His holy covenant,

⁷³ The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:

⁷⁴ To grant us that we,

Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,

Might serve Him without fear,

⁷⁵ In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

⁷⁶ “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;

For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,

⁷⁷ To give knowledge of salvation to His people

By the remission of their sins,

⁷⁸ Through the tender mercy of our God,

With which the Dayspring from on high has **visited** us;
79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,
To guide our feet into the way of peace.”

It's important to tie these things together like this. You see, God isn't doing some arbitrary thing at one time or another, but He is giving His word and then fulfilling it. As He does, He gives us pictures of things to come. Isaac is one of those pictures. In the entire Old Testament, few were conceived and brought into the land of the living like Isaac was. In this then, he is a picture of Christ – the holy Seed of the woman promised all the way back in Genesis 3.

Just as Isaac was promised before he was born, and then was long anticipated, so was Jesus. But before Isaac came Ishmael and Abraham thought he was the son of promise. In the same way, before Jesus was born, came the Law.

The people thought that was God's plan of redemption, but Ishmael was replaced by Isaac and the Law was replaced by grace through Jesus. At the set time, just as God promised to return and give a son through Sarah, He also promised to return and give His Son through the woman – a Redeemer for all who would believe.

Paul tells us that-

“when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” Galatians 4:4, 5

God, promised salvation, and it came at the right time and in the perfect way. Isaac means *Laughter* and he brought laughter to his parents. How much more did the Son of God bring laughter to the world – laughter mixed with unending joy!

As Matthew Henry says, “When the Sun of comfort is risen upon the soul, it is good to remember how welcome the dawning of the day was.”

What was seemingly impossible to Sarah; what seemed like an impossible hope to the Israelites in Egypt, and what came as a cry for mercy from affliction by the psalmist... God has always been attentive to His promises, even in things which seem impossible, He always delivers.

As we ready for our next verse, let me tell you this...

Back in chapter 17, God finally revealed to Abraham that he would have a son through Sarah. Up until that point, his only son was Ishmael the son of Hagar. It was during this time that God changed Sarah's name from Sarai to Sarah and showed that she was to be the mother of the child of promise. When He made the promise He spoke these words to Abraham –

“But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.” Genesis 17:21

² For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

Using the exact same term from chapter 17 – *la'moed*, the “set time” – we are reminded again of the faithfulness of God.

The Promise – “Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year;” **The Fulfillment** – “Sarah conceived and bore...at the set time...God had spoken.”

Great God, wonderful Lord!

In this verse, it says that she bore Abraham a son “in his old age.” This has the flavor of something like “for his old age.” In other words, the old age of Abraham isn't a limiting factor that had to be overcome, like it was for Sarah.

Instead it is an affirmation that his old age will be filled with this child. Rather than his old age being “the difficult days” which Ecclesiastes describes will happen to most of us, it will be for him a time of laughing and rejoicing over the son *of* his old age.

As the days go by, each of us is getting older as well. The pains start coming, the joints begin to ache, and we anticipate difficult times ahead. But in the Lord, even the worst times are really better than the best apart from Him. It's because we have the sure hope that this life and its hard walk is only temporary.

I simply can't wait for the coming day when Christ returns to make all things new – a new body, a new direction, an eternity of joy... All of these things really are coming and right now, by faith, we wait for them. Stand fast in these promises and be assured that all things will be far more wonderful than you can possibly imagine.

In the sermon of Genesis 17 where God revealed to Abraham that he would have a son through Sarah, I read this as our Text Verse.

¹ We were like those who dream.
² Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”
³ The LORD has done great things for us,
And we are glad. -Psalm 126:1-3

Yes, the Lord did great things for Israel when He brought them back from the captivity of Babylon. But He has done great things for His people throughout the ages, filling them with abundant joy and laughter...

II. The Lord Brings Laughter to His People

³ And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac.

Again, in fulfillment of the word from the Lord and obedience to it, this verse is given to us. In Genesis 17:19, we read these beautiful words from God to Abraham – “...Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his descendants after him.”

The promised son has come and Abraham names him Yitsak, for Laughter is his name. As a note of vindication of the Lord’s word, the verse notes, “whom Sarah bore to him.” No laughter of doubt, no anxiety over what might or might not happen, no fear of stepping off a cliff and into the void exists with God.

Instead, there is the absolute assurance that what He says *will* come to pass. Though Satan and all the armies of hell fight to thwart His word, not a letter or the smallest part of a letter will ever fail to be accomplished. When the Lord speaks, it is already done. We merely have to stand back and see the wondrous workings of God.

⁴ Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.

This is our fourth verse today and it is the fourth verse which reaches back to a previous part of God's word.

"This *is* My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ¹¹ and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. ¹² He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant."

-Genesis 17:10-12

God commanded and Abraham obeyed in detail. Isaac was circumcised on the eighth day. I wonder if this made little Laughter cry? In his normally poetic way of looking at these types of things, we read this from Matthew Henry –

"God had kept time in performing the promise, and therefore Abraham must keep time in obeying the precept."

⁵ Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Isaac, the child of laughter was born when Abraham was having his centennial celebration. This was a full 25 years after the move from Haran to Canaan and 14 years after the birth of Ishmael. The year of Isaac's birth is 2109 Anno Mundi.

In just 1895 years, the Son of God would be born about 45 miles to the north of where Abraham is located now. No amount of time or distance is too difficult for God to span in order to fulfill His promises to His people whom He foreknows.

In the next two verses that we look at, Sarah sings out in two exclamations that are almost poetic in nature. The first of these is verse 6 and it actually comprises two sentences in the Hebrew –

⁶ And Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, *and* all who hear will laugh with me."

*Wat-oh-mer Sarah, se-hoq asah li
Elohim kol ha-sho-me-ah yitsak li*

Her words turn on the word "laugh." This however is completely different than the incredulous laugh of chapter 18, where doubt ruled the day. This laugh is laughter of

both wonder and delight at what has happened, and she acknowledges God's sovereign power to overcome even old age and a barren womb.

And in the process as God makes people laugh, and it's not just the person who is directly involved in the miracle, but those who hear of it as well. "God has made me laugh, and all who hear it will laugh with me."

This is so similar to what happened to Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist when she received the news that her own barren womb would also now bear – "When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, *they rejoiced with her.*" (Luke 1:58)

Yes, there is joy and rejoicing over these things, but how much more of even greater things. If God can regenerate the barren womb, He can also restore life from the overflowing tomb.

He did it for His own Son, raising Him from the dead by His great power. And He promises to do it for you as well. The earth's womb which devours our loved ones, and which will eventually devour us, will be emptied of those who have placed their trust in Him. The day is coming and the promise is sure. Eternal laughter will replace our temporary sadness.

⁷ She also said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne *him* a son in his old age."

The turning note of the previous verse was laughter, but the turning note of this one is the triumph of not only her own previous unbelief, but of anyone else that wouldn't have believed it. What nobody could ever have expected has come to pass. She has accused herself of past ingratitude and shouts triumph over it –

⁷(con't) "For I have borne him a son in his old age."

And that makes a good point to stop and tell you that even though you may have to wait for the promises of the Bible to come about in your own life, they will all come to pass. The people of God have waited 2000 years to see Jesus come in the clouds for them, but there is no reason to doubt – He will come.

We're waiting for a time when we don't lose family members, and it is coming. We're waiting for a time when Jesus will sit as King over the earth, ruling from Jerusalem, and

it is coming. We're waiting for the world to be renewed like the Garden of Eden, don't get frustrated, it is coming.

Every promise God has made will come to pass, just as His word records. Be still and wait patiently, it will all come to pass.

III. Great Feasts before the Lord

⁸So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned.

In one verse, we've just skipped over three years of life. "So the child grew and was weaned." The Hebrew time until this turn of life is three years. We learn this from two places. First, in the apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees we read this –

Leaning over her son, she fooled the cruel tyrant by saying in her native language, "My son, have pity on me. Remember that I carried you in my womb for nine months and nursed you for three years. I have taken care of you and looked after all your needs up to the present day." 2 Maccabees 7:27

The second is right from the Bible in the book of 2 Chronicles. During the time of King Hezekiah, we see the age of the Israelites who were counted old enough to be considered as viable citizens requiring normal food to eat –

Besides those males **from three years old and up** who were written in the genealogy, they distributed to everyone who entered the house of the LORD his daily portion for the work of his service, -2 Chronicles 31:16

Once Isaac reached the age of three and was considered fully capable of living on solid food rather than his mother's milk, Abraham threw a giant party. The reason why he did this is the same reason they do this in parts of the world even today.

It's because until a child is on solid food, they have a much greater chance of not making it. Once a certain age is met within a society, a party is given as a general indication that the days of uncertainty are past and he is now likely to be around until adulthood.

When the day came, Abraham gave a feast or a *misteh* in Hebrew. This is the second time such a meal has been mentioned in the Bible. The first was when the two destroying angels appeared at Sodom and Lot invited them to his home.

There in chapter 19 it said, "... he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate."

The first misteh, or feast, in the Bible was the result of the outcry of wickedness against a city and it ended in sadness and the loss of life. The next is misteh is the result of the happy birth and the growth of the son of promise. It will lead to the long and prosperous life of this child of laughter.

There are many other feasts like this mentioned in the Bible – by both pagans and by the faithful, but there is also another kind of feast the Bible speaks of. These feasts are detailed in Leviticus 23 and they are known as the feasts of the Lord. There were eight of them that the people of Israel were obligated to attend to.

I'm not going to go into too much detail about them now, but let me tell you what these feasts are. The Sabbath, the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Firstfruits, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

The reason why I'm bringing them up now is that, even though they are different than the feast Abraham gave when Isaac was weaned, these feasts were also given at specific times and to celebrate certain events.

Next week, we will see how Isaac's feast of weaning actually prefigures one of these feasts of the Lord. I want you to read Genesis 21:1-13 and think about these feasts and see if you can guess which one is being prefigured in Isaac's weaning.

The Sabbath was a weekly feast and it was to celebrate God's rest and redemption. This was fulfilled by Jesus and it is the reason we don't have a Sabbath in Christianity. Hebrews 4:3 says, "...now we who believe do enter that rest." Our rest is in Christ and His work – not in a Sabbath Day.

The Passover was fulfilled by Jesus as is recorded in 1 Corinthians 5 where it says, "Christ our Passover Lamb is sacrificed." His blood is what causes God's judgment to pass over us. We are now free from the penalty of our sin.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread was fulfilled by Jesus as is also recorded in 1 Corinthians 5 where it says that through Christ, "you truly are unleavened." Because of this Paul says we should "keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

The Feast of Firstfruits was fulfilled in Christ as Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 15 because he says “But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Firstfruits was a picture of the resurrection.

The Feast of Weeks was fulfilled in Christ when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the believers in Acts chapter 2. The Feast of Weeks is also known as Pentecost, something we reflect on each year, fifty days after Resurrection Day.

The Feast of Trumpets was fulfilled in Christ on the day of His birth as the Bible details. The same day that people were blowing trumpets and rejoicing, they could not have realized that their blasts were actually welcoming in the King of the Universe.

The Day of Atonement was fulfilled in Christ as Paul records in Romans 3 – “being declared righteous freely by His grace through the redemption that [is] in Christ Jesus, whom God did set forth a mercy seat...” The “mercy seat is the place of atonement.

And finally, the eighth feast is the Feast of Tabernacles. This was fulfilled in Christ when He put on a tabernacle of flesh and dwelt among us as John records in his gospel – “And the Word became flesh, and did tabernacle among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth.”

You see, for the people of God who have called on Jesus, every good thing promised **by** Him in the Old Testament is realized **in** Him in the New. He is the Lord of all feasts and He is the One with whom we will dine someday at a great table of abundance. No wonder David wrote these words to us in the 23rd Psalm –

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.

In Jesus, there are no guesses. In Jesus there is no speculation as to whether He can fulfill His promises. In Jesus there is no worry if He will turn away from those who call on Him. You see, in Jesus there is only truth and surety. If you’ve never trusted this great King and wonderful Savior, let me explain how you can...

Next Week’s Sermon –Genesis 21:9-21 (Cast Out the Bondwoman and Her Son)

He Brings Laughter and Laughter is His Name

The Lord visited Sarah as He had said
And the Lord did for Sarah as He has spoken
Though it seemed certain that her womb was dead
The word of the Lord came – surety in this token
For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son
It was in his old age that this did occur
At the set time God had spoken so it was done
The child came because the promise was sure

And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac as instructed
He was eight days old when the rite was conducted

This was just as God had commanded in the past
The day came about and he was circumcised at last

Now Abraham was one hundred years old
At the time when Isaac was born to him
Never would someone believe if told
Almost anyone would think the chances were slim

But it happened and Sarah joyfully said
“God has made me laugh, I am filled with joy
And all who hear will laugh with me instead
Of never believing I’d have a bouncing baby boy

She also stated, “Who would have spoken
To Abraham that Sarah would nurse children like this?
For I have born him a son in his old age, no jokin’
This child has brought us an abundance of bliss

So the child grew and was weaned
Because on God’s faithfulness they leaned

And Abraham made a great feast on that same day
When Isaac was weaned, he threw an enormous par-tay

The promises of God for Abraham and Sarah came true

And the promises of God will do likewise for you

We have these promises revealed in a book
The Holy Bible is where we they are to be found
Please open it up and take a good look
The words are true, the instruction is sound
They tell us of Jesus and all that He did
When we were lost in a sea of sin and death
He has saved from hell, and yes God forbid
We fail to accept Him before we take our last breath

Please call today on the Lord
And accept His offer of eternal life
Surety is found in Him and His word
Put away now the body of strife

All glory to Him for our every breath
God has saved us from eternal death

Victory in Jesus is our guarantee
Come to the Lord and this you will see

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 21:9-21
(CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON)
(PICTURE OF THE DAY OF PENTECOST)

Introduction: Reading the stories in the Old Testament often leaves us wondering about why they're in the Bible. With each new account, we need to re-ask it again. Why was the story of Cain and Abel there? What about the story of the Tower of Babel? Why is the story of Sodom and Gomorrah given?

Today, we'll look at the account of Hagar and Ishmael as they leave the home of Abraham and start life apart from them. While we're looking at the account, we have to remember that it's a part of what God decided to include in His word and therefore it must be relevant to our understanding of how He interacts with His people.

We looked at the overall purpose of Hagar and Ishmael's inclusion in the Bible before, and today will be a partial review of that. We'll include some things that are new too. One of the interesting studies that we've looked at, and that we will continue to look at, concerns the people who are somehow later included in the genealogy of Jesus – like Lot's girls.

Interestingly, though some pretty sketchy people are found in His ancestral records, there is no one from Hagar or Ishmael to be found leading to Jesus. The key to understanding why is in understanding the grace of the Lord in salvation apart from works of the law.

There are no works of the law which will save us, and as we'll see, Hagar and Ishmael are pictures of the law and **therefore** they are excluded from Jesus' genealogy. Such are the dealings of God with man. The Bible is a beautiful story of redemption from sin which comes solely by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Text Verse: ²⁹ *These are their genealogies: The firstborn of Ishmael was Nebajoth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,* ³⁰ *Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema,* ³¹ *Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These were the sons of Ishmael. 1 Chronicles 1:29-31*

Hagar bore Abraham a son named Ishmael. That son then bore 12 sons of his own. But unlike Isaac, who was born of a promise, Ishmael was born in the normal way. Sarah and Isaac are a picture of grace while Hagar and Ishmael are a picture of the law. The law

cannot save; only God's grace through our faith saves and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Cast out the Bondwoman and Her Son

Last week's sermon gave details about the birth, circumcision, and weaning of Isaac. The last verse we looked at was verse 8 which said, "So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned."

The next verse is our first verse today which is verse 9...

⁹ And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing.

The "son of Hagar the Egyptian" is Ishmael, and he's not mentioned by name, but rather by his mother's name and nation. This is to show the contrast between Isaac, who was named in the preceding verse and Ishmael. Saying "the son of Hagar the Egyptian", rather than "Ishmael", is to remind us that as the Israelites were never to return to Egypt, we as Christians are never to return to the bondage of the Law.

Isaac is now the center of attention, the son of promise, and the inheritor of Abraham's estate. In contrast, the older son is still just the son of a maid and is excluded from the spiritual and land promises that God has revealed to Abraham.

His scoffing occurred during the feast mentioned in the previous verse. Isaac is now three years old and this is his initiation from being a baby to being a young boy who can feed himself. For whatever reason, Ishmael was scoffing at him.

We can let our imaginations run wild about "why" because nothing else is given. Maybe he was dressed up in a cute little ceremonial outfit. Maybe he was still struggling to feed himself. Maybe he was getting all of daddy Abraham's attention and this made Ishmael jealous. Ishmael is about 17 at this time and ... well, you know how teenagers get. Whatever the reason, he's scoffing. This isn't mere "laughing" though. A different word is used than the word yitsak which is the laughing connected to Isaac's name. Instead, the word me-se-heq is used.

The meaning can vary in intensity, but a stronger and less happy meaning is certainly intended. This becomes all the more certain when we see what Paul writes about this account in the New Testament. There, in the book of Galatians, he says this –

Now we, brethren, as Isaac *was*, are children of promise. ²⁹ But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, even so *it is* now. Galatians 4:28, 29

Paul calls it outright persecution and therefore Ishmael's laughing was contemptuous at best and possibly threatening toward his younger half-brother. Sarah saw this and was appalled. A seventeen year old mocking someone's precious baby in any generation would be enough to upset a mom. How much more when they lived in the same camp!

Because Paul labels it persecution, and because of the timing of what has occurred, this then is the beginning of the fulfillment of a verse we looked at many, many weeks ago in Genesis 15. At the time God declared Abraham righteous and then confirmed His covenant with him, He spoke these words to him –

“Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will **afflict them** four hundred years.

-Genesis 15:13

This concept of Ishmael persecuting Isaac is critical to understanding the timing of this statement from God to Abraham. From this account today, it will be 400 years before the Israelites will be led out of Egypt and from the hard bondage that they had suffered both there and in their time in Canaan.

This then is about 30 years after the promise to Abraham. Little details like these, in what are otherwise sentences of relative obscurity, become instrumental in understanding God's promises, and His faithfulness in keeping them.

Talking about faithfulness to His promises... a few weeks ago we looked at the story of Sodom and Gomorrah and how it pictures the coming rapture. Do you think that God would put those hints of what He will do into his word from an account over 4000 years ago if he didn't really intend to follow through with the plan?

I know it seems like our lives are often out of control and that there is nothing firm or stable to hold onto, but that is the farthest thing from the truth. God has a plan which is so detailed, so minute in what it reveals to us, and intends for us, that we have every reason to stand firm in our hope and hold fast to our convictions.

The thing we should take away from these details is that He is a God of details. Every sore back, every lost loved one, every sleepless night... all of it – He has it all under

control and He will complete what He has started. If Jesus can overcome the cross, we can overcome through Him. Stand firm on that.

¹⁰ Therefore she said to Abraham, “Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *namely* with Isaac.”

Of course, about 50% of the people who read this verse come away with the sense that Sarah, and even Abraham, have committed some type of great offense by both thinking this and eventually following through with it, as we’ll see in a few minutes. But the context of the account, and the rest of the Bible, make it clear that Sarah is both right and just in her words – “Cast out this bondwoman and her son.”

The word she uses for “cast out” is *garesh* and it is used elsewhere, such as in Leviticus, to indicate an actual divorce. This is probably exactly what Sarah is implying. Even though she calls her a “bondwoman” she is also labeled elsewhere as being Abraham’s wife.

So what Sarah is asking is for something of a legal and formal declaration that Hagar is out...not just as a slave, but also as a wife of Abraham. The second half of the verse assures us that this is so – “for the son of this bond woman shall not be heir with my son.”

Now listen to what Paul says about the rights of the heir in Romans 4, remembering that Ishmael is a picture of the sons of the law and Isaac is a picture of the sons of grace –

“For the promise that he would be the heir of the world *was* not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if those who are of the law *are* heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect,” -Romans 4:13,14

Before we go on, we’re going to revisit Galatians 4 again, as we have several times already, to understand why this account is in here and what significance it has both to you and to all people who are free from the constraints of law because of the work of Jesus –

²¹ Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. ²³ But he *who was* of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, ²⁴ which things are symbolic. For

these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar— ²⁵ for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children— ²⁶ but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. ²⁷ For it is written: “Rejoice, O barren, *You* who do not bear! Break forth and shout, *You* who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband.” ²⁸ Now we, brethren, as Isaac *was*, are children of promise. ²⁹ But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him *who was born* according to the Spirit, even so *it is* now. ³⁰ Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” ³¹ So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free. -Galatians 4:21-31

Now that we’ve seen the purpose of the actors in the play, we can look again at Ishmael’s laughing and make more connections. This is exactly what God wants us to do because he specifically notes it in His word.

The first is that Ishmael probably looked at this little boy and couldn’t believe that he would be the father of many nations and the son of promise. He probably wondered how a little boy, so small and helpless, could ever meet the Lord’s purposes.

But Paul, in the New Testament reminds us of how this is so –

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence. 1 Corinthians 1:26-29

This scoffing of Ishmael then is a picture in itself. Just as Hagar and Ishmael point to the law and Sarah and Isaac to grace, Ishmael’s scoffing points to the scoffing of Israel at the coming of the Holy Spirit –

¹² So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?”¹³ **Others mocking said,** “They are full of new wine.”¹⁴ But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, “Men of Judea and

all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.

-Acts 2:12-14

The older brother, Ishmael, is a picture of the people of the older covenant – the bondage of the law and those who held to it. He scoffed at his younger brother, just as those in Jerusalem scoffed at those under the New Covenant grace found in Christ.

Even more amazing is that they both occurred on a feast day. The first was at the weaning of Isaac, when he moved from milk to solid food, and the second was at the weaning of God's people at Pentecost when they went from spiritual milk to spiritual solid food.

And then we need to look again at that unusual word *garesh* or “divorce” that was given to Hagar. Why is this so specifically included? We don't even need to leave the Law of Moses to understand the implications of this. Here is Deuteronomy 24. Listen carefully –

When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, ² when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's *wife*, ³ if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, ⁴ *then* her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that *is* an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance. Deuteronomy 24:1-4

There was a marriage contract at the time of the law and we were divorced to that through Christ. The symbolism of Hagar is absolutely clear. We are never to return to the law. Paul explains this marriage concept in Romans 7 to help us understand clearly –

Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. (vs. 4)

Can you see now how important it is to have the foundation of all things as are recorded in the book of Genesis? It is a marvel, a glory, and a testament to the wisdom and the power of God for all who believe.

God included this story of a boy laughing at his younger brother as a type or shadow of those under the law laughing at their younger brother of promise – the church, at its own feast of weaning.

¹¹ And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham’s sight because of his son.

It’s quite evident from the previous accounts in Abraham’s life, that he is a truly honorable, non-confrontational, and family-oriented man. He took Lot along when he travelled to Canaan. He gave him the choice of choosing what portion of the land to take when they needed to separate.

He went after Lot and rescued him when he was taken captive. He pleaded with Lord before the destruction of Sodom for them to be spared if at all possible, certainly because he knew Lot was there.

These things and others we’ve seen all point to Abraham’s character and conduct. So when he heard what Sarah was proposing, it had to be really tough on him. No matter what the situation between him and Hagar was, Ishmael is his son and he’s been raised as such for 17 years.

And now he’s being asked to cut this tie and send his son out into a hostile and unforgiving land. The Jewish writer Pirke Eliezer notes that of all of the evils which came upon Abraham in his long life, this was the hardest and most grievous in his sight.

¹² But God said to Abraham, “Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.

Whatever misguided notions people think or teach about what Sarah proposed and Abraham followed through with, God had no problem with it. It’s always best to think tough issues through and try to understand “why” things occur and what they lead to rather than make emotional and knee-jerk assumptions.

Even in America we kick young adults out of our homes when they cause problems. I’m guessing, although I can’t speak for how they’ll respond, that one.... ooor both, of my children will testify to this.

So what is the point of this verse being here? Like the symbolic nature of the entire account as we looked at in Galatians 4, this verse is cited by Paul, in the book of Romans, to remind us about God's election –

“But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, 7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, “In Isaac your seed shall be called.” Romans 9:6, 7

God spoke to Abraham and told him not to worry. He'd already given a promise about Ishmael several years earlier. “Abraham, don't you remember? I told you he would become fruitful and multiply and that he would be the father of 12 princes. It'll all work out as it should.”

¹³ Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he *is* your seed.”

This promise is repeated to Abraham from Genesis 17:20 and it will be confirmed in Genesis 25:16. God told Abraham that Ishmael would have 12 sons and we find out later that he did. And this is the reason for the text verse I gave today from 1 Chronicles. In that genealogy of the people of the world, Ishmael is remembered even there.

Through the sons of Ishmael will come a chain of events which will eventually lead to the deliverance of the Israelites 400 years later. It was his descendants who bought Israel's son Joseph from his brothers and then sold him to Potiphar the Egyptian.

If this didn't happen, Joseph would never have ascended to the right hand of Pharaoh. Every detail of history is carefully and minutely woven together to lead to the fulfillment of God's marvelous plan.

Likewise, through the law, which Ishmael pictures, will come the deliverance of the world when Jesus comes and fulfills that very law on our behalf and then sits down at the right hand of God. The patterns laid down in this simple account about Ishmael are astonishing...

II. Wandering in the Wilderness

¹⁴ So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting *it* on her shoulder, he gave *it* and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away. Then she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba.

Again, like other times in the Bible, it is noted as “early morning.” God probably spoke to Abraham in a dream, and like every other time He speaks to him, he immediately obeys. There’s no dallying in the life of Abraham. When God speaks, he listens and acts. If you read this verse in some versions, like the King James or the ESV, it’s almost confusing what’s going on. Here’s the ESV –

So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

Because of the wording, it almost sounds like Abraham put the bread, the water, and Ishmael on Hagar’s shoulder and sent her out. The implication is that this poor lady with a little boy is being sent out to wander around in the wilderness. This isn’t at all what you should imagine, but because of the confusion, most depictions of Hagar and Ishmael show her with a little boy.

He is, as I said earlier, about 17 years old. Abraham gave the bread and water to her to carry because that’s the job of the women in the Middle East – carry stuff around. This is found throughout the Bible and even to this day if you go over there, you’ll see women... carrying stuff around.

Plus Abraham had a boy to hug and probably cry over. If he’d given the stuff to Ishmael, the bread would get smushed and the water might get spilled. Putting the stuff on Hagar is both expedient and right. The parting had to be a heartbreaker, but obedience is what he’s been called to and he is a man of obedience.

No matter how sorrowful to our human nature, anyone who is fearful and devout will walk in his ways and will, like Abraham, obey immediately, even when it concerns family or loved ones. As the Geneva Bible cites, “True faith renounces all natural affections to obey God's commandment.”

Remember, this is a picture of the law and grace. We are asked to cut our tie to the law. Not in part, but in its entirety. We are to be obedient to what the Lord has accomplished for us by setting aside the law in exchange for grace, just as Abraham has done with Ishmael.

¹⁵ And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs.

Based on Ishmael's age of 17, this verse might seem a bit improbable. How could a 17 year old be in the condition he's in before his mom who is much older? The answer is found in our genetic make up.

Men are about 60% water weight and women about 50%. But, men are about 3-5% body fat and women are about 10-16%. The percentage of body fat for women is greater than that for men due to the demands of childbearing and other hormonal functions.

Because of this, men burn off water more quickly and ladies hold it in. Ishmael's loss of water was enough to make him weary before her, and so she put him under a shrub to get him out of the sun.

¹⁶ Then she went and sat down across from *him* at a distance of about a bowshot; for she said to herself, "Let me not see the death of the boy." So she sat opposite *him*, and lifted her voice and wept.

Bowshot – only time in OT *kim-ta-kha-ve*. A bowshot is a long way, about a half a mile. Hagar couldn't bear the thought of being close enough to hear Ishmael dying or even calling out for water and so she went far enough away so that she not only wouldn't see him, but she wouldn't hear him as well.

Not only that, she also didn't want Ishmael to hear her own cries too. The expression to "lift her voice" means that she really sobbed over what was happening and she didn't want her boy to hear. This is a really, really sad and desperate scene which will be repeated throughout the Bible – people facing death.

In fact, it's something that simply can't be missed. Death is something everyone will face – both in others and eventually in them. The wages of sin, after all, is death. And thus we are all destined to die because we are all sinners. We each need a Savior.

The thing that I needed to know was why... why does God include this verse? Why is her immense weeping mentioned? It's there for a reason and this isn't arbitrary. On Monday as I was practicing this sermon for the first time, it came to me. It is a picture of the end of the tribulation period when Jesus and His church return to rescue the people of Israel.

According to Daniel 9:24-27, God has reserved 7 more years for Israel after the rapture of the church. This is the final 7 years of the Law of Moses in Israel. At the very end of this period, when Christ returns to His people, we read this in Zechariah 12 –

¹⁰ “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only *son*, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. ¹¹ In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. ¹² And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; ¹³ the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; ¹⁴ all the families that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves. Zechariah 12:10-14

Hagar is a picture of the law, she is mourning over the coming possible death of her son. The same mourning will be seen in Israel at the death of the law through the death of Christ, when the grace of Christ is bestowed upon them. The proof of this is coming in the verses ahead.

III. God Hears

¹⁷ And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, “What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.

Here we have a play on words – *v’yshma* or “and heard God” the voice of the lad whose name is Ishmael – God hears. This reminds us of the promise made all the way back in Chapter 16 when God told Hagar to name her child, Ishmael. Why? Because God heard then, God hears now, and God will always be there to hear.

And here He is, “the angel of God” calling out to Hagar – “What ails you, Hagar?” In other words, why are you crying... “Don’t you remember my promises of the past? Here I am ready to fulfill them to you now. Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad...”

God heard their cries then, and God will hear the cries of His people Israel and He will respond. I hope you can see the parallels of what God is doing, and why these verses are

here – God is returning to tend to Israel after their time in the wilderness. He is ever faithful to His unfaithful people.

¹⁸ Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation.”

Once again, this goes right back to Genesis 16 and the original promise to Hagar before Ishmael was born. “Don’t you remember Hagar? I’m right here tending to every detail.” And so He tells her to walk back the half mile or so she’d wandered away and to hold the boy because what He promised will come about – Ishmael will become a great nation.

¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink.

Hagar trots back and once she gets there, her eyes are opened to see a well of water. There are two possibilities about this. The first is that she missed this well the first time and it’s the entire reason he told her to go back. Where she laid him was right where the water was all along.

The second option is that God just opened up the earth and made water appear as He does elsewhere in the Bible. He did it for the Israelites in the wilderness, He did it for Samson after a battle, and He continues to do it for His people when the need arises. Isaiah almost mirrors the need of Ishmael when he wrote these words in his 41st chapter–

“The poor and needy seek water, but *there is* none,
Their tongues fail for thirst.

I, the LORD, will hear them;
I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.

¹⁸ I will open rivers in desolate heights,
And fountains in the midst of the valleys;
I will make the wilderness a pool of water,
And the dry land springs of water. Isaiah 41;17, 18

The answer to the question is that the Water of Life has always been there, but the well was hidden and so Hagar had missed it. God directed her back to her son first and then to the waters which would take care of them and sustain them for the rest of their journey. And this is what will happen for Israel in the years ahead.

The Water of Life, Jesus, has been there all along, but in order for salvation to come to the gentiles as Paul tells us in Romans, their eyes were blinded to it. But God will direct them to it as it said in Zechariah 13 – “In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.”

The amazing story of God’s grace reaches to all of the people of the world and God fully intends to fulfill His promises to His beloved people, Israel. And this is how He will do it. But understand, this is really what He does for each person who is saved by Jesus.

He directs us to His Son first and then He gives us the spiritual ability to see that where He is, is also the spot where the Water of Life is. And then, astonishingly, He gives us the choice to drink that water or to reject it. The funny thing is that despite the thirst every human has, not everyone will drink from the Water of life.

²⁰ So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

God has His purposes and He has made His plans. There is no thing which will thwart them, though we think we can. Atheists love to pretend He isn’t there, people work hard to remove His presence from society, and at times, even believers attempt to suppress the knowledge of Him for a spell. But God is there.

He was there at the creation. He was with Noah for the long days of the flood. He was there with Abraham as he waited for a son to be born, and God was with the lad, Ishmael. And because He was, the boy became a man of the wilderness and an archer.

And he certainly taught the skill of archery to his own sons because more than a thousand years later, Isaiah spoke of the clan of Ishmael’s son Kedar, noting their skills as renown archers –

For thus the LORD has said to me: “Within a year, according to the year of a hired man, all the glory of Kedar will fail; ¹⁷ and the remainder of the number of archers, the mighty men of the people of Kedar, will be diminished; for the LORD God of Israel has spoken *it*.” Isaiah 21:16, 17

A thousand years in time and God was still there watching and guiding the streams of human history. And he is doing it to this day – even in your own life. He is there and He is tending to you...

²¹ He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Without a father to set him up with a wife, Hagar stepped in and made the selection. As she was from Egypt, so is her daughter in law, Ishmael's wife. Both the root and the branch of Ishmael proceed from the same people.

The place where they settled is called the Wilderness of Paran. This place is so absolutely barren and wild that being an archer makes all the sense in the world. You can't be a very successful farmer in a place like this. It's around the area of Mount Sinai and is just as unforgiving as any place you'd ever want to visit. (Paran – place of caverns - explain)

Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian said that his 12 sons and their descendants after them came to inhabit all the country from the Euphrates to the Red Sea and called it Nabatene. They are an Arabian nation, and at least until the time of Josephus, they named their tribes from the 12 sons of Ishmael.

In the end, this story of Ishmael is one that ultimately points to the amazingly glorious work of Christ in fulfilling the law that we cannot fulfill.

Next Week Genesis 21:22-34 (The Well of the Seven)

God Hears, God Remembers, and God Responds

Sarah saw the son of the Egyptian Hagar
Whom she had borne to Abraham
Scoffing at Isaac, BUT this didn't go very far
Because she asked her husband to make them scam

Cast out this bondwoman and her son
For her son will not be an heir with Isaac – he's the only one

And the matter was displeasing in Abraham's sight
Because of his son, he didn't think it was right

But God said, "Don't let this be displeasing in your sight
Because of either the lad or because of your lady servant
Whatever Sarah has said, treat it as right

Listen to her voice, for in Isaac to your seed I will be observant

Yet, I will also make a nation of your son Ishmael
Because He is your seed it will come about
So Abraham rose early in the morning before the breakfast bell
In the word of his God, he never held a doubt

He took bread and a skin of water and put it on her shoulder
And he gave the boy to Hagar and sent her away
Then she departed and wandered through shrub and boulder
In the Wilderness of Beersheba where only the donkeys bray

And when the water in the skin was completely gone
She placed the boy under a shrub she found there
And she went as far as an arrow is shot when drawn
For to see the boy die is something she couldn't bear
So she sat opposite him and lifted her voice and wept
Into anguish of soul was her whole life swept

And God heard the voice of the lad
Then the angel of God called out of heaven to her
"What ails you, Hagar? Things aren't all that bad
Fear not for God has heard the cries and will handle this for sure

"Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand
For I will make him a great nation
Then God showed her a well of water in the desert sand
And she was certainly filled with joy and elation

So she went and filled the skin with the water
And gave the lad a refreshingly long drink
It was probably better than eggs and a bagel with butter
Even better than a 7-11 slurpee I would think
So God was there tending to the boy
And he dwelt in the wilderness after he grew
Becoming an archer his arrows he would deploy
The life of a hunter is the life that he knew

He dwelt in the wilderness of Paran

And from Egypt his mother took for him a wife
And in the Arabs today his name lives on
Because God looked after Ishmael's life
In the same way, God is there with you
And He will always lead if you don't know what to do
When things seem helpless and out of our control
That is the time on Him all our cares we should roll

God loves His people, the proof is in His Son
Our Lord Jesus, who came to show us His Father's heart
And through His cross and the empty tomb the battle has been won
It is through calling on Him that our new life can start

Fellowship with our Creator is restored through His life
Yes because of Jesus all things become brand new
Between God and man, there is no longer strife
Because the devil's work, Jesus did undo

Thank You Lord, let us shout out Your praise
And worship You in holiness for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 21:22-34 **(THE WELL OF THE SEVEN)**

Introduction: Today we're going to learn about the importance of oaths and agreements and see how God watches over them, even thousands of years after they are enacted. Every oath we take and every vow we make is done in the presence of God and therefore they are as binding as if they are made directly with Him.

Today's verses may not be as deep and exciting as some we've traversed, but they are as important as any other. God wants us to learn from them and to then abide by the instructions and the lessons they provide. Let's do our best to take heed to them as we live in His presence as followers of Jesus Christ.

Text Verse: *You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name. Deuteronomy 10:20*

Some people believe based on Jesus' words in the gospels that we should make no oaths at all. But this is a misreading of what Jesus was telling us. When we make oaths, however, they are not to be taken lightly and they are only to be made in the Lord's name. Any vow or oath which is made under any lesser name will ultimately diminish His glory in our perception of Him and is actually an act of idolatry and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Abraham's Vow

In the coming verse, the first thing we need to do is to try to determine when it actually occurs –

²² And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, "God is with you in all that you do.

There are three possibilities as to when Abimelech came to Abraham. The first is that it was from the passage in Chapter 20 when Sarah was taken into Abimelech's home. If so, it would skip over both the birth and weaning of Isaac and the story about Ishmael which included his growing up and becoming an archer.

The second possibility is that it was after the birth of Isaac around the time of the feast when he was weaned. The third is that it happened much later, when Ishmael had grown up to become an archer.

The first option is unlikely because there is a progression of events which leads from one thing to another right up until the time of Ishmael and his mother leaving the home. The third option, when Ishmael is grown up, is also unlikely.

That is more of an addendum on the timeline to note that he survived the ordeal of being in the desert and eventually married and became an archer. The most likely time is around the time of Isaac's weaning when Hagar and Ishmael were sent away.

The reason why this is likely is because by having the record of them being removed from the camp assures that what is coming in today's account is intended to include the people who descend from Isaac, not Ishmael. If Ishmael were still in the home, there could be a claim by him and his descendants to what is coming.

Now let's read the verse again to refresh it in our minds – “And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phichol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, “*God is with you in all that you do.*”

The king of Gerar, who had already interacted with Abraham in the matter concerning Sarah his wife, comes along with the commander of his army to make a formal treaty with him. His word to Abraham, “*God is with you in all you do*” is something God promised Abraham all the way back in chapter 12 –

² “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.” Genesis 12:2

By this meeting with the king, the Lord has fulfilled the promise to Abraham. It was as obvious to Abimelech as the nose on his face that God was looking out for him. When he took Sarah into his harem, God came to him in a dream, called him a dead man for taking a prophet's wife, and told him he had better return her.

He also was fully aware of the large size of Abraham's camp in people, livestock, and wealth. Now, he had heard that a son was born to him and had lived to the age of weaning, meaning he would become the inheritor of Abraham's camp. And the camp was powerful. Anyone in the area would know that with his fighting men he had overthrown the 4 kings of the east.

God was with Abraham and so Abimelech came to make a treaty with him now before died. Once he was dead, the son would take over and a new regime would be established. It would be easier to work with Abraham now than to do so with his son in the future.

Another question arises though, why did he bring along his army commander? He is mentioned by name and therefore God is telling us that he is important to know. His name means “the mouth of all” or literally “strong.” Bringing him along does a few things.

The first is that it will demonstrate that the pact to be made has the full support of the people. It also acknowledges Abraham’s military superiority over his own kingdom. Abraham’s might was renowned and bringing the commander who was named “Strong” was an implicit acknowledgment that Abraham was stronger.

This is in line with Jesus words in a parable in Luke 14 –

³¹ Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. ³³ So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.

Abimelech may or may not be a believer in the true God, but he is acknowledging that Abraham is superior to him in military power and that his God is more inclined to Abraham than anyone else, including him.

Before we head to the next verse, we should probably evaluate our own lives and see if we’re willing to heed what Jesus is implying in the verse I gave you from Luke. He is the commander of the strongest army there is and so we should be brave enough to stand up for our convictions and let others, not us, sue for peace.

Any Christian who isn't willing to speak up for his faith and for the truth of the message of Jesus Christ is neither properly executing, nor worthy of, the title of “Christian.”

Whether the people around us acknowledge it or not, the God we follow is the only God and because He is, then nothing can stand against us. So if you’re timid about whatever issue you’re facing, don’t be. He is right there with you as He was with Abraham.

²³ Now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have dwelt.”

However Abimelech knows... he knows that Abraham isn't going to just be a powerful leader and then fade away, but that his line will continue forever. Because of this, he asks for him to speak not only for himself, but for his son, and his future descendants too.

What he is asking for is something we would call the Lex Talionis or “an eye for an eye.” What kindness or evil I show you, you will show me. What I think about this account, and several more like it, may not be popular, but I believe it is 100% correct.

The covenant between Abimelech and Abraham is as binding today as it is when it was made. It seems to be written into the Jewish mind and actions even now. I do not care even a little bit what the rest of the world says about the actions of Israel. They never act as the aggressors in their actions against their neighbors.

On August 31, 2004, 16 were killed in two suicide bombings on buses in Beersheba for which Hamas claimed responsibility. On August 28, 2005, another suicide bomber attacked the central bus station, seriously injuring two security guards and 45 bystanders. During Operation Cast Lead, which began on December 27, 2008, Hamas fired multiple Grad rockets from Gaza into Beersheba.

On almost every occasion in their history, Israel responds to attacks on the people they covenanted with, but they do not actively attack them. In the Bible and in modern history, when this isn't the case, the Lord sees and acts. Let me give you an account from 2 Samuel 21 when Israel violated such a covenant –

Now there was a famine in the days of David for three years, year after year; and David inquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, “*It is because of Saul and his bloodthirsty house, because he killed the Gibeonites.*” ² So the king called the Gibeonites and spoke to them. Now the Gibeonites *were* not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; the children of Israel had sworn protection to them, but Saul had sought to kill them in his zeal for the children of Israel and Judah. 2 Samuel 21:1-2

People may forget these things over time, but the Lord never does. This covenant with the Gibeonites was about 400 years earlier and yet God held Israel to account for it. His

eye is on both sides of these struggles and He attends to violations in man's word in surprising and fulfilling ways.

This is a lesson we need to remember as individuals and as a nation. When we sign a contract of peace with a group of people, it is binding and is not to be dismissed by us first, only in retaliation for an aggression initiated against us.

²⁴ And Abraham said, "I will swear."

In Genesis 15, God told Abraham that it would be 400 years before he would take possession of the land and so he has two reasons to agree. The first is that Abimelech came to him on friendly and submissive terms. Second, by such an agreement, in a land which he doesn't even own, he is receiving a guarantee of safety.

This would be like making an agreement with your landlord. He comes to you with his lawyer and says, "I know that God is with you in all you do and so I want to guarantee that I will prosper through you.

"So, would you be willing to live in this house for free – you and any of your descendants who want to for the next 400 years? If so, I'll pay all the bills and throw in a security system too."

And so you agree. Abraham agreed too...

The agreement is made and it will be confirmed in a covenant. Abraham's word is *i'shaba* – "I will swear" and is the same root as the number seven - sheba. An oath of this type will be confirmed in a rite involving the number seven.

II. Oh, Well!

Before you sign the lawyer's papers, you want to clear up a small problem. He came to you and so he's obviously willing to bargain and wants to see the deal done and so now is the very best time to clear any outstanding matters.

On the back of the property is a big shed that you built. The landlord's employees have been coming onto the property and filling it with their stuff. Before you sign the papers, you want your shed and you want it left alone.

Abraham has his own terms which he wants settled before he confirms the oath with Abimelech...

²⁵ Then Abraham rebuked Abimelech because of a well of water which Abimelech's servants had seized.

Water is where it's at. If you've never been to Israel, just go on line and type in "Beersheba," which is where this story is happening. You'll see lots of sand, lots of rocks, and you can feel the heat shimmering off the photo.

There are two rain seasons in the land – known as the former and latter rains which come in the fall and the spring. In the off seasons, or in the times when the season doesn't get rain, a well is the only source of water. It is the only way to irrigate, and the only way for the people and animals to drink.

Abraham is more concerned about this well than any other part of the meeting and it will be a continued source of trouble if it doesn't get settled. Abimelech's servants need to leave it alone or the oath will only have hints of unhappiness associated with it.

²⁶ And Abimelech said, "I do not know who has done this thing; you did not tell me, nor had I heard of it until today."

This verse shows the gracious nature of Abraham for two reasons. First Abraham agreed to the oath even before the issue of the well was brought up. And secondly, Abimelech was never told in the past about what was going on.

Abraham had the power to take the well back by force and keep it guarded, but instead, he graciously kept the matter concealed. Abimelech is hearing about it for the first time. I like what the Geneva Bible has to say about this verse – "Wicked servants do many evils unknown to their masters."

You'll find many times in the Bible that this is so. Poor King David had a very faithful army commander named Joab, but he did all kind of things that he shouldn't have done. Should you be a boss, you know that even the best of employees make some rather dubious decisions from time to time.

Abimelech is gracious back to Abraham just as Abraham was to him. In the end, the covenant will go forward and it will last as a testament to this congenial meeting between these two men.

²⁷ So Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech, and the two of them made a covenant.

In verse 23, it was Abimelech who asked for the agreement, and in verse 24 Abraham agrees to it. Abraham is the one who offers the animals because he is the one who is granting the request.

He took “sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech.” Abraham provides the animals and Abimelech is the one to kill them and divide them in two. After that, both of them will pass between the pieces and the covenant will be confirmed.

The significance to this ancient rite is that if either party broke the covenant, they would be treated in the same manner as the animals that they passed through. In other words, “What has been done to these animals is what I am binding myself to.”

²⁸ And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.

Some scholars say these seven lambs are the animals that were sacrificed and the other sheep and oxen were gifts to Abimelech. However, this doesn't make sense and it is exactly the opposite. The terminology, both before and after this verse, indicates that the seven lambs are a witness to the covenant, not the sign of it.

²⁹ Then Abimelech asked Abraham, “What *is the meaning of* these seven ewe lambs which you have set by themselves?”

Abimelech is standing there looking at these seven cute, fluffy little lambs and wondering what they mean. The animals for the sacrifice have been slaughtered and divided and all of a sudden Abraham walks up with seven more lambs.

He probably stood scratching his head or maybe pulling his beard and wondered what was going on.

³⁰ And he said, “You will take *these* seven ewe lambs from my hand, that they may be my witness that I have dug this well.”

I've been to this place and looked down this well. Yes, the well is still there, but the lambs aren't. So where is the proof that Abraham actually gave them to Abimelech and where is the proof that he accepted them? Anyone?

The proof is in the document we're reading. As the noted legal scholar and principle founder of Harvard Law School, Simon Greenleaf states, "Every document, apparently ancient, coming from the proper repository or custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden of proving it to be otherwise."

It's important to remember this because there are copies of the Bible which go well back into antiquity and which predate any other claims on this well or any of the other biblical sites coming into contestation in modern times. This may seem like a side issue, but God has recorded this deed and we need to take heed to it, as well as several others in the Bible.

People argue over Israel's right to the land. They argue over a Jewish presence on the Temple Mount, they argue over Israel's very right to exist. So, knowing the Bible is the most important tool that we have to refute these baseless claims.

The seven lambs were offered by Abraham as proof that he dug this well. They implicitly state that the land around the well was for his use. If Abimelech accepts the lambs, then what is implicit becomes explicit. Remember, it was Abimelech in the previous chapter who said this to Abraham –

"See, my land *is* before you; dwell where it pleases you." (Genesis 20:15)

³¹ Therefore he called that place Beersheba, because the two of them swore an oath there.

"Therefore..." We're reminded to think on the previous verses of today's sermon and come to a conclusion or accept one that has been made. So let's review:

Abimelech and Phichol came to Abraham, acknowledged that God is with him in all he does, and so they ask him to swear by God that he won't deal falsely with him, his son, or his descendants, and that there will be established an agreement based on the *lex talionis* – an eye for an eye, if the agreement is broken.

Abraham agrees and after his agreement he brings up the subject of the well. Abimelech says he had no knowledge of the problem and Abraham takes animals for a sacrifice to cut a covenant. He also sets aside seven ewe lambs as a witness that he dug the well. If Abimelech agrees to this, then the covenant will be sealed.

"Therefore..." because of all of these things, the well is called Beersheba. Why is the naming of the place the conclusion of the matter and the reason for our "therefore?" The word in Hebrew for "therefore" is *al* and can be translated, wherefore, therefore, so, and, etc. But it is used to demonstrate a result.

"Therefore" – the result of all the things we talked about is the name Beersheba. The word *be-er* means well. The verb *sheba* means "oath." So, or therefore, the result is the "Well of the Oath." But the root of *sheba* also means "seven." So, or therefore, the result is the "Well of the Seven."

The "therefore" is that the well and the surrounding area is called Beersheba, and the name came from this oath. The oath is the grant and the name is the testament to the grant. Who owns this land? The descendants of Abraham through Isaac, not Ishmael, and also not any of the other people in the area... The deed stands.

III. The Lord, The Everlasting God

³² Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba. So Abimelech rose with Phichol, the commander of his army, and they returned to the land of the Philistines.

Both agreed – Abraham and Abimelech, and so the covenant is confirmed and it's done as the verse says, "at Beersheba." The inclusion of the name in this verse is given specifically to demonstrate that it came from this account.

The fact that the name of this place has lasted for 4000 years tells us that God is carefully watching over His land and is demonstrating the significance of these accounts in His word.

As the Palestinians continue their assault against Israel – each time they do, they violate this ancient covenant which came between these two men. You see, the term Palestine comes from the Hebrew word *plishtime*, which we translate as Philistine.

These people cannot claim the title while rejecting the obligation to it. It either goes all the way or it doesn't go at all. Hence, the town of Beersheba is in the news and will continue to be in the news as long as these wicked people are hostile to their Jewish brethren.

The history of the place is rich and it will be mentioned many, many more times as the Bible unfolds. It will become synonymous with the very southern spot of the Land of Israel.

This spot is where God meets with Jacob just before he leaves the land of Canaan on his journey to Egypt. From the time he leaves Beersheba, it will be several hundred years before the people return from there.

33 Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.

Verse 33 introduces a few terms and a pile of debate. Abraham planted, according to the NKJV a “tamarisk tree” and others say an “oak tree.” The KJV says “grove.”

The term is *eshel* and is used only used two more times in the Bible. Both times, a tree and not a field for plowing, seems likely.

Study your Bibles and make your conclusions. I go with a tree, not a grove because a tree seems to be tied into what Abraham is doing. He is calling on the Lord, the Everlasting God. This is the first time in the Bible this term is used – Yehovah, El Olam.

He is the Eternal One. He is unchangeable and therefore he is sure and able to watch over the covenant made between these two men. Because of this, Abraham plants a tree – a symbol to men of permanence and reliability. As my brother once said to me, “The definition of an optimist is a person who plants a tree.”

A grove gives the thought of neither permanence nor reliability. In fact, it gives just the opposite. A grove is something temporary and which changes with each harvest, but the Bible says otherwise about the tree –

In Isaiah chapter 6, he is told by the Lord to proclaim His word to the stubborn and dull eared people. They are told to keep on hearing, but never listening. They are told to keep on seeing, but never perceiving. Eventually, Isaiah cries out –

“Lord, how long?” And He answered: “Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, The houses are without a man, The land is utterly desolate, ¹² The LORD has removed men far away, And the forsaken places *are* many in the midst of the land. ¹³ But yet a tenth *will be* in it, And will return and be for consuming, As a

terebinth tree or as an oak, Whose stump *remains* when it is cut down. So the holy seed *shall be* its stump.” Isaiah 6:11-13

Despite Israel’s unfaithfulness, their stiff-necks, and their unwillingness to hear, God promises to preserve a teeny remnant of the people and they will be as the stump of the tree which will sprout again at the scent of water.

Abraham has planted a tree acknowledging God’s faithfulness and permanence. It’s as if he sees the future of his people and acknowledges God’s sovereignty over them and His eternal faithfulness to them, even when they nail His Son to another tree.

Concerning this treaty between Abraham and Abimelech and their descendants after them, it is Yehovah, El Olam who will vindicate the just and who will judge the unjust who breaks the agreement. He is Abraham’s infallible Source of rest and peace.

In Ecclesiastes 3:14, we read this –

“I know that whatever God does, It shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, And nothing taken from it. God does *it*, that men should fear before Him.”

The form and appearance of the things around us may change, but what God determines is permanent and everlasting. Nothing that He decides can be frustrated or hindered. Even though the tree Abraham planted is temporary and changing, it is in itself a shadow of something that is eternal and unchanging.

One more little tidbit about this verse for you – at the beginning of this chapter, way back in verse 1 when the Lord visited Sarah and brought about the conception of Isaac, which was two sermons ago, the name of the Lord “Jehovah” was mentioned.

It hasn’t been mentioned again until now 32 verses later. Through Isaac’s weaning, through the sending away of Hagar and Ishmael, and through the entire account with Abimelech, only the term “God” is used. This is because of the relationship between the people in those accounts and God was general and not intimate.

But His relationship with Sarah as the mother of Isaac and His relationship with Abraham, the man of faith, we see a personal and covenant based relationship. And so the chapter begins and ends with the divine name, Jehovah. It is this name which, until the incarnation of Jesus, demonstrates communion with man.

This is how life was intended to be. When man was created, it was the Lord who was with him in the Garden, but since then He only appears at certain times and for specific reasons in human history.

The intimacy between God and man was all but gone and can only be restored when we follow His rules. Once we do though, Paul tells us about the restored relationship –

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, Romans 8:14-16

³⁴ And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines many days.

This is the last verse of chapter 21 and it is given to show us God’s faithfulness to Abraham. After the treaty, after calling on the name of the Lord as the Everlasting God, we see that this same God was both capable and willing to provide for Abraham, even in the Land of the Philistines.

The verse implies that there were no disputes over the well with Abimelech or with anyone else that would have necessitated him moving on. God remained Abraham’s source and place of rest.

Before we leave today’s passage behind us, we should reflect on this personally. What we’ve learned today is as much about oaths, their establishment and fulfillment, as anything else. Some of us here have taken an oath in marriage.

I will tell you that God looks at that oath in the same light as He looks at the oath between these two men. God is still watching it carefully 4000 years later and He is watching for our faithfulness in the covenant of marriage as well.

He’s also watching our other oaths – things we have sworn to accomplish. This includes loan agreements for a car or a house. It includes testifying in a courtroom or witnessing transactions. God watches over our actions and our oaths, expecting full and complete compliance.

If we are really Abraham’s children, we are children of the Lord, and so we need to be competent and faithful to represent Him in all we do.

Next week: Genesis 22:1-8 (By Faith Abraham)

The Well of the Seven

And it came to pass at that time
That Abimelech and Phichol the commander of the army
Spoke to Abraham what was on their mind
God is with you in all you do and we see your life is barmy

Now therefore, swear to me by God
That you will not deal falsely with me or my offspring
And with kindness we will interact while in this life we trod
You will do to me as I to you, please agree to this thing

And Abraham said, "I will swear."
Then he rebuked Abimelech because of a well of water
His servants had seized it, without any care
It needed to be resolved before the animals they would slaughter

And Abimelech said, I don't know who has done this thing
You never told me, nor have I heard till today
So Abraham to Abimelech sheep and oxen he did bring
And gave them to him for a covenant display

And Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock to the side
And Abimelech asked their meaning, and Abraham replied

You will take these seven lambs from my hand in order to tell
As a witness that it was I who have dug this watery well

Therefore, he called that place Beersheba
Because the two of them swore an oath there
Thus they made a covenant at a place which rhymes with Toshiba
Not much else does and I had to put something there

So Abimelech rose with Phichol the commander of the army
And they returned to the Philistine's land
They were hoping their life would also be quite barmy
And that God would bless them from His open hand

Then Abraham in Beersheba planted a tamarisk tree
And there called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God
And he stayed in that land many days happy and carefree
Because he was a man of faith and faithfully he trod

Each of us enters into agreements and covenants too
And God expects us to obey them in all that we do

Let us be faithful to the contracts we sign
And to the vows we make as we speak with our lips
God instructs us that this is His design
He is watching that we don't make any slips

He is faithful to us in each and every way
And so we are to be like Him each and every day

Let us be faithful to our husband or wife
Let us be honorable each day as we work
In every way we need to live an integrity-filled life
Not letting things slip like some kind of a jerk

God promised so very long ago
That He would send His Son to make all things right
Thankfully He didn't change His mind and decide to say no
Because only through Him can we see heaven's light

Great and awesome God,
Let us in thy light trod
Great and marvelous in all your ways,
May we return to you all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 22:1-8 **(BY FAITH ABRAHAM...)**

Introduction: Abraham, as we have seen, has been a man of faith and is recognized as such throughout the Bible. Today we'll see Abraham's faith put to the test and from this account the book of James cites Abraham's deeds, what he did, as a point of justification in connection with His faith.

On the surface, this seems to contradict Paul's idea of justification by *faith alone*, but only until we come to the realization that Abraham's deeds are, in fact, deeds of faith. The deeds Abraham accomplishes, and the deeds that we accomplish, cannot be counted for justification apart from the faith behind the deeds.

Understanding that it is faith and faith alone that justifies us, frees us from attempting to accomplish deeds for the sake of deeds. In other words, doing good things only for the sake of the *doing* merely produces a never-ending cycle of frustration, because the "doing" can never please God – only the faith behind it can.

This might sound like double-speak, but what Abraham does in the coming two sermons is an act of faith – not in the act itself, but in the outcome of the action.... Life from death.

Text Verse: *Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Luke 3:8*

Jesus speaks of "fruits worthy of repentance" as does the entire Bible. If you have faith in God and accomplish a task because of faith in Him, and someone else doesn't believe in God and accomplishes the exact same task, you will receive your reward and they will receive none. You see, it is faith and faith alone which pleases God and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Go to the Land of Moriah

Everything that has happened to Abraham since his call in chapter 12 has led to the passage we're going to look at today and next week. It is the culmination of everything God has prepared him for, and it is the crowning event in his life.

Four times in his life, Abraham has had to set aside something to gain something greater. The first was when he was called out of the land of idolatry into the land of promise. At that time he was given great and glorious promises about his name and about the multitude of descendants that he would be the father of.

Seven times these promises have been made and built upon and each step has been responded to in faith by this man of faith. The next time he set something aside was when he separated from his nephew Lot, whom he had grown up with and was very close to.

During and after this, the long delays between the promises made to him have molded him into a man of patience and reliance on God's timing. He has conquered armies and refused rewards, trusting instead that what the Lord provides is even greater.

He was told to walk before God and be blameless – meaning not only in his actions, but in the intent behind his actions as well. As an intercessor and a prophet, he's spoken with God as a friend, and petitioned the Lord for the sake of his family and others.

In God's good timing he received the son of promise, Isaac. In validation that he accepts Isaac as the son of promise, he faced his third great trial... setting aside something close to him. This came about when he sent his firstborn son, Ishmael, away.

Isaac then, along with those who would descend from him, is the highest prize of Abraham's life. And so, through this son of highest value he will have his character tested in the highest measure. This is Abraham's fourth and greatest test and the one which will establish him, for all times, as the Bible's premier example of a man of faith.

Every aspect of his life has been brought into focus to this point as a preparation for this moment. His resolve, his holy walk, his benevolent nature, and his fatherly affections are all ready for this final and immense test.

What God is like is what Abraham has been molded into, and what Abraham faces is what God Himself will demonstrate. The man and his life, particularly this point in his life, will be used to show us the very heart of God and the wonder of His love... for us.

¹ Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

“After these things” is talking about the events of the preceding chapter. In the first 8 verses is the record of Isaac’s birth until his weaning at 3 years old. In the next 13 verses, the account of the expulsion of Ishmael and Hagar from Abraham’s camp is noted.

And finally, in verses 22-34, came the detailed story concerning Abraham’s treaty with Abimelech, which included Abraham’s right to Beersheba. The very last verse of chapter 21 said, “And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines many days.”

And so it is “after these things” that God tested Abraham and this is where we begin today. This coming account is one so rich and so theologically significant that no matter how closely we look at it, we will unfortunately only scratch its surface.

After the previous events it says “that God tested Abraham.” The term used in this verse is one used before on specific occasions – “*ha-elohim*” or “the God,” and it is emphatic. When we see the term “the God” instead of just “God” it’s important to ask, “Why?”

And, the reason goes all the way back to the fall of man where Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent. What happens here with Abraham is by the hand of the one true God, not a satanic subterfuge. The Bible is making sure we note this.

It is not a test, therefore, which would result in *disobedience* if accomplished, but obedience. And likewise, if he failed to do it, he would be disobedient. In order to avoid any confusion in this verse, the NKJV says here that God “tested” Abraham.

Some other versions, like the King James say that God “tempted” Abraham. However, the book of James tells us that “God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.” This is a test, not a temptation.

To avoid confusion and the need to make excuses as to why “tempt” here doesn’t mean the same as “tempt” elsewhere, the term “test” is used. Unless you’re Bill Clinton, there’s no point in trying to explain why a word doesn’t mean what a word means. The Hebrew word means to “prove” or “try” and so “test” is far better in modern language than “tempt.”

The root of this word possibly signifies glistening or light. And so what is occurring is a highlight of Abraham’s character by giving him the opportunity to show to all successive ages the nature and worth of an unshaken faith in the power, glory, and truth of God.

²Then He said, “Take now your son, your only *son* Isaac,...

v'yomer, kakh na eth binkha eth ye-hideka asher ahabta eth yitsak

The order in which these words are placed in the Hebrew gradually increases the anticipation and raises the emotions higher and higher. The detail and minuteness of what is being said is meant to elicit the highest sense of the importance of what's coming.

It is intended to preclude any doubt in Abraham. Every word is detailed, emphatic, and striking, leading to the name...Isaac. In other words, to show Abraham what he most wanted to know he was going to use what Abraham most wanted to keep.

He wanted to know God's plan of redemption for mankind – the mystery behind it – and so in order for him to see it, God directs him in the very way in which He would someday show the world the extent of His own Divine love and goodness to fallen man.

God didn't spare his own Son, but instead delivered Him up even though He had done no wrong. He was innocent and loved. And so to allow Abraham the experience of what it was like for God to accomplish this act, He directs him to do the same. For all intents and purposes, Isaac is dead to Abraham from this moment.

God says, "Take your son, your only son..." when in fact Abraham had another son. This then indicates the nature of the sacrifice – it is the son of promise, it is Isaac. And so the pattern of God's sacrifice is laid out – there is a firstborn son and there is a Son of promise. One will live and One will die.

And thus we read in Exodus 4:22 –

"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel *is* My son, My firstborn."

And thus we read in John 3:16 –

"For God so love the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

²(con't) ...**whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah,**...

"Whom you love" is meant to indicate the Abraham's highest love. In other words, Abraham surely loved Sarah and he loved Ishmael too. But the love of Abraham for Isaac

is the highest love of his soul. Abraham is asked to take this love to “the land of Moriah.”

Moriah means “Chosen by Jehovah.” And so, “Go to the land I have chosen. It is a particular place which out of all of my creation is designated for a particular purpose.” Moriah is mentioned only one other time in the Bible, 2 Chronicles 3:1 –

Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.

²(con't) **...and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.”**

The son of promise, the only begotten son of Abraham is to be made a burnt offering. The exact method of such an offering was to first cut the throat, then cut it open, wash the entrails, and then cut up its quarters. After that, the pieces were to be placed in order on the wood and finally it was to be burnt to ashes. Imagine the emotion...

Were we to trace every avenue of this verse through the Bible, this sermon would go until late in the night, but this is the spot where the temple stood and it is the mountain where God’s only Son died. At that moment, the veil was torn as is recorded in Matthew.

As He passed through the veil, He presented His blood as the fulfillment of all of the offerings which only prefigured His work in the Old Testament. When this blood was presented, it restored access to God for fallen man.

Paul records the type of offering Jesus made in Ephesians –

Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. ² And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. (5:1, 2)

The term “sweet-smelling aroma” is directly linked to the burnt offering Abraham is asked to make. The death of Isaac upon the altar is given as a foreshadowing of the death of Jesus on the cross.

This son of promise who was miraculously born of a womb that was past the time of child-bearing, prefigures the Lord who was miraculously born of a virgin womb. The sacrifice of Isaac on Mount Moriah then is a similar picture of the Lord's cross. From birth to his coming sacrifice, Isaac pictures the Lord.

II. The Third Day

³ So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son;...

As I said earlier, in point of fact Isaac is to already dead to Abraham. Though the action hasn't come yet, the state of mind has. He was probably numb from the contemplation of what was directed, but in complete obedience to God, the account says he "rose early in the morning."

He probably was told to do this in a night vision and as soon as the morning dawns, he sets out to complete what was directed. Time and again we've seen Abraham's immediate response to every task he's been given. He is a man of promptness and obedience.

A particular point about this verse which we can only speculate on, and yet which we shouldn't miss, is that Abraham's donkey is saddled. When we think this passage through, and although unstated, Isaac will ride a donkey next to his father.

And so once again we have a pattern of the coming Christ revealed in the book of Zechariah chapter 9 –

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. (vs 9)

Just as Isaac's birth prefigures Jesus' birth, just as Isaac's weaning prefigured the birth of the church, just as Isaac's sacrifice is to prefigure Jesus' death, so is Isaac's ride to that death here to prefigure Jesus' triumphal ride into Jerusalem.

^{3 (con't)} ...and he split the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

Here we have another picture of the coming Messiah. The verse says Abraham split the wood for the burnt offering. Though he has a thousand or more people in his camp, **he** split the wood. It is an act of intimacy and of personal responsibility. In the same way, God is the Creator, in Genesis 1:11 we read this –

Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb *that* yields seed, *and* the fruit tree *that* yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed *is* in itself, on the earth”; and it was so.

God used a portion of His own creation, a tree, in the sacrifice of His Son. The work of Abraham prefigures that great act and the personal responsibility it foreshadows. And so off they head from Beersheba to the spot where history itself began, climaxed, and will continue into eternity – the mountain of Moriah, Jerusalem.

⁴Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off.

It’s about 45 miles from Beersheba to Jerusalem and the mournful trip for Abraham took two days. Although we won’t come to the end of the story today, the two days of the journey once again prefigure the time from Jesus’ crucifixion to His resurrection.

As I said earlier, Isaac’s death occurred, to Abraham, the moment he was told to sacrifice him. They arrived at the mountain to accomplish their mission on the third day. The same is true with Jesus, who ascended the hill on Friday and was resurrected on the third day. God has left out no detail, everything foreshadows Jesus.

What is coming in the next sermon then prefigures that great day when life was restored and hope was returned to the hearts filled with grief – both in Abraham and in the apostles and friends of Jesus. Sadness comes for a moment, but the joy is everlasting.

There are many other “third days” mentioned in the Bible, but one in particular needs to be addressed in conjunction with both the binding of Isaac and the resurrection of Christ – because it points to the return of Christ.

In Hosea 6:1-3 we read this –

“Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. ² After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight. ³ Let us know, Let us pursue the

knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter *and* former rain to the earth.”

Although this won't make sense apart from a much deeper review of the Bible, Psalm 90:4 and 2 Peter 3:8 both say that a day to the Lord is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day. This prophecy of Hosea then tells us that the Jewish nation will, after a period of two thousand years, be revived.

This has happened, exactly as prophesied. It also says that they will return to the Lord at this time and be raised up on the third day. In other words, it will be the fulfillment of Jesus' own words when He said that He will return to Israel when they call on Him as Lord, at the dawning of the third millennium from their exile.

We are right at that point in history now. As a confirmation of that, verse 3 says He will come to them like the latter and the former rain. The rain cycle in the land of Israel was disrupted for the past 2000 years and only now that Israel is back in the land and has repopulated the forests have the two rains returned.

James 5:7-8 speaks about this time in history –

“Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. ⁸ You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.”

In other words, Israel the people are back in the land. Israel the land is again receiving its long missing rain cycle. Now that it has returned, the Bible assures us that the Lord's return is imminent.

⁵ And Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey; the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and we will come back to you.”

Abraham confirms that he and Isaac will both return to the servants, even though Isaac is to be offered as a burnt offering. Either Abraham is crazy, he is accommodating his words to soften the truth, he is lying, or he truly believes that they will both return.

He wants to know the mystery of God's plan of redemption and God is going to reveal it to him. He knows this and his faith **in their return** is founded upon it. Even if his son dies, he will live again. And so he tells them that they will both return.

There's no need to speculate on this and the commentaries that say otherwise are wrong. You may place a big X over them. The reason is twofold. First, God made a promise to Abraham in Genesis 17:19 and repeated it in Genesis 21:12 –

“... Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his descendants after him.” (17:19)

But God said to Abraham, “Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. (21:12)

God has promised that Isaac will live and have descendants, but at this point in Isaac's life he isn't even married, much less a father. And so, Abraham's test of faith is exactly that, a test of faith. No matter what Abraham does to Isaac, he is to have faith in the previous promise, that Isaac will live and have children.

When later in the Bible James says that Abraham was justified by works which accompany his faith, he is speaking of this very act. And the work is a work of faith in and of itself. This isn't meant to be confusing, but what God is asking of Abraham is faith in the previous promises, not in some unknown quantity.

This is borne out in what he says to the servants now, what he says to Isaac later, and in what the book of Hebrews says about this very account. There it tells of what would otherwise be hidden –

¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” ¹⁹ concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

-Hebrews 11:17-19

God is using Abraham as an example of two things – First as a picture of what He will do with His own Son. And second, as a lesson for us. God already promised Abraham that Isaac would have children and through him would come the Messiah.

Now he is being tested to see if he will follow through with something which seems contradictory to that – taking Isaac's life. “If God has spoken, then what I have been asked to do cannot stop what has already been promised.” This is the lesson for us.

God has recorded this, and many other things in His word. Now what He asks us to do is to stand on the promises recorded there – even when things seem contradictory to those promises. Romans 8:28 is a prime example –

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose.

If this is true, and it must be because it's recorded in God's word, then when something happens in our life which is bad or which seems to contradict God's love for us, we are to trust that God already has it figured out. In other words, and in plain English, he wants us to not be unstable or wavering in our faith.

This is what God is telling us through Abraham. Don't waiver, don't be unstable, don't call into question God's goodness or integrity. Instead stand firm on what He **has** said and continue on with what He is now directing in your life.

A good way to look at it is – “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world and nothing can separate us or take My love from you.”

What shall we say then? Paul tells us – “...we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. -Romans 8:37-39

III. God Will Provide

⁶So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid *it* on Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them went together.

Once again, as we have seen already many times, this is a foreshadowing of what Jesus will do. Abraham placed the wood on his son and took the fire in his hand along with the knife. The wood represents both Jesus' cross and our sins.

In John 19 we read this about the wood –

“And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called *the Place* of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, ¹⁸ where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center.” (vs 17,18)

In both Isaiah 53 and in 1 Peter 2, the Bible records that the Lord placed our sins on Jesus – a heavy burden He carried up that hill. And the wood was the fuel for the fire of God’s wrath upon the sins of man. As I’ve said many times, God’s is angry at sin and his wrath will burn against it.

And this wrath will either be poured out in the crucifixion of His Son and our acceptance of that offering, or it will be in ourselves as we receive the full measure of deserved destruction. Personally, I choose Jesus.

The fire and the knife being carried by Abraham is also represented in Isaiah 53. There we read this about the One who determined and set forth the Sacrifice –

“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.” (vs 10)

This plan, the sacrifice of Jesus, was set in motion at the foundation of the world according to the book of Revelation and it was the Father who determined it would be accomplished, just as Abraham determined in his own mind to go through with what was asked, carrying the fire and the knife himself.

What Abraham is prefiguring here is the greatest act in all of history. God the Father pouring out all of His wrath at the sins of man on His own Son. This passage in Genesis is given to show us two demonstrable truths.

- 1) That God is holy and will judge all sin, and
- 2) That God loves us and is willing to step out of eternity, unite with humanity, and bear that judgment upon Himself

**⁷ But Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!”
And he said, “Here I am, my son.” Then he said, “Look, the fire and the wood, but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?”**

Isaac is asking an obvious question here. “Dad, I’ve got the wood and you have the knife and fire, but where is the lamb?” A lamb is an animal of the flock. It’s not something someone would normally find walking around in the open country.

This makes the question all the more direct. “Dad, there are no herds around and you didn’t bring a lamb, so where will the lamb come from?” The answer is coming, and no, it’s not a lie...

⁸And Abraham said, “My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.” So the two of them went together.

Abraham has already been called a prophet of God by God. His words when recorded in the pages of the Bible do two things. First they tell us *what* he said, and secondly when spoken in a future sense they are prophecies. Abraham isn’t lying to his son. Instead he’s revealing distinct truths.

One is that God provided Isaac. He is the son of promise and the miraculous birth to a woman beyond the age of bearing. Isaac therefore is the burnt offering. In essence, “Son, it is you.” But Abraham probably told him more because it says, “So the two of them went together.”

He probably reminded Isaac that God had already promised a line through him and that his death wouldn’t be final or God would be a liar – an impossibility. But in what is also a prophecy, Abraham spoke of the coming Messiah.

This is absolutely certain because sacrifices were already being conducted, even from the time of Cain and Abel. If those sacrifices were satisfactory to appease God, then they would have stopped being offered, but they didn’t.

Therefore, like everything else Abraham already knew, there had to be a fulfillment of them in another way. None of this is speculation. It is reasonable and understandable when taken in the context of the entire Bible. Abraham was merely demonstrating faith in this. God would provide the final Lamb.

Abraham, in his walk up the hill with his son, was learning that Isaac was an expressive type of the coming Messiah. Every other sacrifice that had been offered from the foundation of the world had been those chosen and offered by men. But Isaac was asked for by God and so this looked forward to the true Lamb provided by Him; Jesus.

Next week: Genesis 22:9-24 (The Lord will Provide)

A Difficult Journey, a Hard Climb, Strong Faith

Now it came to pass after these things
That God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham"
And he said, "Here I am" O King of kings
I am at Your service no matter what the exam

Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac
Whom you love and go to Moriah, that land
Offer him there as a burnt offering, don't be slack
Go to one of the mountains of which I shall command

So Abraham rose early in the morning
And saddled his donkey for the ride
He took two of his young men, giving no forewarning
And Isaac his son went by his side

And he split the wood for the burnt offering
And arose and went to the place of the proffering

He went to the place which God had told to him
And it's certain the pain in his heart was quite grim

Then on the third day Abraham lifted his eyes
And saw the place afar off in the distance
And he told his men to stay with the donkey and supplies
"I will go yonder and worship, this is my insistence

And we will come back to you
My son Isaac and I, this is what we will do

So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering
And laid it on Isaac his son
And he took the fire in his hand, and a knife for the proffering
And the two of them went together for the deed to be done

Then Isaac spoke to Abraham his father
"But dad..." "Here I am my son, what is your bother?"

And he said, Look the fire and the wood
But where is the lamb for the burnt offering?
And Abraham spoke and Isaac understood
My son, God will provide for Himself the Lamb of the proffering

So the two of them went together, Abraham and his son
To do the deed which God asked to be done

What we learn is that God demands our allegiance
In every matter, yes every part of our life
Our attitude is to be faithful without belligerence
Even if it means carrying a sacrificial knife

God looks for faith in his faithless people
And is pleased when He finds it dwelling in us
It is a lesson to be taught beneath the church steeple
And when we possess it, He counts it a plus

And so let us demonstrate faith in Him and in his word
And remember that we are man, and He is the Lord

Yes, He is the only one worthy of our praise
And so shall we offer it all of our days

Great, awesome, and splendid God
Help us in our faith to grow and in Thy light to trod

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 22:9-24 **(THE LORD WILL PROVIDE)**

Introduction: Today we're going to look at the completion of the greatest test of faith imaginable. Abraham's test is answered in a glorious and wonderful way and each detail of the story looks forward to something even greater – the coming Messiah. The riches of this passage can only make us stand in awe of what God has done for each of us through the Person of Jesus.

Text Verse: ³⁹ *And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise,* ⁴⁰ *God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. Hebrews 11:39, 40*

Abraham, along with a host of other faithful souls recorded in the Bible, or who lived in faith without any record of their life, have waited to see the fulfillment of God's promises, but they are still waiting because God will bring us all near to Him together, in one joyous gathering and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. By Faith Abraham...

A few weeks ago at the beginning of the sermon about Isaac's birth, I said this – "Everything about our relationship with God ultimately comes down to faith; it is based on faith – proper faith. Misdirected faith is, after all, wasted faith."

I bring that up again now because what we looked at last week and what we will finish looking at today is not nearly so much a test of obedience, which is what most people think of when they read the story, as it is a test of faith.

I say this because on several occasions, God stated that Isaac is the son of promise. In chapter 21, as Hagar and Ishmael were being dismissed from his home, we read this –

"But God said to Abraham, "Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called." Genesis 21:12

What Abraham has been asked to do and what he is going up the hill to actually do is much more a test of faith than it is obedience. Obedience would be the case if Isaac was born without a promise of being the one to carry on Abraham's name.

In other words, if God came to me today and asked me to sacrifice my son, that would be a test of obedience. I have no promises from God about my son. If He said to do it, it would be straight up obedience or disobedience.

However, if God promised to me that in 20 years, my son would be president of the United States and then **later** asked me to sacrifice him, that would be a test of faith, not obedience. The reason is that God cannot lie – and we know this from both the Bible and by simple logic.

It is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, if He asked me to sacrifice my son, having already told me that he would be the President, then I would have to have faith that my son would be resurrected. This is exactly what is happening here and it is proven true by Hebrews 11:17-19 –

“¹⁷ By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, ¹⁸ of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” ¹⁹ concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.”

I hope you're seeing the difference between the two and also are thinking of how you can apply this to your own life. There are things that we need to be obedient about and there are things that simply require our faith. And then there are things that require our faith in order to be obedient.

The differences are important, and how we act, particularly in our faith in God and His promises is the most important aspect of our lives. If you demonstrate the faith of Abraham, I assure you, your rewards will be great when you stand before the Lord.

⁹Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood.

The last verse of chapter 21 said this, “And Abraham stayed in the land of the Philistines many days.” This was at the time of Isaac's weaning, meaning he was three years old. From that time, we're told he lived “many days” in the land of the Philistines. However,

the Bible doesn't give us a specific amount of time. It could have been 10 years or 30 years.

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus says Isaac is 25 years old now, other Jewish scholars say 36 years old. But the Bible doesn't say. Christian scholars like to say he was 33 years old in order to fit the picture of Jesus. There is no need to do this though because, regardless of the age, the entire account already prefigures Jesus.

What God has hidden, we can speculate on, but it would be wrong to be dogmatic. One thing is for sure, he was old enough to carry the wood up the hill, and it would take a considerable amount of wood. No matter what, he would've been in his teens if not older.

The word used to designate him as a lad in English is the Hebrew word *na'ar* and is normally used about a younger man or someone in tenderness of age. Again, regardless of the age, he was at least old enough to put up a fight or run. This is the important thought we should keep in our mind.

Abraham is now 100 plus whatever age Isaac is. If Isaac is 15, Abraham is 115. He's an old man and yet, the record stands that he built an altar, placed the wood in order, and he bound Isaac and then laid him on the altar. The entire act is based on two concepts, Abraham's **faith** and Isaac's **obedience**.

What we see in Isaac is what will later be seen in God's own Son as recorded by Paul –

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. Philippians 2:5-8

¹⁰ **And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.**

The call was given, Abraham got up early – without delay and headed to Moriah. The hill was climbed on the third day, the altar was made ready, the wood was laid out, and the boy was bound and placed in the spot of execution. Every detail prefigures exactly what God was going to do 1800 years later through Jesus.

Abraham then is a type of God the Father and Isaac of God the Son. The minuteness of the details is given for you and me to see, contemplate, and believe. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son...

By doing so, it was taken by God as a deed fulfilled. To Abraham, Isaac died three days earlier. He now is merely completing what has already been accomplished in his mind. Paul writes to us about the Jesus' fulfillment of this Old Testament shadow accomplished by Abraham –

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us?

³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Romans 8:31, 32

Abraham didn't spare his own son and neither did God. Abraham delivered his son up to God and God delivered His Son up for us, including Abraham. Because He did, how shall He not through Jesus freely give us all things, just as He now gives to Abraham...

¹¹ But the Angel of the LORD called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" So he said, "Here I am."

At the moment of finality, comes the sound of relief. In what is almost an ironic occurrence, the Angel of the Lord, the divine Son of God who is being prefigured here, is the One who calls out for the sacrifice to be halted. The very same Lord, however, would receive in full what Isaac is spared from.

The great Mediator between God and man now steps in to fulfill that task of mediation for His beloved servant Abraham. And when He does so, He does it in a display of emotion found throughout the Bible. He calls His name twice – "Abraham, Abraham."

This is the very first of several hundred such times where this is done. It's a method of emphasis similar to us using an exclamation point or italicizing words in a sentence. In an amazing twist of things, Jesus, the Angel of the Lord here calls out "Abraham, Abraham" to save the son of promise who would lead to Him.

And yet from this son of promise would also come the Nation of Israel who would call out exactly the opposite in exactly the same spot 1800 years later. Luke 23 records their emphatic statement "Crucify, crucify!"

And as He hung alone on the cross, bearing the weight of the sins of the world, He called out to His own Father in fulfillment of the 22nd Psalm “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

The Bible is so full of the amazing love of God and what He has done even for those who would raise their hands against His own Son. How can we not stand amazed and in awe of what He has done for each one of us!

12 And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

Ki attah adati – Now I know. *Ki y’ray elohim* – You fear God. God already knew as He knows everything, but in an act of judicial necessity because God governs the world, and for the sake of man’s conscience which needs to be instructed by both practice as well as principle, God tested Abraham.

What God knew, Abraham now knows by that principle as well as the practice. His faith has been tested and it has been found true. And therefore God tells him to not lay a hand on Isaac, or do anything to him.

There will be no sacrifice, no lighting of the wood, no prayers over the offering. Abraham is told to cease everything associated with this deed. The fear of God – a fear that can only come through faith is explained – “since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

What has happened here, as I alluded to already, is that Isaac is prefiguring Jesus’ real sacrifice. Abraham yielded to God by yielding his son. Isaac yielded to God by yielding himself, and the picture of what God did in Jesus and what Jesus did for His Father is complete.

This act by the man of faith and by the son of promise is one of the Old Testament’s most important accounts in understanding what God has done for us through Jesus. In the future, when you read this passage, I hope you will reflect not only on what Abraham did, but what God did in fulfillment of this picture.

Before we go on, I want you to again note the concept of Obedience vs. Faith. For Abraham, this has not been a test of obedience, but a test of faith which necessitated obedience. In the case of Isaac, it was a test of obedience which necessitated faith.

II. The Lord Will Provide

¹³ Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind *him* was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son.

In an amazingly beautiful picture of substitution, God provides a ram in place of Isaac. To understand this picture, you must now look in the mirror. You see, it is you that deserves both the death and burning which Isaac was facing.

It is you who have sinned in thought, word, and deed before your Creator. And in fact, you have done it with laughing and without care. And as Isaac means “laughter,” this is a picture of you lying on the altar ready to receive your just fate from the God who is as angry at your sin as He is in love with who you *could be*.

And so in place of you... the one deserving death, God sent a substitute to take your place. Again, the picture only comes into focus when we understand other symbolism given in the Old Testament. In Leviticus 16, on the Day of Atonement where God covered the people’s sins, a ram was selected as a burnt offering.

This ram, along with other animals, was used as a picture of the work of Jesus. The ram was completely burned up as Isaac was supposed to be. This pictures the complete destruction of the one tainted with sin. In Isaac’s case, a ram is also given as a substitute.

This becomes even more beautiful to picture when we note that the very spot where Abraham is to offer his son is the same spot where the temple would be built by Solomon a thousand years later. And this is where those sacrifices of the law were made. But those sacrifices couldn’t truly save anything as Hebrews later explains.

And so to fulfill God’s plans and to complete the picture they made, God sent His Son, who did die, probably in the exact spot where the ram was that Abraham saw – and guess what! He was “caught in a thicket by his horns.”

This picture is complete when we remember that Jesus is the ram and that He wore a crown of thorns, probably made from a bush from the very same spot. It is probable that this bush is the *Ziziphus spina-christi*, The Christ’s Thorn, or the jujube tree.

It reaches twenty feet in height and is found growing all around the waysides of Jerusalem. The crooked branches of this shrub are armed with thorns growing in pairs, a straight spine and a curved one commonly occurring together at each point. This ram, caught in the Christ's Thorn, became Isaac's substitute. And the true Lamb, caught in the same thorns – woven as a crown on His head – in the very same location 1800 years later became our Substitute. A whole burnt offering to God, as Paul explains–

And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. Ephesians 5:2

And before we move on, we should note how the author of Hebrews explains the sacrifice of Christ –

Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. ⁶ In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin You had no pleasure. ⁷ Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—To do Your will, O God.’” ⁸ Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and *offerings* for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure *in them*” (which are offered according to the law), ⁹ then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second. ¹⁰ By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*. -Hebrews 10:5-10

¹⁴ And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, “In the Mount of the LORD it shall be provided.”

After I met the Lord, I made a cross and signs to put on the cross for each day leading up to Easter. I put it out front of my house for the entire Passion Week. The first sign of the week has this verse on it. “On the Mountain of the Lord is will be provided.” I’ve put that cross and sign out each year since then.

I chose this verse because, from the first times that I read Genesis, I understood what this verse was saying and Abraham did too. He looked behind him and saw a ram caught in a thicket. But what he saw with his physical eyes was less wonderful than what he saw with his spiritual eyes.

Abraham looked into the future and saw the mystery he had wondered about from his first call into the Promised Land and through every promise of God since then. He saw

Christ, our Substitute and he noted where Christ's work would be accomplished. He saw the cross and He saw the resurrection.

The mystery revealed before His eyes was more wonderful than the thought of not losing Isaac. Having Isaac for a few more years of his life was inconsequential to having Isaac for all eternity. And that could only happen one way. Abraham saw the Lord on His cross and called the place Y'hovah Yireh – The Lord Sees.

And because of this, from that time on the saying became known – “On the Mountain of the Lord He will appear.” Because of the type of verb used, known as a Niphal, it doesn't mean “provide” but rather “appear.” This verse is speaking specifically about the manifestation of Jehovah in the flesh – Jesus Christ.

And this is what Paul speaks of in his first letter to Timothy –

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory. (3:16)

III. Only After the Substitute...

¹⁵ Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven,

I didn't find any commentary that noted why the Lord waited until after the ram was offered to call a second time out of heaven, but it seems pretty clear. It is a picture of our salvation. God calls all men to Himself through Jesus Christ. It is His way of speaking to us – by the offering of His Son.

The Ram is there, but we must accept His work as our Substitute. God only calls the second time **after** we accept Him as Lord and Savior. Only after receiving this Substitute can we expect what comes after the Substitute.

God doesn't demand any of us to make a human sacrifice, but rather the acceptance of His offering – a spiritual sacrifice which really occurred in His own Son. This equates to an unconditional denial of our ability to save ourselves. We must die to sin through Jesus – the Substitute God offers.

We are saved and then we receive the promised blessings – not before. The Lord calls a second time out of heaven “the substitute is satisfactory and thus I will bless you.”

¹⁶ and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son—

Earlier I said that it was Jehovah who called out to Abraham. This verse confirms that. The Angel of the Lord is the Lord and He has sworn by Himself. His oath is explained in detail in Hebrews 10 and cannot be passed over –

¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴ saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” ¹⁵ And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. ¹⁷ Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, ¹⁸ that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*. Heb 6:13-18

It must be noted also that the Lord swearing by Himself never occurs again in this manner and so, time and again, we will see repeated references to this very oath by Abraham, by Isaac, by Joseph, by Moses, by David and others in the Psalms, by Zechariah the father of John the Baptist, and even by the Lord Himself.

This verse then is a defining moment in the history of humanity, in the history of the Bible, and in our understanding of the nature of God. (Ge 24:7; 26:3; 50:24; Ex 13:5, 13:11; 33:1, Ps 89:36; 132:11; 110:4, Luke 1:73)

¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore;

The Lord, in swearing this oath upon Himself, uses repetition in a way which shows us that the nations of the earth will willingly come to be blessed through Abraham. It is as if they will rush forward en masse to join to the blessings he has promised; blessings which come through faith in his Seed – the Messiah.

And the number of them will be astonishing. So much so that the Lord uses two terms to describe it, as the stars of the heaven and as the sand at the lip of the sea, where the waves rush in – bringing even more sand to fill its shores. This is a combination of the promises of Genesis 13:16 – dust of earth and 15:5 – stars.

¹⁷ (cont) **and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.**

The gate of the enemies includes all of their strength – troops, advisors, weapons, and fortifications. This is ultimately fulfilled not just physically by the conquest of Canaan, but spiritually by Christ and His church as He states in Matthew 16:18, 19 –

¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹ And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Gates are defensive, not offensive. What the Lord promises to Abraham and what Jesus promises to us is complete victory over the enemies of God and God’s people.

¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

In a previous sermon, we saw that the Seed He is referring to here is Himself – His incarnation in the Person of Jesus. Paul explains it in Galatians 3 in relation to the Law of Moses –

¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. ¹⁷ And this I say, *that* the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance *is* of the law, *it is* no longer of promise; but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise. (vs 16-18)

The promise came before the law. God has promised through the Seed to bless all the nations of the earth apart from the Law. The only way this is possible is for the Law to be fulfilled on our behalf and thus it required the work of a Man born free of sin and who would also fulfill the Law without sinning; the Seed is Jesus.

¹⁹ So Abraham returned to his young men, and they rose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beersheba.

The greatest test of faith recorded in the entire Old Testament is over. Abraham has been given the crown of righteousness and the garments of white. He has proven faithful and God has favored him in a way not seen again in the pages of the Bible.

From this foundational account God's plan of redemption continues, and yet the story for today ends quietly. He returned to the servants at the foot of Mount Moriah and together they return to Beersheba, the Well of the Seven. But even this pictures the work of the Lord.

Jesus also prevailed over His own trial of Moriah and after doing so, He returned to the Well of the Seven. In His eternal state, there are seven aspects of the Lord. Isaiah notes them and they are referred to again in the book of Revelation –

¹ There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

² The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

³ His delight *is* in the fear of the LORD,
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;

⁴ But with righteousness He shall judge the poor,
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,
And faithfulness the belt of His waist. -Isaiah 11:1-5

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. -Revelation 1:4, 5

Even in his return to Beersheba, the Well of the Seven, this man of faith continues to prefigure the Lord of all creation.

IV. The Funnel Continues

I've talked about God's Funnel in the past. It is the chosen line of God's work in and through humanity – from Adam through Seth to Noah, to Shem, to Abraham, and now to Isaac. But Isaac will someday need a wife. And so at the end of this most important of

chapters there is post-fixed a curious set of verses that makes many wonder why are they there...

²⁰ Now it came to pass after these things that it was told Abraham, saying, “Indeed Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor:

²¹ Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram,

²² Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel.”

²³ And Bethuel begot Rebekah. These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham’s brother.

²⁴ His concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah.

These 4 verses are given for two reasons. The first is to introduce Rebekah who will become Isaac’s wife. The mantle is being passed from Abraham to Isaac here. Abraham has accomplished his work before the Lord and the main focus of God’s funnel will now be directed toward Isaac.

The second reason is to give the historical names of some of these people who will come into contact with God’s people later in the Bible. Not all of them will be seen again, but those that will, can be traced back to these verses. In essence, it’s reminding us that we are all eventually related to each other if we go back far enough.

When we read the book of Job, we can come back here to see his family line; when we read about the Chaldeans in Isaiah or Daniel, we can find them here too. These and others who later become enemies or allies with the Israelites are all humans needing the same Savior that Abraham needed.

Next Week – Genesis 23:1-20 (The Death of the Princess)

The Lord Will Provide

Then they came to the place of which God had told Him.
And Abraham built an altar there where they stood
He placed the wood in order, and bound Isaac limb by limb
And laid him on the altar, there upon the wood

And Abraham stretched out his hand and also took the knife
To slay his son, his precious son born of Sarah his wife
But the Angel of the Lord called from heaven to Abraham
And said “Abraham, Abraham” in a resounding voice

Abraham replied, "Yes Lord, here I am"
"Do not lay your hand upon the lad, instead you can rejoice

"Do not do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God
Since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me
Abraham lifted his eyes and looked and maybe he did applaud
There was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns, you see

So Abraham went and took the ram and led it by his side
And offered it, a burnt offering instead of his son
And Abraham called the name of the place "The Lord Will Provide
The test of Abraham's faith surely had been won

And as it is said, even to this very day
In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided
Then the Angel of the Lord a second time out of heaven did say
I have a decree, there is something firmly decided

By Myself I have sworn says the Lord
Because you have done this thing
And have not withheld your son, your only son by my word
Blessing I will bless you – let the nations sing

And multiplying I will multiply your descendants
Even as the stars are numbered high in the heaven
And as the sand which is on the seashore, ever so resplendent
The world through your seed I will enliven

And your descendants shall possess their enemies' gate
And throughout all ages, your name it shall be great

So Abraham returned to his young men
And they rose and together to Beersheba they went
And Abraham dwelt at Beersheba from then
And this is where, for a while, his time was spent

Now it came to pass after these things, not before
That it was told Abraham, saying
Indeed Milcah has born children to your brother Nahor

For this you know they have been praying
Huz his firstborn, Buz his brother, Kemuel the father of Aram
Chesed, Hazo, Pildash, Jidlaph, and Bethuel, if girls they would make a harem
And Bethuel begot Rebekah

These eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother
His concubine, whose name was Reumah,
Also bore Tebah, Gaham, Thahash, and Maachah – what a mother!
And so behind us is the story of Abraham and Isaac

Given to us to show the marvelous workings of the Lord
All contained in the Holy Bible – a beautiful almanac
Yes, for us to learn and love, His precious word

And what a word it is indeed!
May we learn it and also to it give our heed
For in this book is the story of God's Son
Who through His blood the victory is won

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 23:1-20 **(THE DEATH OF THE PRINCESS)**

Text Verse: *The voice said, "Cry out!" And he said, "What shall I cry?" "All flesh is grass, And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. ⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. ⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever."* Isaiah 40:6-8

God is the Creator and we are His creatures. Some of us are faithful and some lack faith, but no matter what, we are still just flesh and we will all wither like the grass and fade like the flower. We have one chance to get things right in this life and so we should be attentive to the word of our God now while we have the chance. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Death of the Princess

¹ Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; *these were the years of the life of Sarah.*

Sarah is the only woman in the Bible whose age at death and specific place of burial is recorded. She lived to the age of 127 and died 37 years after Isaac was born.

She is the first woman who is actually noted since Eve who was in the line of the Messiah. From the Bible, we can infer other women who are in His line, but Sarah is explicitly mentioned as bearing the son of promise, through whom God's plans would be realized.

And so from Sarah, there is a connection directly linking her to Mary, the mother of Jesus – both physically and spiritually. Through her came the otherwise impossible birth of Isaac, who is a picture of Christ, and through both her and Mary came the Messiah Himself. The patterns of the life of Sarah are deep and rich.

In Hebrews 11, she is noted for her life of faith –

“By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. ¹² Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as*

many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.” Hebrews 11:11,12

In Galatians 4, Paul shows her to be a type of the Church which exists by the grace of Christ rather than the bondage of the law, and in 1 Peter 3, she is noted as the mother of all believers. This great woman of God is so noted throughout the pages of the Bible.

² So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan,

This place, Kirjath Arba, now known as Hebron, is still a city in Israel. It’s in a valley which is surrounded by seven mountains. The Arabs call it el Khalil which means “the friend,” a title which refers all the way back to Abraham and his friendship with God.

It says that Hebron is “in the land of Canaan.” This is in contrast to Beersheba where they lived before which was “the land of the Philistines.” In other words, Sarah died in the land of promise.

^{2 (con’t)} and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

There are some Jewish traditions that you will hear, even in synagogues today, which say that Abraham and Sarah never spoke again after Abraham went to offer up Isaac at Mount Moriah. They say that what Abraham did was disobedient and sinful and that is why Sarah is never mentioned from that time until now – she disagreed with Abraham.

There are numerous things wrong with that and there is actually evil intent behind it too. I’m being as honest as I can because this is such a serious matter. First, Abraham did what God asked and the Bible, from then on, speaks of him as the epitome of faith and obedience.

Secondly, Sarah isn’t mentioned again because she is no longer relevant to the story. The son of promise is born and the narrative moves on. This is exactly the same as Mary. She is mentioned only once after the resurrection of Jesus and it isn’t any more than a fleeting cameo.

Mary is not the source of our faith and she has nothing further to do with the unfolding story. Sarah was noted when she played her role and then she was given the quiet respect of a woman who had done her service. Only at her death is she mentioned.

And finally, the reason “why” there is an attempt to malign Abraham in this way is because the story so clearly and concisely points to the life of Jesus. The only way to get around this is to diminish the magnitude of Abraham and his life.

Having said that, Abraham had his tent and Sarah had her tent. This is the way families worked and we know this from Genesis 24:67 where Isaac takes his new wife to Sarah’s tent after they were married; it is now her tent. They each had their own space.

When Sarah died, Abraham “came to mourn for Sarah and weep for her.” The two words in Hebrew for “mourn” and “weep” indicate true sadness and great sorrow. They’re combined to show the magnitude of the loss to Abraham after 127 years of life together and most of that time as husband and wife.

Abraham was truly mournful. However, a secret is found in the original text of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is something extremely rare in the Bible and it shows us of the Abraham’s continued faith. The word for “weep” is *libkhotah* and the middle letter of *libkhotah* is the letter kaph.

It is the 11th letter of the Hebrew aleph-bet and it is symbolized by an open palm. It has four possible meanings “bend, open, allow, or tame” – all things which occur with an open hand. In the Hebrew of this word in this verse, this letter kaph is smaller than the other letters, a writing tool known as miniscule.

The question is, “Why did God choose this one letter to be made smaller than the rest?” I believe the answer is that as Abraham wept, he opened his hand as a gesture of offering. When he did, he was saying what Job said at his own loss, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked shall I return there. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.” Job 1:21

Abraham is demonstrating faith that what the Lord had taken would be returned through the Seed of promise whom he had seen on Mount Moriah when he was given a ram in place of Isaac. Abraham, in other words, is demonstrating faith in the resurrection of the dead.

This is only the third time so far in the Bible that a letter is made larger or smaller than the text around it. The first was in Genesis 1:1 and the second was in Genesis 2:4, both of which are speaking of the creation of the heavens and earth.

In all, there will be very few times in the entire Bible that such rare letters will be used – only 17 in the five books of Moses and a few others after them. God is giving us clues about Himself and His plan of redemption in these unusual sized letters.

**³Then Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying,
⁴“I *am* a foreigner and a visitor among you. Give me property for a burial place among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.”**

When it says he “stood up from before his dead” it notes the type of mourning seen elsewhere in the Bible. In the book of Job, it says when his friends came to mourn with him they “sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights.” (2:13)

It’s a common description in the Bible and is simply the way they did things and probably still do in many Mid-East nations. When he had poured out his heart and his tears, he stood and spoke to the sons of Heth. These people, the sons of Heth, were first mentioned in the Table of Nations in Genesis 10:15.

Eventually, king David’s wife Bathsheba will come from them and she will be an ancestor of Jesus. When Abraham spoke, he noted his lack of property, stating he was a foreigner and a visitor in the land. This is true, because the land belonged to the Canaanites until God determined they were to be removed, 400 years later.

It’s also something Abraham and others were noted as being faithful for in Hebrews 11. They acknowledged that they were pilgrims in the land and that God had something better prepared for them. Peter writes in the New Testament that this is still true among believers – this is not our home and we should recognize that. God has something better for us.

God is preparing a city for His people where there will be only joy, contentment, and an eternal filling of life. We will live in the presence of God and He will be pleased to dwell with His people.

**⁵And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him,
⁶“Hear us, my lord: You *are* a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places. None of us will withhold from you his burial place, that you may bury your dead.”**

The terms “sons of Heth” and “hear us” doesn’t mean everyone said this, but just a leader speaking for the people. It would be like someone interrupting us out here on the beach and me saying, “Leave us alone;” one speaking for the whole.

When he addresses Abraham it’s in a very respectful way. “Hear us my lord: You are a mighty prince among us.” The term he uses is *nesi elohim* or a prince of God. They understand Abraham’s favor with the Lord and mention it now.

Although the word is different than the name of Sarah, it could be that they are using this term to tie him directly to Sarah. Her name means “princess” and by calling him *nesi elohim* or prince of God, the Bible is directly connecting the two as noble people.

In his address to Abraham, and speaking on behalf of the people, he offers a resting place for Sarah freely and without condition.

II. The Cave of Machpelah

⁷Then Abraham stood up and bowed himself to the people of the land, the sons of Heth.

Starting with this verse, and going through verse 18, there is a treasure which was hidden until I found it preparing for this sermon. It’s a literary form of writing known as a chiasm. I’ve found about twenty of them, some spanning many chapters and even entire books of the Bible.

There are hundreds, if not thousands of them in the Bible and people, as they find them, publish them for others to see. I did a search on line and there is no record of this one, so you are probably the very first people since Genesis was written to see this.

I’ll pass it around for you and I’ll try to remember to post it on the video as well. A chiasm says something in order and then turns around and says it in the opposite order, making an X. The Greek letter for X is called chi and so these are called “chiasms.” I hope you enjoy this one.

Genesis 23:10-18 – Abraham Buries His Dead

A Purchase of Land (10/15/2012)

a (7) sons of Heth

b (9) the cave of Machpelah which he has, which *is* at the end of his field

c (10) - in the presence of the sons of Heth, all who entered at the gate of his city

d (11) - the field and the cave that *is* in it

e (11) - in the presence of the sons of my people

f (11) - Bury your dead!"

g (12, 13) - Abraham spoke to Ephron

x (13) "If you *will give it*, please hear me. I will give you money for the field; take *it* from me and I will bury my dead there."

g (14) Ephron answered Abraham

f (15) - So bury your dead."

e (16) - in the hearing of the sons of Heth

d (17) - the field and the cave which *was* in it

c (18) - in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who entered at the gate of his city

b (19) the cave of the field of Machpelah

a (20) sons of Heth

There is a second chiasm that I found in this chapter as well which we'll get to later. Wonderful treasures hidden in God's word! Anyway, Abraham gets up and bows to the people as a sign of respect and thanks and then he makes his desire known...

⁸ And he spoke with them, saying, "If it is your wish that I bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and meet with Ephron the son of Zohar for me,

⁹ that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he has, which *is* at the end of his field.

Abraham repeats what he said earlier and adds to it. His statement, "If it is your wish" acknowledges their agreement. He will be allowed to bury his beautiful wife who is now returning to the dust. This verse is basically saying, "Because you agree, please meet with Ephron on my behalf as I'd like to buy the cave of Machpelah."

This name of this cave means “double” and its probably a cave within a cave or a cave linked to another cave and is something that he’s both aware of and wants. The Bible doesn’t tell why he wanted it, but being “double” means it would have enough room for others. Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Leah will all be buried there, along with Abraham.

⁹ (con’t) **Let him give it to me at the full price, as property for a burial place among you.”**

Abraham has already been offered any place among the people, and without cost, but that isn’t how the world works and Abraham knows it. To accept a gift like this would be rude and the offer was one of respect, but shouldn’t really be considered as a freebie. Understanding this, he asks for it using the term mah-lay kesef or at full money or full weight. Silver was the mode of money and it would have been weighed out to the required weight. “I want this and I will pay what it is worth.”

This is similar to what he did when he defeated the four kings and returned all the booty to the king of Sodom in Genesis 14 –

²¹ Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, “Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself.” ²² But Abram said to the king of Sodom, “I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, ²³ that I *will take* nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that *is* yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’”

Abraham didn’t want anything later to interfere with what he was buying now. Instead of being a leech on those around him, he wanted to be a man who paid his bills and owed no one. What he wanted would be paid for free and clear. Paul tells us in the New Testament to live our lives in the same way –

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. Romans 13:8

We’re asked to not get ourselves into debt because when we do, we’re in bondage to the lender. Unfortunately, both as individuals and especially as a society, we’ve rejected this principle. The Bible asks us to correct it because when we don’t, we only become enslaved to someone other than our rightful Master.

¹⁰ **Now Ephron dwelt among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the presence of the sons of Heth, all who entered at the gate of his city, saying,**

¹¹ “No, my lord, hear me: I give you the field and the cave that *is* in it; I give it to you in the presence of the sons of my people. I give it to you. Bury your dead!”

In what may seem to us as a complicated ritual, this is simply the way these things were done and still are done in many areas of the world. Abraham asks for a place to bury his dead and the leader offers a place freely. Then Abraham offers to pay for a specific location which he has actually been freely offered.

Then Ephron the owner speaks up, in the presence of “all who entered at the gate of his city.” “No my lord, I have given you (past tense) the field and the cave... It’s yours and that’s it.” Ephron notes that his gracious offer is in the people’s presence. But it’s also done in the gate of the city.

This is the place where legal transactions occur and everyone there is either a judge or a witness. Abraham could, right at this point, say “Ok, thank you” and it would be his, but the customs and propriety would never allow that. An offer of free land isn’t free.

¹² Then Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land;

¹³ and he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, “If you *will give it*, please hear me. I will give you money for the field; take *it* from me and I will bury my dead there.”

Abraham, following what to us is a confusing ritual, bows in gratitude that the offer has been made and now he leaves himself just as open to being cheated as Ephron just did for him. In the “hearing of the people” meaning in full view of judges and witnesses, He basically says, “Seeing as you will *give it to me*, then you will also let me *pay for it*.”

But here is the part that we shouldn’t miss. Abraham asked for the cave. Ephron offered the field and the cave, even though the field was never mentioned by Abraham. This means if Abraham wants the cave, the field has to go with it.

Ephron wants to retire from this deal. Even though he offered them for free, he knows Abraham will counteroffer with payment. But Abraham only mentions the *field* in the counter offer, *not the cave*. There is much more going on here than you may imagine.

He is buying both, but he is allowing Ephron to appear noble by selling the field and giving the cave as a bonus. What is happening here is wheeling and dealing at its best and yet it’s done in a way that no one will really be a loser – even if Ephron is dishonest in the field’s price.

Ephron gets rich off a field that's not worth whatever he asks and Abraham gets a cave as a gift when he pays too much for a field that he doesn't need.... All very simple, right? Wait till you see what all of this symbolically represents.

¹⁴ And Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him,

¹⁵ “My lord, listen to me; the land *is worth* four hundred shekels of silver. What *is* that between you and me? So bury your dead.”

The Hebrew doesn't say “the land is worth four hundred shekels.” Ephron uses an idiom that needs to be translated this way for us to understand. And we should understand... “Listen Abe, a land of four hundred shekels, pshaw, what is that between good friends like you and me. Just bury your dead and forget about the money.”

Abraham was offered the land for free, knowing it wasn't really free. Then he offers to pay full value – *whatever it is*, knowing that payment is necessary, but setting himself up for any amount by not giving an advanced amount... which he could have done.

Now Ephron pulls a figure out of the sky... somewhere way up by the North Star, but he says, “Gee, that field is worth sooo much, but that enormous price doesn't matter to me – just bury your dead.”

Abraham now has one more chance to take the field for free. If he does, he'd look like a scab for not paying. If he turns it down, then he'd look like a poor wheeler-dealer. And so there is but one option...pay the high cost and receive the cave that went along with the expensive field.

What is even more important in this confusing story is what this purchase points to. Ask yourself, “Why is this story here at all? Why did God include all of these complicated details about a land purchase?” People die all the time and land is bought all the time, but they're not in the Bible. Why is this one?

I had to ask myself this too and it wasn't until a day later as I was completing the sermon that I realized it. Before we finish today, you will know too.

¹⁶ And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, currency of the merchants.

Four hundred shekels of silver go to Ephron at the gate of the city where the judges preside. Ephron has a lot of money, and Abraham has a field and a cave. But before we get to our last thought of the day, I'd like to remind you about what happened in chapter 20.

Abraham received Sarah back from Abimelech the King of Gerar, and when he did the king gave him 1000 weight of silver to cover the matter of what happened. God not only watched over Sarah then, He also ensured the right place would be there in her death.

And Abraham had 600 of silver left over as a blessing from the Lord. This is what God does. When Sarah was taken by the king, it was probably a very stressful time for them. But God turned it around for good. And not only that, He gave them a blessing for later.

And this is exactly what He will do for each of us. When something bad happens in our lives, we have to trust that not only will it turn out for good, but God will actually bless us abundantly in the process.

Of all the people you will ever meet, I am the most opposed of all to the “prosperity gospel” which says we will get rich and have a lot of stuff if we give to the church. And yet I am completely convinced that in the end, a faithful life will receive more blessings than any of us could possibly imagine... and I can imagine a lot.

III. Permanent Ownership of the Land

¹⁷ So the field of Ephron which *was* in Machpelah, which *was* before Mamre, the field and the cave which *was* in it, and all the trees that *were* in the field, which *were* within all the surrounding borders, were deeded

¹⁸ to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.

The purchase is complete and everything is restated to ensure it is completely understood by us. Who the owner was, who the buyer and new owner is, what the price was, and that everything – every single thing – including the field, cave, borders, and even the trees are included. Nothing has been left unattended to.

This was in the presence of the sons of Heth and in the place of legal transactions – the city gates. All of this detail. Are you wondering why?

¹⁹ And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.

Abraham asked for this spot to bury his dead. Now he buries his princess. Undisputed right and title to the land and cave is acknowledged by this verse. Her burial is noted to confirm this. Her presence is the formal title deed of the transaction.

Just so you know, this chapter contains the first biblical record of mourning for the dead, of burial, of owned land property, of purchased land property, and that silver is used for a land purchase.

It's also laid out in a special structure, given to us by God to show us what He is doing and why. Chiasms aren't just a mere curiosity of literature to God. They are placed in the Bible to reveal His mind.

In addition to the chiasm is the introduction of the small letter kaph in the middle of a particular word for a particular reason. And all of it ... all of it, points to Christ. Stand by for the explanation of why this chapter records such minute detail and what it means to you.

²⁰ So the field and the cave that is in it were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth as property for a burial place.

This final verse of the chapter is a shortened repetition of verses 17 and 18. One must ask, why? Why is this repeated? The answer is that this forms another mini chiasm. And we have to note that this chiasm centers on the burial of Sarah, just as the previous one did.

- a. so the field of Machpelah... before Mamre...the field and the cave in it... were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth
 - x. And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah
- a. so the field of Machpelah... before Mamre...the field and the cave in it... were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth

This is no mistake, it isn't arbitrary, and God is trying to tell us something if we will just open our thick skulls. What we need to do is to determine what it is. So let's take a few minutes and look at details that we could actually talk about for several more hours.

I can only give you an overview of how important this story is and how it points to God's love for you. And as far as I know, you are the first people in history to hear this...

Abraham's bride is dead, but she is the mother of the promised son. In last week's sermon, he was given a preview of substitution for atonement and the resurrection when he was on Mount Moriah.

In today's chapter, he becomes a picture of Christ. He has no title deed to the land and so he must make a purchase. In this story Abraham was called *nesi elohim* or a prince of God. Jesus is noted as God's Prince in both Isaiah and Acts.

He wants a place to bury his dead in anticipation of the resurrection, and in order to get it, he must take the land with the cave. And in actuality, it is the land which is being purchased; the cave is given as a part of the deal. Are you seeing it yet?

You see, back in Genesis 3, the devil obtained the title deed to the earth. This is proven in Matthew 4:8,9 where the Bible says –

“Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to Him, “All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me.”

More to the point though, the earth is the repository for the human soul. This is noted time and time again in the Bible. Let's go through and see how the land deal went.

Abraham wants the cave, the repository for his dead, and asks the sons of Heth to go to Ephron and sell it.

Ephron means “of the dust” and he is a picture of Adam, who was created from the dust (see 1 Corinthians 15:48) and thus he represents all of us. Adam, the man of the dust, was deceived and now belongs to the devil (see 1 John 3). The name of Ephron's father is Zohar which means “brightness” or “shining.”

Zohar then is a picture of Satan, the ruler and title owner of the world. Paul writes this about Satan,

“And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.” 2 Corinthians 11:14

This story is a picture of our redemption. Adam gave up the title to the earth when he sinned. Jesus came to buy it back.

Heth means “terror” and is a picture of all the people of the world who live in fear of death because they cannot meet God’s law. When it was given at Mount Sinai, the people trembled and asked not to hear God speak to them directly again.

Since the law was given, men have lived in terror because there is no way we can meet it as Paul clearly explains in Galatians 3. It condemns all to death. These sons of Heth, or “sons of terror” are witnesses of what will transpire.

Hebrews 2:14-15 explains this –

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

“Through death He might destroy him who had the power of death...” Sarah’s death and burial is a picture of this!

The sons of Heth first offer any place Abraham chooses. But not any place will do. Abraham specifically asks for the cave of Ephron, the son of Zohar, and offers the full price for it.

Jesus asks specifically for the cave of Adam and his seed. The people of the world have many choices of religion, but only one will do. Jesus has come to buy the place where his bride will lie in repose awaiting what He knows will be the resurrection. But Satan doesn’t know this.

Ephron the son of Zohar, picturing Adam son of the devil, willingly offers the field and the cave for free in the presence of witnesses and Abraham declines stating that payment will be made for the field. Jesus determines, like Abraham, that the full price for the title deed to the earth will be paid. There will be no later claims against his ownership.

The devil offers the title deed to Jesus for a mere act of worship as we saw in Matthew 4, but Jesus denied the devil. The devil next tries to stop Jesus when he indicates that what He is proposing will involve His death. When did this occur? It was when Peter tried to stop Jesus in Matthew 16:21-23 –

²¹ “From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. ²² Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!” ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”

The devil has lost out a second time to Jesus, just as Abraham declines free land for the second time.

Ephron then says the land is very expensive – 400 shekels – a high price indeed. He notes that Abraham doesn’t need to pay such a high price – “You don’t need the land, just bury your dead.” Abraham declines again and offers the full price.

The devil freely offers Jesus to bury his wife, His redeemed, because the title deed to the world is an exceedingly high price. “You don’t need the title deed to the land. It is too high a price. Just bury your dead.”

This is the third time Ephron freely offers the land. And when was the third time the devil tried to stop Jesus? It’s recorded in Matthew 27 –

While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, “Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.” (vs 19)

The devil finding no other way to stop what is happening goes back to his very first trick in the Bible, deceiving man by going through his wife. Eve was deceived and then got Adam to sin and now he is trying it again through the wife of Pilate. But it doesn’t work.

Abraham weighs out the money in silver. The four hundred shekels of silver represent a period of divine completion. God noted in Genesis 15 that the affliction of Abraham’s descendants would be 400 years until their freedom from bondage.

This amount of four hundred shekels for payment is symbolic of the full price being paid for our bondage and also that there is both a guarantee of an end to it, and a set time of redemption.

Jesus accepts the offer of the payment price for the land and understands that the cave – the tomb, is a part of the deal. Jesus pays the price at the cross of Calvary. The title deed is transferred, the right to the world is His, and the tomb is His reward.

These dealings between Ephron and Abraham were in the presence of witnesses at the city gate where legal transactions occurred. Jesus completed His work in the presence of witnesses in fulfillment the Law of Moses, which is the legal transaction necessary to fulfill the contract.

As He Himself said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”

This still leaves one detail missing, why this particular cave –Machpelah? The name of the cave means “double” and it therefore signifies the double delivery from death. Jesus didn’t come to just purchase the title deed to the world for Jews, but He did it for gentiles as well. His death filled this double role.

¹¹ Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands— ¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Ephesians 2:11-18

All of this took place in a town called Kirjath Arba. This name means “City of the Four” and is a picture of the world which Jesus is reclaiming. The number four consistently designates the earth in the Bible – four corners or directions of the earth – “north, south, east, west;” the four elements – “earth, air, fire, water;” the four seasons – “spring, summer, autumn, winter;” etc.

Kirjath Arba however is also called Hebron in this chapter. This means “conjunction” or “joining” and takes us right back to Ephesians 2 where Christ made one bride out of two – Jew and Gentile.

Do you remember what I said a while ago about the money Abraham received from Abimelech? He gave Abraham 1000 weight of silver for a covering of what had happened to Sarah. Now Sarah is being buried in land that was paid for with that money.

Abimelech means “Father of the King.” The Father of King Jesus orchestrated all of this in the pages of His word to show us the marvel of what He would do through His own Son 1800 years later. Remember, Sarah means “princess.” She is a picture of us.

Jesus secured the right to the earth where His princess, His bride lies – waiting for the day when He will come again for her. Every story in Genesis is given in order and with specific details to show us this marvelous unfolding story of God’s love.

And as a last note, in verse 17, the word for “deeded” as in the title deed, is the word v’yakham. This word means “rose” or “stood up.” The selection of this word has mystified scholars throughout the ages. One Jewish scholar named Jarchi came rather close to why it was used.

He said that the reason for this particular phrase is that this field, with all belonging to it, came into the hands of a greater person; out of the hands of a private man into the hands of a king. And so, without even realizing what he had written, he clearly identified what had happened.

The King of the Universe bought back the title deed to the earth from the common man, Adam – symbolized by Ephron – “of the dust.” The transfer was from the lesser to the greater; from Adam to Jesus; from death to life. Jesus now has both the title deed and, because of the resurrection, the power over the tomb as well.

I should note to you that the term “sons of Heth” – symbolizing those who are in terror because of the demands of the law which condemns all to death, is used 8 times in this story. Eight is the number of “new beginnings” in the Bible. We, the sons of terror, are now free from the terror of death because of the high price Jesus paid on our behalf.

One more thing – silver was used for this land purchase. In reality, Jesus death was a result of a transaction in silver and that money was used to buy a field as well... a field known as Akel Dama, the Field of Blood.

So why is this story given? It is because this woman of God, Sarah, was the mother of the promised Seed who would destroy the works of the devil by paying a debt He didn't owe to save the likes of you and me. And His reward was a tomb, a double tomb. The first half of the tomb was where He lay; the other half is where we will lay.

He was victorious over His half of the tomb and He is also victorious over our half if we simply accept the payment. Let me tell you how to...

Closing Verse: *Indeed it was for my own peace That I had great bitterness; But You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back. Isaiah 38:17*

Next week – Genesis 24:1-11 (To Find a Wife)

Buried but not Forgotten

Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years
These were the years of Sarah's life
So Sarah died and Abraham came to shed tears
It was in Hebron of Canaan that he mourned for his wife

Then Abraham stood up from before his dead
And spoke to the sons of Heth saying
I am a foreigner here, wherever I lay, that is my bed
And now for a burial place from you I am praying

Give me property for a burial place among you
That I may bury my dead out of the place of my view

And the sons of Heth answered Abraham from their faces
"Here us my lord, you are a mighty prince among us
Bury your dead in the choicest of places
None of us will withhold from you a place, it is decreed thus

Then Abraham stood and bowed himself low

To the people of the land, the sons of Heth
And he spoke with them saying that if this is so
He desired a special cave for Sarah to rest in her death

“If you wish that I bury my dead out of my sight
Hear me and meet with Ephron the son of Zohar for me
That he may give me the cave of Machpelah, it is just right
It is at the end of his field, go look and see

Let him give it to me at the full price
As a property for a burial place among you
The one I want is suitable and nice
The one belonging to Ephron, it’s true

Of the sons of Heth, Ephron was one
And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham
In the presence of all of them, not just one
Who entered at the gate of the city with an ox or a lamb

“No my lord, instead please hear me
I give you the field and the cave that is in it
I give it to you in the presence of my people, it’s free
I give it to you, bury your dead, this I permit
Then Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land
And he spoke to Ephron as a wish, not a command

If you will give it, please hear me
I will give you money for the field
Take it from me, I will pay what you ask, you see
And I will bury my dead there, for this I have appealed

And Ephron answered Abraham, to him saying
“My lord listen, the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver
What is that between you and me, I am praying
So bury your dead, this message I deliver

And Abraham listened to Ephron and weighed the silver
Which Ephron had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth
Four hundred shekels of silver he did deliver

Currency of the merchants, to purchase a place for resting in death
So the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah
Which was before Mamre, the field and the cave
And the all the trees that in the field he saw
Which were within the borders for silver he gave

These were deeded to Abraham as a possession
In the presence of the sons of Heth
Before the gate of the city, its thronging procession
Abraham purchased the place for resting in death

And after this Abraham buried Sarah his wife in...
The cave of the field of Machpelah before Mamre
Which is in Hebron in the land of Canaan
Because the field and the cave now were his, you see

They were deeded to Abraham by the sons of Heth
For property as a burial place for resting in death

But death isn't the end for Sarah that faithful soul
Because the story continues on and it is glorious indeed
There is One who came from her who would open the scroll
And restore eternal life to Adam's fallen seed

Jesus is the Promised One
Born of a woman and yet God's own Son
And through His obedient life
He has purchased for Himself a spotless wife
These things are pictured in the Bible's holy pages
And they have been loved and cherished for ages and ages

Take time each day to read this beautiful word
And take it to heart each and every day
It tells us of this wonderful Lord
Who prevailed over the devil and so let us say
Great and awesome God, in your light we shall trod
And so for all of our days, let us give You all of our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 24:1-11 (TO FIND A WIFE)

Introduction: We're going to start chapter 24 today and this chapter gives us the story about how Isaac got his wife. The account is really lovely, and goes into great detail so that you will hopefully come to see in it patterns and pictures that focus on our relationship with Jesus.

Because the chapter is so long, it will take four full weeks to get through it and it won't make complete sense unless you listen to the entire series, but when you see the overall pictures of the Godhead, it is a beautiful testament to the way God works through His word.

He takes real people, who really lived, and He uses them and their circumstances to point to Jesus and our relationship with Him.

One of the things that we need to understand in order to really grasp this chapter are the roles of the members of the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The pictures in today's sermon are dealing mostly with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the preparation of a bride for the Son.

Text Verse: *He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.*

-Proverbs 18:22

God performed the first wedding ceremony when He presented Eve to Adam. He is preparing another wedding and it will be with His Son's bride – a spotless and chaste virgin who has been selected especially for Him and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. To Find a Bride

¹ Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.

As we go along, we'll see the people in this account representing others. Abraham is a picture of God the Father. Keep that in mind as we go. There is both the literal story and there is the intended picture of what God is showing us as He works out His plan of redemption.

At this time, Abraham is 140 years old. We'll find this out from details in the next chapter which tells us that Isaac was married at 40 years of age. Abraham had Isaac when he was one hundred and Sarah died when she was 127. So, this is 3 years after Sarah's death and it is the year 2149AM.

An amazing fact which I would hate to skip is that Shem, the son of Noah, who is Isaac's great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great grandfather will still be alive for 10 more years. That is 12 generations – 9 greats, a grandfather, and a father.

Anyway, in his old age, it says that Jehovah had blessed Abraham in all things. We already know from Abraham's life that he is a very wealthy man and in a few verses, we'll see that he will use this immense wealth in the process of obtaining a bride for Isaac.

² So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, "Please, put your hand under my thigh,

As I said, Abraham is a picture of God the Father. As we go on, we'll see that this servant is a picture of the Holy Spirit. Abraham here calls the oldest servant of his house who is also the one who rules over all he has. This person is like the CEO of a company.

He makes all the decisions and directs all the people. He is the most trusted person in Abraham's life. Almost all commentators agree that this is Eliezer of Damascus who was the chief steward of the house all the way back in Genesis 15.

That was about 55 years earlier and he was the head of the household at that time which means that he has worked for Abraham for a very, very long time. From this chapter we will see that he is completely and wholeheartedly dedicated to Abraham.

This chief servant of the household speaks not on his own authority, but on the authority of the one who sends him. This is exactly how Jesus describes the Holy Spirit in John 16 –

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (vs 13)

We will see how accurately he fulfills this position described of the Holy Spirit in the verses ahead. Even his name implies this. It is *Eliezer* which means “God is Help.” Jesus not only calls the Holy Spirit the “Spirit of Truth” but also the Helper in John 14 –

²⁵ “These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. ²⁶ But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. (vs 25-26)

He is the one to help Abraham in the task ahead, just as the Holy Spirit is the Helper of God in the parallel tasks that are going on, even now in the Church Age. Anyway, Abraham calls him and says to him, “Please, put your hand under my thigh...”

This is the most intimate part of the man and it is therefore the most solemn vow that can be made. Under the thigh is where Abraham’s life was continued on through his seed, resulting in Isaac. It is also where the rite of circumcision was conducted.

Both of these actions point to the coming Messiah. Abraham’s seed would lead to the Messiah through Isaac, the son of promise and circumcision as a rite pictures the cutting away of the sin nature. The oath that is being made concerns the highest decision in the life of Abraham and it is the highest priority of the servant who will carry it out.

³ and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell;

Abraham uses an elongated form of what is stated in Genesis 1:1. There it says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Here he says, “the Lord, the God of the heavens and the God of the earth.”

b’Yehovah elohe ha’shemayim v’elohe ha’arets

There is no doubt in the Old Testament that Jehovah is both the Creator and the Sustainer. And yet Genesis 1:1 doesn’t say that. Instead it only says “God.” We’re learning as we progress through the Bible about both the nature of the Godhead and how God reveals Himself through verses like this one.

We’ve already seen that Jehovah walked in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve were present, and He walked up to Abraham as he sat in a tent. In both cases He talked

to these people face to face. And yet we know that God is Spirit, that God dwells in an unapproachable light, and that no man has seen God.

We will also learn, from both Old and New Testaments, that Jehovah is Jesus. If you're having a hard time grasping these things, don't feel ashamed or overwhelmed. The mystery of the Godhead and the mystery of the incarnation are so complicated that men have been studying them for thousands of years and we are still struggling to fully comprehend them.

We'll have to trust for now that what God has revealed in the Bible is true and then align our theology with that, rather than trying to align our theology with what we want to believe about God.

It is by Jehovah, who is the God of the heavens and the God of the earth, that Abraham makes Eliezer swear that he won't take a wife for Isaac from the daughters of the Canaanites among whom he dwells. And here we have an interesting hidden concept. The word that Abraham uses for "dwell" is the Hebrew word *yoshev*.

This word, *yoshev*, has the same numerical value as the name of the chief servant, Eliezer. Both of them numerically equal 318. If you were here during the sermon of Genesis 14, you might remember that this number is the same as the number of fighting men that were in Abraham's camp.

I think what is being told to us here is that Abraham, who is a picture of God the Father, is sending his helper Eliezer, who is a picture of the Holy Spirit, to conduct a particular task which is his responsibility.

The things of God the Father *and where He dwells* are different than the things of the Helper, the Holy Spirit. I don't think this is a crazy analysis either, but rather these things are hidden here for us to dig out and to learn in order to see how each member of the Godhead functions and what their responsibility is.

As far as the reason for a wife not to be taken from the Canaanites, it certainly stems from the curse of Canaan which goes all the way back to Genesis 9. When Ham, the youngest son of Noah committed an offense against his father, Noah turned and cursed his youngest son Canaan –

²⁵ “Cursed *be* Canaan;
A servant of servants
He shall be to his brethren.”

²⁶ And he said:
“Blessed *be* the LORD,
The God of Shem,
And may Canaan be his servant.

²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth,
And may he dwell in the tents of Shem;
And may Canaan be his servant.” Genesis 9:25-27

It would be out of the question for the son of promise to have a wife from a people who were under a curse. This brings in the next concept. Isaac is a picture of Jesus, the Son of the Father. The Canaanites then picture the people of the world – all who are under the curse of the law, which is God’s standard.

Paul explains this in the Galatians 3:10-14 –

¹⁰ “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” ¹¹ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” ¹² Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.” ¹³ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree”), ¹⁴ that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

One more thing about the Canaanites, in addition to being under a curse, they would eventually be dispossessed by Abraham’s descendants. He knew that this would happen in little over 350 years. And so He makes his wish known to his chief servant...

⁴ but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.”

At this time, it would be good to introduce Jesus’ words from Matthew 22 –

And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: ² “The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son

Jesus equates the kingdom of heaven to being like a king – and Abraham is certainly a kingly figure in the Bible – who arranged a marriage for his son. And he is arranging someone to marry Isaac who is of his same people and family. (vs 1-2)

They would have the same customs and understanding of God and they would have his same nature. Are you seeing Jesus and the church in any of this? I hope so.

II. She Must Come by Faith

⁵ And the servant said to him, “Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?”

Before swearing the oath, the servant asks an obvious question because it’s something that if he didn’t get an answer for in advance, it could get him into trouble later. “What if I can’t find someone willing to follow me back here? Shall I take Isaac there?”

The way he speaks shows that he assumes he will find someone but that she may want to see Isaac first, before actually agreeing to marry him. If this happens, then would it be right to take Isaac back to Mesopotamia to meet her? This verse now points to us.

Regardless of what thousands upon thousands of people have claimed since Jesus left, no believer has seen Him since the time of the apostles. I don’t care how honest they sound, how adamant they are, or how convincing their story is, it hasn’t happened.

There are several ways that we can know this directly from the Bible and they are prefigured in this verse right here. We are betrothed to a husband we have not seen. One of countless sets of verses which tell us this is so is from 1 Peter 1 –

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls. (vs 6-9)

Faith is, as Hebrews explains it, “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Faith that is seen is no longer faith and we, as the Bride of Christ, live

by faith and not by sight. I wish anyone who claims they have seen Jesus well, but I simply do not believe them.

⁶ But Abraham said to him, “Beware that you do not take my son back there.

As this account pictures the taking of a bride for God’s Son, this verse confirms what I just said. Isaac was not to be taken back to the land where his bride was residing and Jesus will not return to the land where we are now.

Instead, we will meet him in the clouds for the first time when we meet Him at the rapture. This verse is an imperative from the father. Either the bride agrees to the terms or the bride won’t meet the one she was to be chosen for. And this reflects our state.

We must agree, without seeing Jesus, that He is the one in whom we will place our trust and our hope. If we aren’t willing to, by faith, receive what He offers, then we will have no part at all with Him. Just as the choice is given to the bride of Isaac, the choice is also given to the people of the world.

As has been the pattern since the very first verses after the fall, everything about our relationship with God comes down to faith. This is what God expects and this is what pleases Him. He is asking each one of us to pick up His love letter to us, read it, and accept it by faith. Are you willing to do this? Romans 10 says so –

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!” ¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “LORD, who has believed our report?” ¹⁷ So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (vs 14-17)

Will we stay in our own land, not believing God’s word, or will we be ready to meet the Lord when He comes in the clouds? The word which was sent from father Abraham through Eliezer is given and the word which has been sent from the Father through the Holy Spirit, which is the Holy Bible, has also been given.

This is another in a long line of reasons why you should read your Bible, know your Bible, and believe your Bible. The Son is there, in its pages, waiting for His bride.

⁷ The LORD God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, 'To your descendants I give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.

Here in verse 7, Abraham shortens what he said earlier and simply states "the Lord God of the heavens" or *Yehovah elohe ha'shemayim*. This time he leaves off the second half of the title which said, "the Lord God of the earth." Why? Why did he do this?

The only real difference between the verses is that the Canaanites aren't mentioned and so it must be that he is connecting Jehovah of the earth to the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. The One who brought him into Canaan is more fully revealed to him now.

Abraham says it was the Lord God of the heavens that took him from his father's house and from the land of his family, and it was He who swore to him that he would be given the land. The same Lord, he is certain, will now find a wife for Isaac.

So you can comprehend what I really want you to understand, think of it like this. You work for a person who owns two big companies – Charlie's Cookies and Charlie's Cakes. You work at Charlie's Cakes.

You tell your best employee that you want him to do something for you and you let him know that the owner of Charlie's Cookies and Charlie's Cakes will be keeping an eye on how this goes. Your employee agrees and so you tell him you need him to find out how they get their cookies to be both tasty and delicious.

He says, "What if I find out how but I need to bring someone from Charlie's Cakes to the Cookie Company?" That is a "no, no" because company rule's won't allow that. Instead you tell him that the owner of Charlie's Cookies will ensure that everything goes smoothly.

Even though the same person owns both companies, you now only mention the cookie company. This is what's going on here with Abraham. Through the Bible, we're seeing an explanation of how we can and should perceive God.

He is sovereign over all of creation, but He is working things out in different ways at different times and fulfilling different roles in the process. This is the same as when we

call Jesus *Savior*, but we also call Him *Redeemer*. We call Him *King*, but we also call Him *Lord*. We call him our *Brother*, and yet we call Him our *Friend*.

God is putting these details in here and is asking us to pay attention to them, not skip over them with a ho and a hum, or a fee, a fie, a foe, and a diddly dum.

If it is important enough for God to place in His word, then we owe Him the honor and the respect of paying attention to it as we read and study. Great God, beautiful word, glorious Lord!

III. The Son Remains in the Promised Land

⁸And if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be released from this oath; only do not take my son back there.”

Abraham already knows the outcome of what he’s requested. God has promised him that he and his descendants will possess the land. He also knows that one of the Canaanites will not be a suitable wife for Isaac. He is going on the certainty that what he is doing is the right thing. And yet, he has misunderstood things in the past.

Because he has, he tells Eliezer that he will be released from the oath if the woman he is certain is there simply won’t come back with Him. The imperative is repeated though – “Only do not take my son back there.” There must be willingness on the part of the bride and she must accept this deal by faith and not by sight.

Isaac was to remain in the Promised Land while the servant sought out a bride for him. In the same way, Jesus will remain in heaven, exactly as the Bible says, until the Holy Spirit has His bride ready. This is both a challenge and a test for us. Are we willing to live by faith, and by faith alone, in what God has promised?

Some of the gifts that the Bible speaks of for believers are wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading, mercy, discernment, tongues, administration, and helping.

Let me ask you, are any of these unique to Christianity? No. Not one of these gifts is exclusive to Christianity. There are false prophets. There are people who speak in tongues in many religions. All over the world there are healers, and performers of miracles, and givers, and those who lead, and those who exhort.

If we are relying on outward signs of gifts in order to be taken to the Promised Land, then we are making a fundamental error in our religion and we are violating the very premise of the Bible – that we are to live by faith. Of all of these gifts, the gift of discernment is wonderful, because we can tell when other gifts aren't real.

But even this gift can be misused by wrong discernment. In the end, what we must have in order to be among the marriage ceremony is faith that our promised Bridegroom is who He claims to be. Keep that in mind as you're in church that requires speaking in tongues.

⁹ So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.

As I said earlier, within the Godhead there are individual roles. This isn't speculation, but rather it is what the Bible teaches in both testaments. The Spirit issues from the Father through the Son. The Gospel of John makes that perfectly clear. Because this is so, we have a picture of the Spirit's work beginning here.

The servant was asked to perform his duties on an oath which required him to place his hand under Abraham's thigh. Here in this picture is the Spirit receiving His direction from the Father through the Son, just as the servant is symbolically receiving his instruction from Abraham through the Isaac *who issued from Abraham*.

What the servant is doing is directed by the father for the benefit of the son. Even though the son, Isaac, isn't explicitly seen in this picture, he is seen implicitly, because of the placement of the hand during the oath. Abraham's seed issues from this place.

Likewise, even though the Son isn't seen in the world today, He is implicitly here – both in word (the Holy Bible) and in Spirit through the gifts we are given. This will become evident in the next verse...

¹⁰ Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, for all his master's goods were in his hand.

Ten is the biblical number for fullness. I could give you many examples of this, but we'll pick two just to give you an awareness of the concept. There are Ten Commandments, right. But in the law there are actually 613 lesser laws. However, these are summed up in the ten. They are the fullness of the law.

As a second example, we can go to Revelation and see Jesus' words there – “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

The term “ten days” indicates a fullness of testing. It is an indeterminate amount of time which is used by Job, Daniel, and elsewhere. As I said, there are numerous uses of the number 10 in the Bible and they will invariably indicate fullness.

And this is what we see here. The servant takes ten camels loaded with “all his master's goods...” This doesn't mean that he left Abraham and all of the people in the camp sitting on the ground out in the open. It means that he took a fullness or a full representation of everything Abraham possessed.

And once again, this is exactly what the Spirit does. The New Testament is filled with descriptions of the gifts of the Spirit, the workings of the Spirit, and the comfort of the Spirit. This servant, picturing the Holy Spirit, sets off with his goods at the direction of the father and on behalf of the son, echoing Jesus' words about the Holy Spirit as he goes –

¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you. John 16:14, 15

Isaac is the inheritor of Abraham's estate and all things which belong to Abraham likewise belong to him. And so it is with Jesus. He is the inheritor of all things. Isaac is to receive a bride and Jesus is also going to receive one. Will you be ready when He comes?

¹⁰ (Con't) **And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor.**

Off goes the servant with his ten camels to Mesopotamia. In Hebrew, the land is known as *Naharaim* or “the two rivers.” In this land he went to the city of Nahor, Abraham's younger brother.

In the coming verses, Nahor will be mentioned several times, but only in reference to someone else. In other words, he is probably already dead. However, Nahor is an important figure in the Bible even though it doesn't record him really doing anything. In a coming sermon, I'll explain why he's important.

¹¹ And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water.

This is our last verse today and we end with the servant's arrival at a well outside the city. The importance of wells is found throughout the Bible and this one will be no different. The day I was typing this sermon, I was thinking about water.

If we are deprived of water, then nothing in the world is more important to us. Food is similar, but if we are deprived of both food and water, the first thing we will go for is the water. We are so tied to it that even a short period without it and our life will end.

The water is the first spot that the servant goes to after his long journey. Not only does he need it, but his camels will too. And when he arrives, it is evening time – the end of a long day and the time when the women go out to draw water for the evening.

They do this because it's hot during the day. Going in the early morning and the evening allows them to keep out of the heat during the task of carrying the jar, working at the well to bring up the water, and then carrying the full jar back.

In John 4, there is a story about a woman at a well that we'll take a short look at –

⁵ So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶ Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. ⁷ A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." ⁸ For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

⁹ Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

¹¹ The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?" ¹² Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"

¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up

into everlasting life.”¹⁵ The woman said to Him, “Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.” (vs 5-15)

What I want you to get from this story about the life of Jesus today is that this woman was going out to get her water at the sixth hour. By the time standard that John uses, this is noon – the middle of the hot day in Israel.

Unlike the other ladies, she went at noon because she was an outcast. She’d been married 5 times and was at that time living with a man she wasn’t married to. But Jesus still sat and talked with her, leading her to a much deeper well with much purer water than she would find elsewhere.

The point I’d like to make is that your life may be completely messed up and you may be hiding it from others, but Jesus is there and He knows full well everything you have done. You very well may need the water of life that He offers. If so, stop going to the well in the heat of the day looking for water that will never satisfy.

Instead, reach out to Him and He promises you water which will spring up to everlasting life. And He offers it freely. On the very last page of the Bible, we read this in Revelation 22:17 –

“And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.”

The Spirit is out, right now, bearing gifts and calling the bride to meet the Bridegroom. And some day, He will depart with that bride to meet the Lord. Though we haven’t seen Him, we love Him, and though You may not know Him, He knows you. Let me take just a moment to explain how you can become a part of what God is doing through and for His Son, Jesus...

Closing Verse: *For we will surely die and become like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away a life; but He devises means, so that His banished ones are not expelled from Him. 2 Samuel 14:14*

Next Week – Genesis 24:12-28 (Rebekah)

Sending Out For a Bride

Now Abraham was old, well advanced in life
And the LORD had blessed Abraham in all ways
It was his intent to obtain for his son a wife
One that would bring him joy, all of his days

So He said to his oldest servant, a very good guy
The one who ruled over all his house
“Please, put your hand here under my thigh
And I will make you swear an oath concerning my son’s spouse

By the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth
You will not take a wife for my son from Canaan’s daughters
Those among whom I dwell, and the land of his birth
You shall go to my country, to the Two Rivers’ waters

From my family, you shall take for my son Isaac a wife
This is the oath to which you shall bind your life

And the servant said to him, “Perhaps the woman will not
Be willing to follow me to this land whence Isaac was begot

“Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?
“Beware you don’t take him back there, Abraham did exclaim

The LORD God of heaven, who led me from my father’s band
And from the land of my family, and who spoke to me
Swore to me, saying, “To your descendants I give this land,
He will send His angel before you to find a wife, you see

And you shall take a wife for my son from there
But if the woman is not willing to follow you
Then you will be released from this oath, do not despair
Only do not take my son back, this you shall not do

So the servant put his hand under the thigh
Of Abraham his master, and to the oath he swore
Then he took ten of Abraham’s camels and waved goodbye

And departed, with his master's goods which the camels bore

He arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor
And he made his camels kneel down outside the city
From the journey he was probably tired, thirsty, and sore
But he was on a mission, not one looking for pity

By a well of water at evening time he waited
The time when women go out to draw from the well
And certainly as he sat, he antici.....pated
The completion of his task and hearing the wedding bell

Likewise the Father is looking for a bride for His Son
And the Spirit is searching hearts, searching every one

And the heart which is tender and responds to the call
Will be led to the waters which spring to eternal life
And someday the bride will wear her wedding shawl
When Jesus comes for His long anticipated wife

Oh! A beautiful bride for the Lord wearing radiant white
The marriage of the Lamb will be a resplendent sight

Until that day we wait in faith for our precious Lord
And seek His face through His wonderful word

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 24:12-28 (REBEKAH)

Introduction: The great theologian John Wesley and his noted brother Charles, who wrote countless Christian hymns, made such decisions as their journey to America by opening the Bible in a random manner and deciding what they should do from the verse that first came to view.

When this type of thing didn't work, they would turn to drawing lots. In other words, the Bible didn't give me what I want, so I'll try dice. These types of superstitions were common with him and they deviate from sound biblical practices. In one instance Wesley decided to attack the Calvinist theory of grace.

In 1739 he preached on and published a passionately Arminian sermon entitled Free Grace. He did this only after seeking a sign from heaven and drawing lots twice.

Today we will learn more about how the Holy Spirit works in our lives and what His role and function is. We can get quite a bit out of today's story and we'd be remiss if we didn't attempt to learn from the pictures God has given us here.

Text Verse: *And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them. Acts 16:9, 10*

In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God directed Abraham's servant to find a wife for his son. In the New Testament, we see the Holy Spirit directing God's people in the spreading of the gospel in order to search out those who will be a part of the Bride of Christ.

We need to live in such a way that we are always ready to be filled with and respond to the Holy Spirit as He directs us to others in need of this good news. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Spirit Directs God's People

In our last sermon we saw Abraham call his chief servant and he asked him to swear to a vow to obtain a wife for his son Isaac. He directed him to go to Mesopotamia where his

family was and get a wife from there. The servant was instructed in no way take Isaac there, but the woman had to come, by faith, to meet her husband.

The last verses we saw said –

“Then the servant took ten of his master’s camels and departed, for all his master’s goods *were in* his hand. And he arose and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. ¹¹ And he made his camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw *water*.

This is where we start today then, with verse 12...

¹² Then he said, “O LORD God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham.

The servant has arrived and is waiting by the well. What he does here is absolutely vital to the mission and therefore it is the very first thing he does – he prays. He prays in the name of the Lord.

He acknowledges the Lord’s authority over Abraham and that he in turn is subservient to him. He then he asks for success in his mission which is on behalf of his master. In other words, he’s not praying for himself, but for the mission which he has been sent on.

I don’t think there’s anything wrong with praying for yourself, and there are times in the Bible when this happens, but I find it extremely hard to do personally. The reason is that if I belong to the Lord, then whatever I do should be meant to honor Him.

And so when I pray about something that involves me, it is always under the premise that it should be to bring Him glory, not me. The Lord already knows everything I want and need and so I see asking for those things in prayer as repetitive and pointless.

However, I don’t want to frighten you off from praying. There are only three ways that we can commune with God. The first is through reading the Bible. The second is through being filled with the Holy Spirit. But that isn’t at all what most Christians think.

Being filled with the Spirit is a passive action, not active. In other words, if you are a believer in Jesus, you are sealed from the moment of belief by the Spirit. You have all of

the Spirit that you can ever get at that moment. However, the Spirit can get more of you. Being filled is passive and it can only happen in a few ways.

By knowing your Bible, by living out what the Bible expects, and through the third way of communing with God – through prayer. And so, Abraham’s messenger does what each of us should do in all things – he prays.

To expect any good thing to be accomplished without using the means of getting that thing accomplished is both stupid and arrogant. How can we expect God to respond to our needs without stating them in a manner which honors Him?

So in the future I want all of you to do three things every day – 1) Read your Bible. 2) Live out what your Bible instructs for you, and 3) Pray to God that His will and plan be worked out through you and for you as well as for the others you pray for. By doing these three things, you will – like Eliezer, commit your whole life to the direction and blessing of God.

¹³ Behold, *here* I stand by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water.

Notice that the servant acknowledges the Lord first and asks Him for his petition to be granted. Then in this verse he mentions the well where the women will come to. He doesn’t wish from the well and he doesn’t pray to the well. He prays to the Creator of the water and the land from which the well was dug.

Likewise, we aren’t to petition anything in creation in our prayers. Not horoscopes, not tarot cards, not the sun, moon, or stars. We don’t wish upon a rainbow or upon a figure of Jesus that shows up in a piece of Ravioli. There is no thing in creation that we pray to or bow to, not Mary or the saints. We only offer prayer to God.

¹⁴ Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say, ‘Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,’ and she says, ‘Drink, and I will also give your camels a drink’—*let her be the one* You have appointed for Your servant Isaac. And by this I will know that You have shown kindness to my master.”

The verses in this story are what we call “descriptive.” In other words, they describe what happened. They are not “prescriptive,” meaning they don’t prescribe what we should do. He is at the well and He is praying to God on behalf of His mission, which is on behalf of Abraham who is living his life under the Lord.

And so he asks for a sign. When I said this verse isn't prescriptive, it means that this simply records what happened, not what we should necessarily do. There are many times in the Bible when people ask for a sign. Can anyone here tell me what the difference between them and us is?

The difference is twofold. First, we have the Bible – they didn't. And the second is that if you have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord, then you also have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. Except under different circumstances and for different reasons, they weren't.

Because we have the Bible and because the filling of the Holy Spirit is available to us, then asking for a sign is presumptuous and it is therefore sinful. This doesn't mean that God doesn't give signs, but that we are to understand them for what they are when He gives them, not when we ask for them.

The Bible says we not live by faith and not by sight. If we go around asking for signs, then we are not living by faith, but are trusting in the sight of a sign. A sign that is given when *not requested* still requires faith to understand that God gave it.

The case here at the well requires special direction from God which he otherwise didn't have. Unlike him, we have God's special direction in the Bible and in the presence of the Spirit.

In 1 Corinthians 1 Paul explains the difference between those who look for signs, those who live by the intellect alone, and those who follow what the Bible proclaims –

²⁰ Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. ²² For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. (vs 20-25)

¹⁵ **And it happened, before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her pitcher on her shoulder.**

Enter Rebekah... According to Abrahim the meaning of her name denotes the tying up of cattle for their own protection, the establishment of their home, and to keep them from wandering off. Within this name lies the notion that individuals are placed together by some higher authority or someone smarter than they.

This account is the perfect fulfillment of her name. God in His wisdom sent her to Eliezer even before he finished his prayer in order to fulfill His plans for the world's people. It's something we need to think on with every single thing that happens in our lives. Have you ever prayed for something and within no time at all it came about? Or have you ever prayed for something for an immensely long time and when it did occur you realized that it was at the perfect time instead of when you started praying – which would have actually been a terrible time for it to happen?

God is infinitely smarter than us and every single thing that happens is because He has planned for it. This is even true with a pretty young girl walking up to get water from a well at evening time. So intelligent is God that speaking through Isaiah He says –

It shall come to pass That before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will hear. Isaiah 65:24

At the time that God determines to fulfill His word, it will happen as surely as the sun will rise. As the Geneva Bible says about this verse, “God gives success to all things that are done for the glory of his name and according to his word.”

Although we haven't come to the end of the story, we can already guess that Rebekah is the girl God has chosen for Isaac. And because she is the grand-daughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother, we will learn something here that most people never consider.

Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees and he traveled with His father Terah, His brother Nahor, and His nephew Lot who was the son of Haran, Abraham's older brother who died in Ur. If you think this verse through along with what we also learned from previous sermons, all of these people are ancestors of Jesus.

Terah is the father of Haran, Abraham, and Nahor and he also had a daughter named Sarai. Haran is the father of Lot who is Jesus' ancestor through both of his own daughters. Haran is also the father of Milcah, Rebekah's grandmother.

Nahor is the father of Bethuel, the father of Rebekah, and Abraham and Sarah are the parents of Isaac. So, all of these people are in Jesus' genealogy and they all come from Terah, Abraham's father.

Terah, all three of his sons and his daughter, and the others mentioned – all of them – lead to Jesus. This then is one of the most pivotal families in all of redemptive history.

¹⁶ Now the young woman *was* very beautiful to behold, a virgin; no man had known her.

Rebekah is noted as very beautiful and so I bring up the point now that there is absolutely nothing wrong with being beautiful, and there is nothing wrong with noticing that in others. In some denominations, it's almost scandalous to even note it and women do their very best to look as plain and as dull as possible.

However, the Bible never recommends this. What it does ask for is whether a lady is beautiful, or not-so-much, that she carry herself with the dignity of a lady and not trust in outward adornments, but in the beauty of what God has given her.

The next thing this verse notes is that she is a virgin and it explains it by saying that no man had known her. To "know" in this sense specifically means sex. This verse is prefiguring Rebekah as a picture of the church. Paul speaks of us in this way –

For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:2

What the Bible is speaking of in Rebekah in a physical sense is what Paul desires of us in a spiritual sense. We are to be unknown in dealing with other gods. We are never to mix our devotion to Christ with anything else. Unfortunately, this message is all but lost in the Christian world today.

¹⁶(con't) And she went down to the well, filled her pitcher, and came up.

Rebekah is a picture of us. She knows where the water is and she goes down to it. This well is lower than ground level and she has to descend to it before drawing out the water. The symbolism here is seen in our descending to the Water of Life, Jesus, as we go to our knees in the prayer which will change our eternal destiny.

After we obtain the Water through our prayer, something wonderful happens...

¹⁷ And the servant ran to meet her and said, “Please let me drink a little water from your pitcher.”

If you were here during last week’s sermon, you’ll remember that the servant is a picture of the Holy Spirit. When Rebekah receives the water from the well, the servant runs to her. And in the same way, the moment we receive the Water of Life into our jar of clay, the Spirit rushes into us, sealing us for the day of redemption –

In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. Ephesians 1:13-14

After we are sealed and belong to Him, Paul explains the mystery of Christ in us in 2 Corinthians 4:7 –

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.”

The NIV uses the term “jars of clay.” Just as Rebekah filled her jar of clay, we also are filled – both at the well of the water of life, one physical; one spiritual. Everything we are reading about is pointing to Jesus and our relationship with Him. It is the Spirit which leads us to Him and it is the Spirit who calls to the people of God...

II. The Spirit Calls God’s People

¹⁸ So she said, “Drink, my lord.” Then she quickly let her pitcher down to her hand, and gave him a drink.

¹⁹ And when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, “I will draw *water* for your camels also, until they have finished drinking.”

The bride of Christ, the Church, isn’t just a beautiful virgin lazing around until the Lord returns. Just as Rebekah is the carrier of the water from the well, the church is the carrier of the Water of Life – the message of Jesus. The church is the one who carries the message to others either directly or by supporting those who do.

If you remember from last week, the camels and all that they carry are a picture of the gifts which God has given to His people. Her drawing water for these camels is a picture

of our willingness to serve those who bear the gifts of God. She is the church and the church has people that can do anything the world does.

There are people who preach and there are missionaries. There are people who can build buildings and there are those who clean the buildings. There are camels and there are those who water camels. God has appointed all of us to do something.

It is unthinkable that people go to church on Sunday morning and do nothing more for the Christ during the week. At church on the beach, we may seem to have fewer opportunities to serve than at other churches, but this isn't so. We have people to invite to come, and we have an offering bucket for those who can afford it.

We have people we can tell about Jesus during the week, and we have people who can carry stuff to the truck when we're finished. We have people we can share the weekly video with on the internet with others too. We have people who occasionally bring something for others to eat. Whatever your gift is, use it like Rebekah used hers – with diligence and to the point of completion.

And one more thing about this verse – remember that the servant is a picture of the Holy Spirit. Rebekah said to him, as we should say to the Spirit, "Drink my lord." As believers, we have all the Spirit that we can get. However, the Spirit can get more of us.

Despite what charismatic churches teach, the Bible doesn't ask us to say "Come Holy Spirit" because He is already there. Instead it is the Spirit who says "Come." The more we offer to Him, the more we will be filled. And so Rebekah offers to him.

²⁰ Then she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough, ran back to the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.

Camels drink a lot. This wasn't one trip to the well, but many. One camel that's been on a journey like this will drink about 25 gallons. This then would be 250 gallons. If her jar held 3 gallons, which would be about 25 pounds (8.34), then it would take her about 83 trips between the well and the trough.

In total that's about 2080 pounds of water, plus the weight of the jar for each carry. This girl is no slacker. Even if they only drank half that much, it's probably much more work than any of you will do after dinnertime tonight... well, except for maybe Kelly.

Rebekah serves until the job is complete and this is what we are asked to do as well. There is a world full of people who need the Water of Life and there are a million jobs within the church that need to be accomplished. Rebekah didn't stop until the job was done and we are to continue on until our job is finished as well.

And as a piece of trivia for you, camels don't store water in their humps. Rather it is stored in their bloodstream. The humps are storage for fat for when there's no food. When needed, that is their food source and that is when the hump shrinks.

²¹ And the man, wondering at her, remained silent so as to know whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.

The word translated here as "wondering at her" is only used this one time in the entire Bible and so it is translated differently by different people. Some say gazed, watched closely, looked steadfastly, was astonished at her, etc. It is the same as another root word which means to twirl to giddiness like a child might do.

Adam Clarke's comment on this verse is so funny that I have to quote it for you, "And he was so lost in wonder and astonishment at her simplicity, innocence, and benevolence, that he permitted this delicate female to draw water for ten camels, without ever attempting to afford her any kind of assistance! I know not which to admire most, the benevolence and condescension of Rebekah, or the cold and apparently stupid indifference of the servant of Abraham. Surely they are both of an uncommon cast."

In the New Testament, Paul tells us to be filled with the Spirit. In the Greek the verb is a *present imperative*. This means to keep being filled, just as Rebekah is continuously filling her pitcher. The stream of water into and out of it is continuous, just as the stream of the Spirit should be in each of us.

Through understanding the Bible, allowing Him to fill us, and through prayer, He will be there with every task. We may be doing the physical part, but He is there and He is supervising. The job will get done and it will be, in the end, a great work of God.

III. The Spirit Gives Gifts to God's People

The Spirit Directs God's People; The Spirit Calls God's People

²² So it was, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a golden nose ring weighing half a shekel, and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten *shekels* of gold,

Once the task was done, the man pulls out a gold ring. Some translators call it a nose ring, some an earring, but it is singular and so this isn't likely, and some say an ornament for her head. Any of these could be right and we can only speculate which it is. He also brought out two bracelets of ten weight.

You can still see Middle Eastern women wearing these things. The ones the servant gave to her would have been very valuable and it was a great amount of money for her work. Likewise, we will receive a great reward for the work we do for Christ.

The Spirit is the one to give us our spiritual gifts and they come as we grow in our walk with the Lord. If you read your Bible, you'll eventually receive the gift of discernment. As you witness to others, you'll eventually have developed the gift of teaching, etc.

Other than what we have naturally from birth, these things need to be developed and the Spirit will give them graciously as we grow in our Christian life. Likewise, the rewards for the work we do for the Lord will be great. Nothing that we sacrifice now will be forgotten or left unrewarded by Him.

²³ and said, “Whose daughter *are* you? Tell me, please, is there room *in* your father’s house for us to lodge?”

What seems obvious is that the Lord provided exactly what the servant wanted, a beautiful bride for his master's son. But he needs to make sure that this isn't a false sign and so he asks who she is and he immediately follows up with a second question, “Do you have room for us?”

There were no inns at this time and so, like you'll find in the country of Japan, there are people who will take travelers into their own home as a type of substitute inn. In Japan, they're called *ryokan* and staying at them is a fun way of traveling the country and meeting nice people... plus they have really great food.

The servant is hoping for a place to stay and for good news about her family line. If she is the right girl, staying in her home will only make his journey and his task easier.

²⁴ So she said to him, “I *am* the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah’s son, whom she bore to Nahor.”

²⁵ Moreover she said to him, “We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge.”

In response to his question of “Whose daughter are you?” she responds with her father’s name. Bethuel means “Daughter of God” and so she says, I am the daughter of the daughter of God.” It’s an interesting play on words, but it points again to the church.

Bethuel is an unusual name for a man, but because he is Rebekah’s father, and they are key to bringing in the nation of Israel, we have a picture of the church as the daughter of the daughter of God.

This family, which is so heavily entrenched in the genealogy of Jesus, openly welcomes the servant in for the evening – they have plenty of straw and feed and room to lodge.

²⁶ Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the LORD.

Her sudden appearance as he finished his prayer was certainly directed by God. Her willingness to do exactly what he had prayed for was also directed by God. And her words to him now assure him that even this is directed by God.

Exactly the spot, exactly the fulfillment of the request, and exactly the right family line... all of it has the sure sign of God’s divine hand upon his journey and so the man, overwhelmed by God’s gracious hand, bows his head and worships.

²⁷ And he said, “Blessed *be* the LORD God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master. As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master’s brethren.”

Today’s first verse said, “O LORD God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham.” Now at the end of this journey, the servant uses the same words in praise of the Lord for fulfilling his prayer.

What we can learn from this, even if the verse is simply describing what happened, is that for each blessing we receive, and especially those we asked for in advance, we should stop and praise the Lord.

Unfortunately, we too often forget to show gratitude at the end of the same journey that we asked help for when we started. Whether it's a journey of an illness, a college education, or a family vacation, we usually remember to ask God to bless it.

But when the trip is over, the thanks and praise is often forgotten. The servant was faithful to stop and praise the Lord here and it would be right for each of us to do the same after any successful journey.

²⁸ So the young woman ran and told her mother's household these things.

If Rebekah is a picture of the church and she has run home to tell her mother's household, then shouldn't this picture us telling those around us about the wonderful dealings of God as well? Not only should we tell those in our family, but what about the people we work with and the people we socialize with.

And ultimately, as Christians, don't we have a debt to the Jewish people, to take this message back to the well from which we sprang? In all, the story of Rebekah is the story of the church. We have a story to tell and it's about the greatest wedding which will ever occur. And it is a marriage to the King of kings.

Let me tell you how you can be a participant in this glorious ceremony which God has prepared for His own beloved Son...

Closing Verse: *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."* John 7:37, 38

Next week – Genesis 24:29-52 (A Work of the Spirit)

The Virgin at the Well

The servant said, "O LORD God of my master Abraham
Please give me success this day,
And show kindness to the master of who I am
Please grant me my petition I pray

Behold, here I stand by the well of water,
And the daughters of the men of the city
Are coming out to draw, please send a family daughter
I beg for You in this matter to extend pity

Now let it be that the young woman to whom I say,
“Please let down your pitcher that I may drink,”
That she in turn will respond as how I pray
“Drink and I will also give your camels some I think”

Let her be the one You have appointed for Your servant Isaac
And by this I will know You have kindness to my master shown
And it happened, before he had finished speaking, he turned back
A girl coming with a pitcher on her shoulder, walking alone

Now the young woman was very beautiful to see
A virgin; no man had known her
And she filled her pitcher, this young beauty
As the servant watched in order to be sure

After coming up from the well, the servant ran to meet her
And said, “Please let me have a little drink of water”

“Drink, my lord,” Letting her pitcher down to her hand
She gave him a drink which was refreshingly grand

And when she had finished giving him a drink
She said, “I will draw water for your camels also
When they have had enough, only then I think
That back to my home is where I will go

So she quickly emptied her pitcher into the trough
And ran back to the well to draw more water
She drew for all his camels before she took off
The servant sat watching this exceptional daughter

And the man wondering at her remained silent as water she drew
Had the LORD brought him to where his journey was now through?

So it was, as the camels had finished drinking that then
The man took a golden nose ring, half a shekel its weight
And two bracelets for her wrists weighing of gold ten
And he spoke to her making his words straight

“I would like to know whose daughter are you?
Tell me, is there lodging in your father’s house for us too?”

“I am the daughter of Bethuel, Milcah’s son,
It was he whom she bore to Nahor”
Moreover she said to him, Aren’t you the blessed one
We have both straw and feed enough, and room to lodge for sure

Then the man bowed down his head and worshiped the LORD.
And he said, “Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham
He has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward
My master... In this, humbly gracious to Him I am

As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me
To the house of my master’s kith and kin
So the young woman scurried home, ever so quickly
And told about the things at the well where she had been

God directs our steps as He did in this story
He does it for our good and also for His glory

Just as Rebekah had this most timely meeting
We too have a most important date
It’s coming when Jesus will call out His greeting
And when that day comes, won’t it be great?

To meet our beloved Lord
As we’re promised in His precious word

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 24:29-52 **(A WORK OF THE SPIRIT)**

Introduction: Today's sermon will have a recounting of much of what occurred in the previous sermon and so we'll read through those verses without much commentary, but we won't skip them as they will keep continuity in our biblical traveling adventure .

The Bible often repeats passages for a variety of reasons. Today's repetition is for Rebekah's family to understand that what has come about was divinely orchestrated. In the repetition, maybe we can see our own testimony about when we were called to Christ.

What happens to us is of benefit to others and so we repeat it in order for them to have the same assurance that we have. It's important to understand then that your calling doesn't have to be dramatic or filled with suspense in order to convince others.

Instead it simply has to be truthful and given as a demonstration of how it was molded by God into the call which forever changed your destiny.

Text Verse: *Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Matthew 24:45, 46*

The Lord commissions those whom He chooses. However, there are some who stand in the Lord's house as servants but they are faithless in their tasks. Maybe they serve because the Master is kind and easy in what He directs.

Maybe they serve because they can steal from God's people. The Lord isn't blind to them, nor is He blind to His faithful servants. Abraham's servant went about his task with faithfulness and he is remembered for this many eons later.

How will we be remembered when we stand before our Master? The question stands and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Receiving the Spirit

Before we actually start looking at today's verses, we need to remind ourselves of what these verses picture. They form a story which tells us of how God continued to select people who would become a part of the family of God, but they are also pictures of the greater story of His work in all of the people of God.

The servant pictures the Holy Spirit who doesn't speak of Himself, but rather is given to procure a bride for the Son. Rebekah is that bride and she pictures the church of God's people. And Isaac is the son of Abraham who pictures the Son of God who awaits the bride in the land of promise while the Holy Spirit accomplishes His task.

I want to remind you about the meaning of Rebekah's name today so that we can see how this account is being worked together by a wise Creator who chooses each word and each action and each name to tell us of His wisdom in the unfolding story.

The name "Rebekah" denotes tying up of cattle for their own protection, the establishment of their home, and to keep them from wandering off. Within the name lies the notion that individuals are placed together by some authority higher or smarter than they.

Try to keep that in mind as you see how God has orchestrated her selection for his son of promise Isaac and how each thing that happens comes about by more than mere chance.

²⁹ Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban, and Laban ran out to the man by the well.

Notice that the servant didn't follow Rebekah. Instead he stayed at the well. This tells us that we don't receive the Water of Life through our family. No one can say, "I'm a Christian" because their parents are Christians. Jesus doesn't transfer automatically by birth, but rather everyone needs to come to Him individually.

Laban has a counterpart in the New Testament. Whether he is a saved person or not is hard to tell. One thing is sure. If he is, he is what we would equate with a "carnal Christian" in today's lingo. Someone who made a commitment to the Lord, but who never really lives the life.

His name means "white" but it also means "brick" maybe because of what happens when you fire a brick – it turns whiter. Man was made from the dust, and in the New

Testament believers are equated with jars of clay because we are vessels waiting to be filled with God's Spirit.

Being a brick though doesn't allow for any filling – they're hard and they're solid. At the building of the Tower of Babel, the term for "make brick" uses the same root words as the name Laban. Laban is a brick and unless he softens back to clay he will never know the Lord personally. What about us?

And so he, according to the verse, ran out to the man by the well. It seems as if he's like one of us, but remember last week – it was the servant that ran to Rebekah, not the other way around. Why then is he running to the servant...

³⁰ So it came to pass, when he saw the nose ring, and the bracelets on his sister's wrists, and when he heard the words of his sister Rebekah, saying, "Thus the man spoke to me," that he went to the man. And there he stood by the camels at the well.

The Bible specifically notes Laban as having seen the nose ring and the bracelets that were given to Rebekah. Those precious gifts, along with what she said, caused him to rush out there to the place where the man was. But where does he stand? The Bible says, "by the camels!" Aha!

Here we have a shadow of a man known as Simon the Sorcerer who is found in Acts 8. We can't understand Laban without noting the account of Simon and so let's read that account together –

⁹ But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, ¹⁰ to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." ¹¹ And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time. ¹² But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. ¹³ Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. ¹⁴ Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, ¹⁵ who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ And when Simon saw that

through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." ²⁰ But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! ²¹ You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. ²² Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³ For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity." ²⁴ Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me." Acts 8:9-24

Do you see the parallels between the two? Laban saw the gifts given to Rebekah by the servant at the well. Simon saw the gifts given by the Spirit to Christ's bride from the Well of Salvation.

Laban rushed to where the gifts were, on the camels looking for the same thing that Simon did. What it comes down to with Laban is personal benefit rather than a desire for God.

This doesn't mean that the brick named Laban didn't soften back into clay and it doesn't mean that the sorcerer named Simon didn't repent and accept what the Spirit freely offers, but it shows us the hardness of human hearts that live apart from God.

Now think of those who come to churches and see all the gifts God offers. Do they rush to the gifts or do they, with an open heart, allow the Spirit to rush to them? The difference is more than galactic.

Whatever the final state of Simon the Sorcerer, to this day we have a term we use to describe someone like the Bible describes him – the term is "simony." Simony is the practice of buying or selling spiritual or church benefits such as pardons, relics, etc.

And the halls of Christianity are filled with simonizers even now. Turn on Christian TV and you'll see them by the score. Walk into many churches and money, not Christ is king. The lust for gold and wealth will always draw Laban to the camels.

And the desire to be ultra-spiritual is a type of simony in itself. There are those who pretend tongues, pretend prophecy, pretend visions, and pretend understanding of the Bible, but they are unwilling to yield their hearts. Do you know many pastors get their sermons right off the internet or from books?

Simony isn't just a disease of lay people. Instead it is an affliction of the human heart. What out for simonizers...

³¹ And he said, "Come in, O blessed of the LORD! Why do you stand outside?"

Laban in his excitement about the potential riches calls out to the servant, "Come in, O blessed of the Lord! Come inside and fill my house. It's not out by the well that you belong, but in here." Is this what we will call out to the Spirit? Are we calling to Him in truth?

³¹ (con't) For I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels."

Some ancient Jewish commentators look at this verse and comment that his preparation of the house included removing from view the idols that they worshipped. This is a good analysis too because later in Genesis, Laban will still have idols in his house.

The symbolism again reaches to each of us. Have we removed the idols from our own house, meaning our life, or have we merely hidden them from sight in order to appear ready to receive the Spirit. God does know the difference.

How many people go to church and call for the Spirit to fill them, but then spend the rest of the week running as far from the Well as possible. What are we going to do with the One who alone can bring us the true Water of Life? Are we inviting in the Spirit for the fellowship with the Lord or merely for the gifts that he brings?

And those idols in our home, how many and what a variety! We read horoscopes, we knock on wood, we have Feng Shui arrangements, we may even have a statue of Buddha somewhere – I used to have dozens. What about porn videos?

What is it that gets our attention away from Christ? These idols aren't just detrimental to us, but to others who come to our home and see them, knowing that we are supposedly Christians.

How many of us have made an idol out of sports, money, our car, or even another person. We rush to our idols and we hide from God... except on Sunday morning. God isn't a cosmic dummy – He does see. Let us strive to attain holiness and godliness in life.

³² Then the man came to the house. And he unloaded the camels, and provided straw and feed for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him.

When they got to the house, the first thing Laban did was to unload the camels and feed them. Only then does it note that he cared for the travelers. Remember, the camels are where the gifts are. Are we welcoming the Lord or trying to get goodies from Him?

As far as the washing of feet, it's an important concept. The symbolism here reaches throughout the New Testament, but can be nicely summed up from the book of 3 John –

Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, ⁶ who have borne witness of your love before the church. *If* you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, ⁷ because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. ⁸ We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

Again though, if we do good things for those in the church, is it for the Lord's honor or that we will benefit from our actions. What is the motivation behind our deeds? In the end, if they are deeds lacking faith, then they're ultimately as useless as a football bat.

³³ Food was set before him to eat, but he said, "I will not eat until I have told about my errand." And he said, "Speak on."

This servant is on a mission and it was by a binding oath to Abraham. Before he eats a bite he wants to know if his mission will be a success. If so, his food will digest so much better and he will have the relief of knowing he had served his master well.

In a beautiful parallel from John 4:31-34, we see this account in Jesus' life as He sat by a well in Samaria –

³¹ In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."

³² But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." ³³

Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?" ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.

Like Abraham's servant, Jesus was far more interested in accomplishing His task than He was about eating a meal. I hope this is something that each of us will reflect on also.

What is important to you? Is the Bible important to you, or sitting on Facebook. Is attending church more important than the NFL?

Is helping other Christians with gifts of money or your talent as important as going out to dinner a couple times a week? It all comes down to priorities. What are yours? Just so you know, and which I've said at least 3 jillions times, if you just read your Bible 30 minutes a day, you will be able to read it twice in a year.

It can be tough, but how else are you going to know God? From me? If you're relying on me or someone on TV to reveal Him to you, then your knowledge of Him is limited to a person who could be wrong. If nothing else in your life, please read your Bible.

II. The Servant's Faithfulness

³⁴ **So he said, "I *am* Abraham's servant.**

In this society, a servant would be known as a servant by sight. Laban would have known this, but now he knows whose servant. This is an important verse, because although Rebekah may have told him this, until he hears it personally, he can't be certain.

The reason this is important for us is because there is a real God and there are false gods. The messengers and servants of the false gods are out there and ready to deceive the world and to steal away those who would otherwise belong to Christ. There are false religions such as Buddhism, Islam, and others around the world.

But there are also false sects of Christianity. They bear Jesus' name possibly, but they don't serve Him. Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Adventist sects, and others need to be exposed in order to reveal those who serve the true Master, Jesus.

When you stand at the judgment, what will your words be? For me, "I am a servant of Jesus Christ, and Him alone."

³⁵ **The LORD has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys.**

Let's remember the role of the Holy Spirit within the Godhead from John 15 so that we can understand this servant's role now –

²⁶ “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. John 15:26

In the same way, the servant of Abraham is being sent on behalf of the son carrying all the gifts needed to accomplish the mission.

We’ve seen many times in past sermons the increase of Abraham’s wealth and status as he journeyed to Egypt and throughout the land of Canaan. God blessed him abundantly in worldly wealth and power. All of this has been seen since He departed from his house and moved to the Promised Land.

None of it was gained wrongfully either. Abraham has been a man of integrity and uprightness and God has blessed him because of this. In a similar way, God will bless you for your integrity as well. I am not one to preach a prosperity gospel. God will not reward you because you hope for something in return.

However, He will reward you if you give out of love for Him. There is a difference. If someone tells you that God will unlock His blessings when you give to them, the very implication of what they are saying is that *they* are the access point of God’s blessing being realized.

It also implies that when you give to them, that you are expecting something in return. In this, there can be no true reward. Jesus teaches us in a parable in Luke 17:7-10 –

And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? ⁸ But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’? ⁹ Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. ¹⁰ So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’”

In other words, do your job as a faithful Christian and expect nothing in return. What God gives you is more than you deserve already and every new blessing should be received with thanks.

³⁶ **And Sarah my master’s wife bore a son to my master when she was old;**

There are a few reasons the servant said this. The first is to prove that Abraham is really his master. The servant personally knows about Sarah and he also knows that she was without a child when she left the family years earlier. They have every reason to now believe without doubt that this guy is being truthful.

The second reason is that Sarah is the cousin of Milcah, Bethuel's mother and Laban's grandmother. Rebekah is probably not much more than 14 or 15 years old and if Isaac was Sarah's son from a normal age, he could be 70 or so. It wouldn't be a good marriage for Rebekah.

But that leads to the third reason for this verse. It was to show the miraculous nature of Isaac's birth. While Rebekah is Milcah's granddaughter, Isaac is only Sarah's son. She had a child *despite* her old age.

³⁶ (con't) **and to him he has given all that he has.**

This verse is *key* to understanding the entire passage. The servant now gives them the best news of all from their perspective. What is Abraham's belongs to his son – all of it. Isaac is the heir and his bride will therefore be joint-heir with him in Abraham's house. Here we have a picture of Jesus, the church, and the Holy Spirit.

However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. ¹⁵ All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you. John 16

The servant is proclaiming the message of Christ. The Son has all things which belong to the Father, and the bride is a co-heir with Christ. We find this in Romans 8 –

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ...

What a wonderful treat to be able to see how God has used these people and this beautiful story to show us His own plan for us and our true Husband, Christ Jesus.

The next 12 verses are a repeat of the account from last week's sermon. As that sermon only took about 45 minutes, I'm going to repeat it completely so that you remember

every thing we talked about. Ok, I won't do that. Instead, I'm going to read the verses and give just a few comments.

³⁷ Now my master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell;

³⁸ but you shall go to my father's house and to my family, and take a wife for my son.'

³⁹ And I said to my master, 'Perhaps the woman will not follow me.'

⁴⁰ But he said to me, 'The LORD, before whom I walk, will send His angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my family and from my father's house.

⁴¹ You will be clear from this oath when you arrive among my family; for if they will not give *her* to you, then you will be released from my oath.'

⁴² "And this day I came to the well and said, 'O LORD God of my master Abraham, if You will now prosper the way in which I go,

⁴³ behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass that when the virgin comes out to draw *water*, and I say to her, "Please give me a little water from your pitcher to drink,"

⁴⁴ and she says to me, "Drink, and I will draw for your camels also,"—*let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's son.*'

⁴⁵ "But before I had finished speaking in my heart, there was Rebekah, coming out with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down to the well and drew *water*.

The story is similar to what we looked at last week, but this verse adds in something new. The servant said, "Before I had finished speaking *in my heart...*" The servant's prayer was silent. This is important to note for a couple reasons.

First, Rebekah couldn't have heard the prayer and therefore didn't simply do the things he requested based on what he said. What happened was divinely inspired in her. It's also important because it is something people email me about from time to time. "Is it ok to pray silently?"

The answer depends on the prayer and the person. A silent prayer was also heard by God in 1 Samuel 1:13 when Hannah, the mother of Samuel, prayed for a child. In both occasions, no vocalization occurred yet God heard and answered the prayer.

Interestingly, the 17th letter of the Hebrew aleph-bet is the letter Pe which also means "mouth." This letter is drawn in 2 ways, one with a closed mouth at the beginning or within a word, and with an open mouth at the end of a word. Jewish scholars say that

the closed mouth refers to speech in this world, and the open mouth to speech in the world to come.

The word for mouth is Peh and is pronounced like the letter. As believers are already “crucified with Christ” and dead to this world, we can infer that believers don’t need to vocalize their prayers to be heard.

However, non-believers must vocalize prayer. And because they are non-believers and thus not adopted children of God, there is only one prayer that God wants to or will hear from them. It is the prayer of accepting Jesus.

This goes along with Romans 10:9 – “...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” A prayer of confession is to be audible. Let’s finish with the servant’s words –

⁴⁵ (con’t) **And I said to her, ‘Please let me drink.’**

⁴⁶ **And she made haste and let her pitcher down from her *shoulder*, and said, ‘Drink, and I will give your camels a drink also.’ So I drank, and she gave the camels a drink also.**

⁴⁷ **Then I asked her, and said, ‘Whose daughter *are* you?’ And she said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor’s son, whom Milcah bore to him.’ So I put the nose ring on her nose and the bracelets on her wrists.**

⁴⁸ **And I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD God of my master Abraham, who had led me in the way of truth to take the daughter of my master’s brother for his son.**

III. The Bride is Granted

⁴⁹ **Now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. And if not, tell me, that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.”**

This is a rather obvious plea – “I’ve told you the story and given you all the details, now please let me know your answer.” The servant has nothing further to add and so their response is all that stands between him and accomplishing his mission.

If they say “no,” then he will “turn to the right hand or to the left.” That is an idiom which means that he has other options and will pursue them. Abraham’s brother Nahor had seven other sons besides Bethuel and so he will search those families next if needed.

⁵⁰ Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, “The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you either bad or good.

In the Hebrew, the order of the words is, “then answered Laban and Bethuel.” The word for “answered” is singular. Because of this, we can see that Laban gave the answer for his father. The Jewish scribe Jarchi seems to have it right when he said that Laban was wicked and impudent, jumping in and speaking for his father.

He knew that if they didn’t agree that they wouldn’t receive anything from the servant in payment for her. And so he jumped in very quickly and responded – “Oh yes, we agree. Of course we do. This came from the Lord so how can we speak against it?”

By saying this, he’s putting anyone else who would think otherwise in a bad position. If this was from God and they didn’t agree, then they’d be fighting against God. This is what Laban is implying and he’s doing it to get wealthy off his sister. Does anyone see TV evangelists written all over this?

⁵¹ Here *is* Rebekah before you; take *her* and go, and let her be your master’s son’s wife, as the LORD has spoken.”

The bride is granted. The offer is accepted. The son will have a bride. God has taken this lovely young woman and divinely orchestrated her life so that she would come into the direct line of Jesus Christ. And in the same way, God divinely orchestrates the lives of His people whom He knows will accept the work of Jesus.

Those who do will be a beautiful bride, adorned for her husband. We will become the Master’s Son’s bride, just as the Lord has spoken. What a beautiful story of what God does for each of us who are willing to follow Him by faith and without ever having seen our precious Lord.

⁵² And it came to pass, when Abraham’s servant heard their words, that he worshiped the LORD, *bowing himself* to the earth.

The servant prostrated himself to the earth in humble adoration and in great gratitude for the kind hand of the Lord upon his journey. In the same way, the Spirit of God surely rejoices over each person that He woos to the point where they call on Christ as Lord.

Surely along with Him, the Bible says that the angels in heaven also rejoice over that moment. Let us be ever grateful for the day that Christ called us and made us His own. And let us pray without ceasing for others to receive the wonderful gift of life.

If you've never known the joy of being called by God to be united to His Son, let me take just a moment and tell you how you can have that happen in your own life...

Closing Verse: *The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. ¹⁰ More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward. Psalm 19:9-11*

Next Week – Genesis 24:53-67 (The Son Receives His Bride)

The Bride is Granted

Now Rebekah had a brother, whose name was Laban,
And Laban ran out to the man by the well
So it came to pass, when he saw the nose ring,
And the bracelets on her wrists, he knew things were swell
And when he heard the words of Rebekah, his sister
Saying, "Thus the man spoke to me," that to the man he went
And there by the camels at the well stood the servant mister
He said, "Come in, O blessed of the LORD! Before the day is spent

Why do you stand outside? For I have prepared everything
Even a place for the camels, so let the dinner bell ring
Then the man came to the house and the camels he did unload
And provided straw and feed for them, the camels that he rode
And he brought water to wash his feet
And the feet of the men who were with him too
Food was set before him to eat
But he said, "I will not eat until I have told what I am here to do."

And he said, "Speak on." It was time to hear the account
So he said, "I am Abraham's servant, my words do not discount
The LORD has blessed my master greatly you will be told
And he has become great indeed

He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold
Also servants, camels, and donkeys, now let my words proceed
And Sarah though she was old bore to my master a son
And Abraham to him everything he has bestowed
And so let me recount to you all that has now been done
To bring me here and to whom the credit is owed

So he repeated the story of the sermon from last week
And certainly the families' rapt attention it did pique
When he finished his retelling of the account, he then said
If you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me
If not, I will turn to the right hand or to the left instead
I'm on a mission for my master as you can plainly see
Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said
This is from the LORD; we cannot speak to you either bad or good
Here is Rebekah before you; take her and go that she may be wed
Let her be his wife; the LORD has spoken and we have understood

And it came to pass, when Abraham's servant heard their word
That bowing himself to the earth, he worshiped the LORD
This story shows us that God is in control
Of all the details which occur in our life
All of our joys and sorrows are written in His scroll
Every happy moment as well as each moment of strife
God attends to us in each and every way
And so we should return to Him our praise each and every day
Let us offer to Him our lives to direct and use for His glory
And let us remember to tell others of the gospel story
It is through Jesus that He reveals His very heart
And it is through His Spirit that He searches ours as well
And the Spirit does rejoice when the gospel we impart
Yes, He rejoices when to others the good news we do tell

So let us share this wonderful gospel story
And to God let us give praise and honor and glory

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 24:53-67 **(THE SON RECEIVES HIS BRIDE)**

Introduction: This is our fourth sermon on Genesis 24. The length of the chapter and the detail it contains is meant to show us the importance of the account in later redemptive history. God isn't just picking fun or beautiful stories to show us what the lives of people were like thousands of years ago.

Instead, He is selecting these stories to show us what He will later do in and through His Son Jesus for the people of the world. In the process of redeeming the world from the power of the devil, He is also securing a bride.

If we miss the significance of these stories, our understanding of His love for us and how He will accomplish His overall plans becomes obscure.

Text Verse: *For as a young man marries a virgin,
So shall your sons marry you;
And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
So shall your God rejoice over you. Isaiah 62:5*

God is working in and through time – time that He created, to secure for Himself a people who will live in His presence for all eternity; a bride for a Bridegroom. The story of the Bible is the story of pure and undefiled love.

This love will be realized some glorious day when we are presented to Jesus as a bride adorned in white and suitable for the King of the Universe and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Gifts to the Bride

We should look back at the actors and who they represent again. Abraham is a picture of God the Father, Isaac is a picture of God the Son, and the servant is a picture of the Holy Spirit. Rebekah then is a picture of the people of God; the bride of Christ. Understanding these pictures helps us to understand why God has placed this story in the Bible and to help us see what He is doing in the world as He prepares for eternity with a group of people who have been called out of the world in which we now live.

⁵³ Then the servant brought out jewelry of silver, jewelry of gold, and clothing, and gave *them* to Rebekah.

Last week, we saw that after the servant explained his mission and the journey he took in fulfilling it, the family of Rebekah agreed to allow her to become Isaac's wife. The agreement has been made and so the servant now brings out gifts for the bride.

The Hebrew word translated as "jewelry" actually means "instruments" or "vessels." They may have been things she would use and also things she would wear, but he adorns her with these precious things.

This is a picture of the gifts of the Holy Spirit which God gives to His people, the bride of Christ. This is noted in Ephesians 4:7 –

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. ⁸ Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.”

Throughout the New Testament, the gifts of the Spirit are seen in wisdom, insight, and ability. The vessels and the instruments of the Christian faith are meant to adorn us as the Bride of Christ in anticipation of the day when we meet Him. But there is more...

She is also given “clothing” by the servant. This is noted on numerous occasions in the New Testament, both from Jesus' own words as well as that of the apostles. In Revelation, we see the garments which will be bestowed upon us. – “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments,..." (v.5)

Later, in the same chapter of Revelation, Jesus explains this to us – “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed..." (v.18)

Rebekah has been accepted for the bridegroom as yet unseen and we can also be accepted by God and betrothed to Christ; a bride ready to meet her Bridegroom some wonderful day in the future. God leaves the choice up to us.

We can remain in the clothing we have now, soiled by sin and unfit for the King, or we can be given the pure garments of a bride, free from sin and ready for our wedding. Solomon tells us to live our lives now in that always-ready state –

Go, eat your bread with joy,
And drink your wine with a merry heart;
For God has already accepted your works.

⁸ Let your garments always be white,
And let your head lack no oil. Ecclesiastes 9:7, 8

⁵³ (con't) **He also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother.**

A dowry is paid to the family. Laban and the mother are both given precious gifts. The term used here is the word *migdanoth*. In Deuteronomy 33, it describes exquisite fruits and delicacies. In the Song of Solomon it indicates precious plants or flowers.

In general, it can mean any gifts, but they are of a kind which is inferior to those Rebekah was given. What this then is signifying is that God blesses people through the people of God indirectly. Throughout the ages, this is seen as clear as crystal.

The people of the world have benefited amazingly from Jewish and Christian scientists, scholars, writers, and theologians. Any country which has persecuted Jews or Christians has only cut itself off from the blessings of God's people because it is through us that the world receives the indirect benefits of our blessings.

⁵⁴ **And he and the men who were with him ate and drank and stayed all night.**

Only after securing the bride through agreement and dowry does the servant take his time to eat, drink, and rest. And the picture is no less understandable in the work of the Holy Spirit who is working continuously through the word and through the church to bring the people of the world to understand the message of Christ. But there is a time when that work will be finished...

⁵⁴(con't) **Then they arose in the morning, and he said, "Send me away to my master."**

At some point, the work of God's Spirit will be complete and it will be time for His presence to be removed from the world. That day is coming and that moment will be so sudden that people won't know it occurred. 2 Thessalonians 2 explains that time –

"For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains *will do so* until He^l is taken out of the way. ⁸ And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming."

⁵⁵ But her brother and her mother said, “Let the young woman stay with us *a few days*, at least ten; after that she may go.”

Both Laban and the mother respond here. Laban probably because he wanted a chance to make more off of the deal from the Abraham’s riches and the mother because she will miss Rebekah. Once again, we see a picture of the world at the time of the rapture.

Some will mourn over the loss of what the Christian world has offered and some will mourn over the loss of the Christians. Either way, when the moment of departure is over, it will be forever. Just as the family wants Rebekah to stay for a few days, the people who dithered will long for the church to remain as well. What is taken for granted now will seem more precious than anything else.

The Hebrew term they use for the time they want her to stay is *yammim oh asor* – days or ten. It is difficult to understand exactly what it means and that tell us that what they want is for her to stay an indeterminate amount of time.

And this is exactly the pattern the Bible gives us. Quite a few times, it uses the term “10 days” or “10 times” to simply mean a time of unknown duration. They want Rebekah to stay until they are ready to let her go, not as the servant wishes, but as they wish.

⁵⁶ And he said to them, “Do not hinder me, since the LORD has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master.”

The servant is uninterested in their request. The bride was granted, the dowry was paid, and the task is complete with the exception of the delivery of the bride. He asks that nothing hinder what has been so divinely orchestrated.

And I am sure the same will be coming at the rapture. The Spirit will hear the call of many who wanted one last chance. He will hear the voices of those who had sat on the sidelines and refused to make the commitment they should have made.

And it will certainly pain Him to depart with the sadness of those people. But God has granted everyone a chance to call on Jesus. No wonder Paul is so adamant about our obligation to respond to the Spirit’s call as He wrote these words in 2 Corinthians 6 –

“We then, *as workers together with Him* also plead with *you* not to receive the grace of God in vain. ² For He says: “In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in

the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now *is* the accepted time; behold, now *is* the day of salvation.”

II. The Called Out Bride

⁵⁷ So they said, “We will call the young woman and ask her personally.”

I believe that the mindset of the majority of commentaries on this verse have led us to the sorry state that we’re in today. This goes for everything from television sitcoms to Friday night sports outings. They say that this verse shows that parents should never arrange for a marriage without the consent of both parties.

This is shallow thinking, considering first that Rebekah’s parents have already agreed to the marriage and secondly, the question isn’t whether she will marry Isaac, but whether she will go now without time to prepare.

The custom of arranged marriages goes back to the very first man and woman on earth and it has been these marriages within these cultures that have been known to last. The children obeyed their parents and accepted that what they directed was correct. Love came through the union and through obedience, not the opposite.

Today, we place the priority on emotional love first and it has shown to fail, time and time again. And in the same mentality, it has ended with children who are disobedient to their parents and who dictate to them, not the other way around.

The Bible’s model of marriage is one of respect and obedience which is grounded in unconditional love, not an unknown quantity of love which *then* directs respect and obedience. As we continue to move away from the biblical model, we continue to suffer the results of our choices in failed marriages and broken families.

⁵⁸ Then they called Rebekah and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” And she said, “I will go.”

The question about Isaac isn’t even raised. The decision was already made and she knows it. The question is “Will you go with this man?” In other words, “You haven’t seen the man you’ve been betrothed to and if you go you won’t see us anymore either. Are you willing to go through with it in this manner?”

And her answer is one of faith – both in the providence of God and in the promises of a marriage to a man she has only heard about.

This verse is the call of the redeemed and their answer – “Is Jesus Lord? Yes, Jesus is Lord.” We haven’t seen Him and we only know about Him by what the Spirit has provided – the gospel. We are called by the Spirit, the offer is given by the Spirit, and we respond in consent to the Spirit. “I belong to Jesus and I will go.”

59 So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham’s servant and his men.

Rebekah is going on the most exciting journey of her life. She is off to meet the husband she has never seen. But as she departs, others go with her, some maids and her nurse. The nurse is Deborah, whose name we get from Genesis 35.

Deborah, although unnamed here, has a more important role than you may imagine. The term used to describe her as a nurse comes from the Hebrew verb *yanaq* which means to suckle. She was the one who raised and breast-fed Rebekah from her birth.

Her name means “Bee” and that doesn’t tell us much until we see a fuller picture. Her name comes from the word *dabar* meaning “word” and is where the phrase the “Word of God” comes from.

What God is telling us here, and you shouldn’t miss it because I say it to this church and to everyone I meet week after week, is that Rebekah, a picture of the church, went to meet her husband with the Bee – the Word of God, the Bible.

This is no stretch but is exactly what the Bible itself tells us. Honey was the only sweetener of the day and it is what brought the bland to tastiness, the mundane to joy, the depressed to life. And this is how the Bible is described in the psalms –

In the 19th psalm we see a taste of this when speaking of God’s word – “Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.”

We see it again in the 119th Psalm – “How sweet are Your words to my taste, *Sweeter* than honey to my mouth!” (103) And in both Ezekiel and Revelation, the prophets are told to eat the scroll of prophesy and it would be as sweet as honey in their mouths.

In other words, Deborah had raised Rebekah and went along with her in her new life. We are to know God through this revelation of Himself and we are to carry it with us always until we finally meet Him. The word of God is what tends to us, teaches us, and keeps us from going astray.

If you're relying on the Holy Spirit without the knowledge of the Word of God, you have faulty faith and theology. I honestly feel sorry for people who think all they need is for the Holy Spirit to fill them, but who don't read their Bible.

⁶⁰ And they blessed Rebekah and said to her: "Our sister, *may you become The mother of thousands of ten thousands; And may your descendants possess The gates of those who hate them.*"

This is the first blessing pronounced upon a woman in the Bible and it came to pass in its fullness, just as it was pronounced. "May you become thousands of ten thousands" is a way of saying a number beyond comprehension.

This was fulfilled literally in her two sons – Jacob and Esau who would become the Israelites and the Edomites. And of course it is fulfilled spiritually in the church – the spiritual descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

"May your descendants possess the gates of those who hate them" is asking that her descendants would overcome any and all of their enemies completely. This was fulfilled literally at the time of King Solomon after his father David has subdued all of their enemies.

But this is also fulfilled in Christ where the very gates of hell will not prevail over the forces of Christ and His church – "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18

The words of her family are a prophecy fulfilled in the pages of the Bible both in the world of physical reality and in the spiritual one as well – this is why this blessing is recorded for us to see.

⁶¹ Then Rebekah and her maids arose, and they rode on the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.

Up she goes to be a bride to a man she has never met. She is, as I've said, a picture of the church – the called out people of God. She is a virgin just as Paul describes how we are to be –

“...For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ.” 2 Corinthians 11:2

Paul isn't speaking here of literal virginity, but of our virgin spiritual state in the purity of the gospel. We are to never mix in heresies of any kind. There is one Jesus and one gospel message. God isn't confused and we aren't to be either.

In a fuller and more detailed description of our role and our duties, Paul writes these words to his brothers in Ephesus –

“²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶ that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. ³⁰ For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹ “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³² This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” Eph 5:25-32

III. The Bridegroom and the Bride

⁶² Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi, for he dwelt in the South.

Isaac is a picture of the Son of God. Here we have a picture of where He is now during the Church Age. Rebekah the bride is coming, but before they meet, Isaac came from the area of Beer Lahai Roi, the “Well of the One who lives and see me.”

Jesus is the Living one and He is in His eternal state watching His bride, walking among His churches, waiting for the moment when the Bride will be ready. The very fact that the Bible explains where Isaac is tells us that this is what we are to learn about Jesus now.

⁶³ And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels *were* coming.

We can only speculate on what Isaac was meditating about. The term is *lasuakh* and this is the only time in the Bible it's used. It appears to be an act of bending the body or the mind or even both.

It could be that one of the entourage went ahead of the caravan to tell him that they'd be arriving soon. But, whatever the reason, he was out in the field in the evening and he was in meditation – maybe thinking about the beautiful wife he was hoping for.

Jesus is waiting for a bride as well and although He already knows the future, we don't. How are you planning on presenting yourself before this great King? Right now is the only point in your life that matters. What you've done in the past is behind you and what lies ahead has no guarantees.

I would hope that deep in your heart, you would commit your "right now" to becoming the most beautiful part of Christ's wedding ceremony apart from Christ Himself.

⁶⁴ Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel;

This is the seventh time the term "lift eyes" has been used so far in the Bible and I've never taken time to explain it. It is an idiom which means to look up or to look out intently. Normally, it doesn't just mean to look physically, but to see something extra with your spiritual eyes as well.

In the previous verse, Isaac lifted his eyes in anticipation of the arrival of his bride. Now Rebekah lifts hers in the anticipation of seeing her bridegroom for the first time. This is a picture of the moment when God favors fallen man.

Throughout our lives, we walk in darkness, groping from one meaningless experience to another. But there is a time when the Lord lifts His eyes and they alight upon us. At that moment, He sees us in a way that didn't exist a moment before. He sees us pure and spotless, without the sin of the past.

And at that same moment we have clarity of vision that didn't exist even a moment before. We have, in full view, the fulfillment of the longing of our heart... we have Jesus.

There will never be a second moment like this and though we were once blind, we now can see. Darkness is traded for light, vanity is traded for purpose.

When Rebekah saw Isaac, she dismounted from her camel. The word means to fall. She jumped off in anticipation. When the call is given for us to see Jesus, I will be jumping up so that I have a head start on all of you.

Isaac and Rebekah have seen each other. Right now we're united to Christ in a form of sight that doesn't need real eyes to be joyful, but just think about the moment when our physical eyes join what our spiritual eyes see...

⁶⁵ for she had said to the servant, “Who is this man walking in the field to meet us?”

Rebekah here is the bride of the bridegroom. In a parallel pattern of the people of God, she loves this man she has never met. The love is unconditional and faithful, not emotional or erotic. Peter describes this love of the unseen Lord in his first letter –

In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see *Him*, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of *your* souls. 1 Peter 1:6-9

Isaac, on the other hand is our picture of Christ, he has never seen his bride, and yet he goes out to meet and receive her. This is coming, hopefully soon, and it will be the greatest moment in our lives. Paul describes it in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 –

¹⁶ For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

⁶⁵ (con't) The servant said, “It is my master.” So she took a veil and covered herself.

This is an important verse to understand the nature of the Godhead. Abraham's servant says of Isaac “It is my master.” In other words, because he is Abraham's, and Isaac is his son, he belongs to Isaac. In the Godhead, there is a hierarchy, but not subordination.

Each member of the Godhead is fully God and is co-equal. However, there is a distinct order to the roles of each member of the Trinity.

Throughout the Bible we see statements which those who are confused about the Trinity misuse, even to the point of heresy. Jesus said that the Father is greater than Him, but that isn't meant in the sense of more importance, but rather of logical order.

Abraham is greater than Isaac because he is logically prior to him, not because he is more human than he is. In the family, Abraham is greater than his son. The servant carries the message of the father and son just as the Holy Spirit does. It's important to know these things and the Bible gives us clues of them as we read it.

Anyway, as soon as she learns that it is Isaac, she covers herself with a veil. This is the first of only 3 times this word is used in the Bible, all in Genesis. The word is *ha'satif*. From the context of the three accounts, we can be certain this is a correct translation.

What I think this veil is telling us is that there is a time between the rapture and the wedding ceremony where we will be veiled to Christ. In other words, we will be taken at the rapture, but before He actually views us in our spotless state, we will be purged of our past lives and made ready as a suitable bride. This is called the judgment seat of Christ and is seen in 2 Corinthians 5:9, 10 –

Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Once we are purged of our old selves and have received our eternal and glorified body based on what we have done with our lives, we will then be ready to have the veil removed once and for all.

⁶⁶ And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done.

A full and detailed accounting of what has occurred and will occur has been given to us by the Holy Spirit, through Jesus. It is called the Holy Bible. Just as this servant is faithful to recount his mission to His Master, we have been blessed through the Lord to be given this unmatched treasure.

But how many of us let it sit gathering dust when it holds the precious words of God's love for each of us? Are we being faithful servants of the Lord as He directs in that word? Let me give you seven things to note about this servant that hopefully you will consider in your own Christian life –

- 1) He didn't go without being sent. We go at His direction, not ours.
- 2) He went where he was sent. We go to where the Lord wants us, not where we want to go.
- 3) He did only what he was directed, nothing else. In the same way, we obey the Bible and add nothing to it.
- 4) The servant both prayed and watched for opportunities. We cannot commune with God outside of Bible reading and prayer and once we've done these each day, we look for opportunities based on that.
- 5) He took advantage of the opportunity that God opened to him. We need to not only pray for and look for opportunities, but to grasp them when they come.
- 6) The servant spoke nothing except what he was directed and he spoke of the greatness and riches of his master, not himself. We need to not add to what God has revealed to us out of our own heads and we need to make sure that our words glorify God – His wisdom, His riches, and His greatness – not ours.
- 7) The servant presented the exact truth of the matter and expected a clear decision from his hearers.

We need to present exactly what God presents and explain very precisely that heaven isn't a place with many paths leading to it. It requires a clear decision for Christ and nothing else will satisfy God.

⁶⁷ Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her.

There is a time coming when we will be brought into the presence of Christ. It will happen so suddenly that no change in decision will be possible. Rebekah responded immediately and without uncertainty and this is what the Lord expects from us. When the decision is made, it is done – we belong to our Lord.

And just like Rebekah, He has a tent prepared for us. The splendid words of fulfillment come from the 21st chapter of Revelation –

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself

will be with them *and be* their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Revelation 21:3-4

The tent of God is with men – we will love Him and He will love us, for all eternity we will rejoice in each other and hail the great Lamb of God who has done all things for His people. But there is a second half to this verse...

⁶⁷ (con't) **So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.**

The death of the Isaac's mother is noted for two reasons. The first is that the bride will comfort the Son in his loss. The second is that there was loss. There is a bride for a husband and husband for a bride, but there are those who won't be in this grand wedding.

The Lord who died for all people will be grieved in his heart at those who never came into His tent, precious souls that He reached out to and who were unwilling to reach back and escape the pit of death which swallows men's souls. Let me explain how you can be a part of the former and escape from the latter...

Closing Verse: *And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. Revelation 22:17*

Next Week – Isaiah 7:14 (The Christmas Story)

The Bride and the Bridegroom

The servant brought out jewelry for Rebekah
Silver, gold, and clothing to adorn her beauty
He also gave things to her brother and mother
The servant fully accomplished his assigned duty
And he and the men who were with him ate
And they drank and they stayed all night
Then they arose in the morning, the dawn was just great
And he said, "Send me away to my master, alright?"

But her brother and her mother said
Let the young woman stay with us a few days

At least ten and then she may go ahead
Let us upon her tender beauty for a while gaze
And he said, "Don't hinder me please
Since the Lord has prospered my way
Send me off, to my master give me release
It is not right that I dally the time away

So they said, "We will call the young woman
To ask her about this personally
Then they called Rebekah before the man
And asked if she would go along willingly
And she said "I will go"
It is the right thing, this I know.
So they sent away Rebekah along with her nurse
And Abraham's servant and his men went too
And they gave her a blessing, not a curse
A blessing fulfilled in me and in you

May you become thousands and ten thousands our sister
And may your descendants possess their enemies' gate
And she arose and followed the servant mister
Who took Rebekah and departed on this journey so great

Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Ro-ee
For he dwelt at that time in the south
He went out to meditate in the field at evening, you see
Praying to the Lord with his heart and his mouth
And he lifted his eyes and lo he looked
And there he saw, yes camels were coming
Then Rebekah lifted her eyes and her heart was cooked
She saw Isaac and jumped from the camel, her legs were numbing

For she had said who is this man walking in the field
Coming to meet us, to him shall my heart yield?
The servant said, "It is my master that you see
So she took a veil and covered herself in modesty
And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done
Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent
He took Rebekah and they were united as one

He loved her and was comforted after his mother's heavenly ascent

What a glorious picture of Christ and His bride
The church that will ever be at His side
What a wonderful story of hope and of love
And the greatness of our God in the heavens above
Holy, splendid, and awesome Lord
How wonderful it will be to finally meet
Until then we have a gift, Your precious word
And its pages are like the honey, so sweet

Thank You for the love of our Lord Jesus
Who has done all these wonderful things for us

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 25:1-18 **(THE MAN OF FAITH)**

Introduction: Today's passage brings us to the end of the life of the great man of faith, Abraham. His life shows the unfolding process of any believer who is drawn to God. A believer hears the call and eventually comes to the decisive moment where he places his faith and trust in Him alone for salvation.

It is this act by which a person is declared righteous and is justified before God. Nothing else will do. After this call and answer comes the process of sanctification where we walk with God and grow in the knowledge of Him and become molded into His image.

We walk and fellowship with Him through prayer, reading the Bible, and communing with other believers. This is the life of Abraham in a nutshell and it is the life we are called to as well. In this great man's life, we saw the following pattern –

In chapter 12, he was called out by God. In Chapter 15, he placed his faith in God's promise and was declared righteous. After this, he walked in faith each step of the way until his faith was tested to the highest measure in Chapter 22 when he was asked to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mount Moriah.

In chapter 23, we saw Abraham's sorrow at the loss of his princess and bride Sarah, but even that mournful account showed us his great faith. In the last chapter, he sent for a bride for his son and then he lived out his years full and content as we'll see today.

Abraham has been a picture of Christ, a picture of God the Father, and a picture of the faithful soul God searches for. Let us carry with us the many lessons we've learned as God has displayed the life of this man in the pages of His word.

Text Verse: "Listen to Me, you who follow after righteousness,

You who seek the LORD:

Look to the rock *from which* you were hewn,

And to the hole of the pit *from which* you were dug.

² Look to Abraham your father,

And to Sarah *who* bore you;

For I called him alone,

And blessed him and increased him." Isaiah 51:1, 2

Abraham is called the rock from which belief is hewn and the faith of Abraham is what digs us from the pit we were born in. Because of such faith, God blessed Abraham and increased him and He will do the same for us as we live in faith just as this great man of faith did, and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Life Goes On

From the time that Sarah died until the time that Abraham died is a period of 38 years. From time of our last Genesis sermon where Isaac received Rebekah as his wife, which was 3 years after Sarah's death, it is a period of 35 years.

During that time, we'll see today that Abraham had another wife and concubines as well. For us, like Abraham, life goes on after tragedy and loss. Abraham made the most of his time and had lots of children as these years went by.

One of the important things that we should learn from today's verses though is the scant amount of information that we receive about these 35 years. God only includes details that are necessary for us to know what He is doing in and through history as we have seen so many times already.

In the coming four verses, we will see Abraham's line continue through another wife that he will take. In all there will be six sons, seven grandsons, and three great-grandsons of Abraham mentioned, making sixteen in all.

¹ Abraham again took a wife, and her name *was* Keturah.

If you can mentally follow the progression of what's happened, Sarah dies and only afterwards Abraham finds a wife for his son. Because Sarah is dead, Rebekah moves into Sarah's tent. Now, after that has occurred, Abraham is noted as having another wife.

The wife of the son of promise, Rebekah, receives the tent of the mother, not a second wife or concubine of the father. This follows the Bible's concept of what we call "dispensationalism." God works through dispensations, of which there are seven –

1. Man innocent.
2. Man under conscience.
3. Man in authority over the earth.
4. Man under promise.

5. Man under law.
6. Man under grace.
7. Man under the personal reign of Christ.

Other things are going on in the world around us, but there is an overall pattern to what God is doing. The same is true with how the Bible presents the sequence of the life of Abraham and now as it moves into the life of Isaac.

Abraham's wife is named Keturah. This name means "incense." As we'll see in a few verses, Abraham has other concubines, and children through them as well, but only Keturah is mentioned. In all honesty, I couldn't find any reason why she alone is mentioned along with her children, but the name "incense" may explain it.

² And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah.

³ Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim.

Keturah had six sons by Abraham and in turn the sons of one of her sons are listed and then one of those sons has his sons listed. The name Keturah or "incense" may be given because as incense flows out and eventually disappears into the world, it seems that most of these groups of people did as well.

However, two of her sons, Medan and Midian, will later play a role in the purchase and transfer of Joseph when his brothers sell him to the Egyptians. And Midian will also be the people who Moses escapes to when he flees from Egypt.

After the time of Joseph, the line of Medan isn't mentioned again, but the line and name of Midian will be noted many, many more times throughout the Old Testament and even once in Acts. Almost always, these people, the Midianites, will be in strife with the people of Israel, but there is one notable exception.

The people of Midian are where Moses' wife Zipporah will come from. Her father, Reuel (also known as Jethro) who was the priest of Midian, became an instrumental figure just prior to and after the Exodus and it is from him that a notable size of the basis for our American government comes from.

When Moses was in the wilderness, he was the sole judge of the people. When his father-in-law saw this, he gave Moses advice which was accepted for the people of Israel and which eventually became a foundation of our society until not too long ago –

¹⁷ So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do *is* not good. ¹⁸ Both you and these people who *are* with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing *is* too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. ¹⁹ Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. ²⁰ And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. ²¹ Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. ²² And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be *that* every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear *the burden* with you. ²³ If you do this thing, and God *so* commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace." Exodus 18:17-23

So the wisdom of Jethro, which was carried on even in the establishment of our nation, can be traced right back to the verse we're looking at in the sons of Keturah the wife of Abraham.

Surely her name – "incense" – has proven true. From her the line and wisdom of Abraham has wafted around the world in a fragrant display.

⁴ And the sons of Midian were Ephah, Epher, Hanoch, Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah.

Of all of these names of the sons of Midian, only one – Ephah – is mentioned again outside of the book of Chronicles. He along with his father Midian is mentioned in Isaiah 60 in a prophecy about the future blessings of the Land of Zion –

The multitude of camels shall cover your *land*,
The dromedaries of Midian and Ephah;
All those from Sheba shall come;
They shall bring gold and incense,
And they shall proclaim the praises of the LORD. (v. 6)

Even if we have forgotten who these people are or where they've settled in the world, the Lord hasn't. Someday all of these lines will be known and we will be able to look back on the verses from Genesis and see how God wove it all together in His grand plan.

Now that we've looked at this entire group of people who came from Abraham, I will note that I went through every name and every line of each name mentioned here and I couldn't find a single person who is included in the line of Jesus.

This is similar to what we saw about Ishmael in a previous sermon and as I'll note again later today. It seems that the line of Keturah, other than leading to the family of Moses' wife, is a troubling line of people who have been at war with Israel throughout the ages.

⁵ And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac.

Isaac is the son of promise and the inheritor of all that Abraham has. This was already noted in the previous chapter by the servant of Abraham who went to Mesopotamia to get a wife for Isaac. When he was there, he said this to the family of Rebekah –

³⁴So he said, "I *am* Abraham's servant. ³⁵The LORD has blessed my master greatly, and he has become great; and He has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, male and female servants, and camels and donkeys. ³⁶And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and to him he has given all that he has. -Genesis 24:34-36

Imagine how Ishmael and these other sons of Abraham felt about this. This very well may be a part of the reason for their hatred of Israel even today. Stories get passed down as do bad feelings. And along with the physical blessings, it cannot be missed that Isaac's line, the people of Israel, have also been blessed in other ways.

They have been far more educated and prosperous in both mental and spiritual understanding. Of course, with these blessings comes even more material wealth and of course, more animosity and more jealousy. There is a way around this which far too few are willing to take.

Instead of being angry at the blessings of the Jewish people, the world can join in their blessings and thus be blessed. But the exceptional person will do this and there are very few exceptional people in the world.

The Bible notes a few, like Ruth. And there are some in the church too, but for the most part the people would rather hate and take than bless in order to be blessed.

⁶ But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.

The same groups who were excused from the inheritance were also excused from the home, but he did give them gifts while they lived at home. This may include Ishmael who was sent away a long time ago, and it included the sons of any other concubines.

However, when they were old enough to be given the boot, he sent them eastward, away from Isaac. This means that he probably had them leave before they got married or had children and so all of the grandsons, and great-grandsons mentioned above were born after the sons of Abraham had already been sent away.

It is Isaac who would receive the inheritance and his descendants through Jacob would continue toward the Messiah. The rest were sent east, which in the context of the Bible is a place of false worship, exile, and which almost exclusively lacks the true God.

If you can see it, Isaac is a picture of Jesus, who is the inheritor of all of things from God the Father. The amazing thing for each of us is that again and again the New Testament says that when we receive Jesus, we join in that inheritance. In fact, in Revelation 21:7, Jesus says that those who overcome will inherit all things.

II. The Man of Faith

⁷ This is the sum of the years of Abraham's life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years.

Abraham was first noted in Genesis 11 and he was the main focus of the biblical narrative until the end of Genesis 23 where Isaac began to take the lead role. His time of life in the land of Canaan has been 100 years and this is now the year 2184AM.

The life of Abraham is singularly noted as the epitome of a person who lives by faith and he will continue to be noted in this way throughout the rest of the Bible.

But the narrative of his life comes to an end in these few verses. He died at 175 years of age. His grandfather died at 148, his father at 205, Isaac will be 180, and Jacob will be 147. So this is the general lifespan of people at this time. Now he dies and he awaits his final reward with the redeemed of the ages.

To put Abraham's death into proper perspective, we should note that Isaac is now 75, Ishmael is now 89, and Abraham's grandchildren, the twins Jacob and Esau who haven't been mentioned yet are 15 years old.

And as something for us to think about, this verse actually uses the term, "the days of the years of Abraham." The great scholar Adam Clarke beautifully states what we should take to heart –

"There is a beauty in this expression which is not sufficiently regarded. Good men do not live by centuries, though many such have lived several hundred years, nor do they count their lives even by years, but by days, living as if they were the creatures only of A Day; having no more time than they can with any propriety call their own, and living that day in reference to eternity."

Moses sums up this thought in the 90th Psalm –

So teach *us* to number our days,
That we may gain a heart of wisdom. (12)

⁸Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.

This verse is the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham from Genesis 15 –

Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. (15)

He attained the years God had determined and was gathered to his people. This verse, along with many other Bible references, implies that he didn't cease to exist but his soul has continued on in another sphere. He and those with him are in a world of consciousness, but without an actual body.

In one example from Jesus' mouth, we read this from Luke 16:19-23 –

¹⁹ "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. ²⁰ But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, ²¹ desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom.

The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

If you read the KJV, this verse, rather than saying “breathed his last” says “gave up the ghost.” This really isn’t accurate if you think it through. Abraham had no power to keep or give up his ghost. That is God’s prerogative, not ours.

There is only one who truly gave up the Ghost and that is Jesus when He died on the cross. The terminology used in the original languages will bear this out. Jesus even states this in John 10, which is another of countless verses which point to His deity –

“Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.” (vs 17-18)

Abraham had no such power. He breathed his last, not “gave up the ghost.”

⁹ And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, ¹⁰ the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth. There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife.

Isaac is noted first in this verse because he is the son of promise and the one who had authority over the household of Abraham. Ishmael is an invited family member to the burial of their father, the great man of faith, Abraham.

Unless you listened to the sermon on Genesis 23, the terminology in this verse won’t make much sense. But in short, Abraham is buried in the cave which Sarah was buried in. The names of the people point to death in this world, a world owned by Satan and which is the repository for the souls of the sons of Adam.

The purchase of this cave pictured the price Christ paid to redeem Adam’s seed and it is therefore a place which is now one of comfort for believers as they await the resurrection. Understanding this, the parable Jesus gave about Lazarus makes much more sense.

¹¹ And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac dwelt at Beer Lahai Roi.

The final verse of this particular section is given to show us that the blessings of God on Abraham have now been passed onto Isaac. What should be noted is that the term God, or Elohim, is used instead of Jehovah.

The work of Jehovah is described in the covenantal sense which follows the plan of salvation for the world. The blessing of God in this verse is referring to worldly blessings such as crops, herds, money, servants, etc.

This particular sort of blessing now rests upon Isaac, just as it did on Abraham. Isaac is dwelling by the well which was named when Hagar had fled from Sarah which we talked about in Genesis 16.

This area, centering on this well, is where the blessings of God first begin to come upon Isaac apart from Abraham.

III. The Generations of Ishmael

¹² Now this *is* the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's maidservant, bore to Abraham.

We now come to seven verses which are given as a branch from the main narrative of the Bible. This is now the seventh set of "generations" listed in the Bible. In order, they are –

- The generations of the heavens and the earth (2:4);
- the generations of Adam (5:1);
- the generations of Noah (6:9);
- the generations of the sons of Noah (10:1);
- the generations of Shem (11:10),
- and the generations of Terah (11:27).

In the sermon on Genesis 5, I talked about the spelling of the word *toledot* which is the Hebrew word for "generations." I'm not going to go into any great detail here, but I will mention that this word *toledot* can be spelled in a variety of ways based upon the structure of the sentence.

In this word *toledot*, there can be one or two letters called vav, which is the sixth letter of the Hebrew aleph-bet. Six is the number of man in the Bible. Before the fall, toledot is spelled with 2 vavs.

From after the fall, all the way up to the time when King David is introduced, the toledot is never again spelled with two vavs.

It's believed that the missing vavs indicate the fallen state of man. David is the final piece of the Messianic puzzle and so the second vav is reintroduced. Anyway, there are only three times out of the 30 between the fall and David that there is no vav at all.

This line of Ishmael is the first and I believe the reason is because there is no one from Ishmael's line who is recorded in the line of the Messiah. The book of Galatians shows us that Ishmael is a type, or picture, of the law.

The law cannot save anyone and therefore there is no hope if one is of the spiritual line of Ishmael – the bondage of the law. A person must move from Ishmael to Isaac, from the law to grace, from Adam to Christ or they cannot be saved.

As I said, there is only one other line of people where there is no vav in a genealogy from Genesis to Ruth and it is in the line of Levi – one of the 12 sons of Israel. All of the other sons have a genealogy listed and they all have a vav. Levi however is mentioned twice and both times the vav is missing.

Why would there be a vav in every other genealogy of all of Israel's sons except Levi? Because Levi is the administrator of the law! The Levites picture the law.

God is giving us amazing clues concerning the enormity of our decision to follow Christ and trust in Him alone, apart from works of the Law. One is separated from God and disqualified from the prize if they choose to participate in the mandates of the law in hopes of pleasing God.

Think of that when you are told you must observe a Saturday Sabbath, be circumcised, not eat pork, not get a tattoo, or any other thing which is found under the law but which is not mentioned in the proper context of the New Testament.

A second point to be made about the verse we're looking at is that this genealogy of Ishmael is given and it will be followed immediately by the genealogy of Isaac, though that will be in next week's sermon.

The custom of the Bible is to cite the lines of people who branch off from the Messiah before the Messianic line is given. This was true with the history of Cain before that of Seth, the history of Japheth & Ham before the history of Shem, the history of Haran & Nahor before that of Abram.

The pattern now continues with Isaac. This is a pattern known as the doctrine of divine election – God makes a divine choice. Isaac is the son of promise even though he is younger than Ishmael. The promise skips over Ishmael and goes to Isaac.

This pattern will continue throughout the Bible and it points to the work of Jesus, the second Adam, replacing the work of the first Adam as Paul notes in 1 Corinthians 15. In next week's sermon, we'll talk about election and predestination in detail.

**¹³ And these were the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; then Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam,
¹⁴ Mishma, Dumah, Massa,
¹⁵ Hadar, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.**

The line of Ishmael is given here to show the fulfillment of the promise God made to Abraham, about Ishmael, in Genesis 17:19-20 –

¹⁹ Then God said: "No, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his descendants after him. ²⁰ And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.

God promised, and now we see that God delivered. Only God could look into the future and see what would occur. By speaking to Abraham as He did, the word was binding and so now we see the fulfillment of what was promised.

¹⁶ These were the sons of Ishmael and these were their names, by their towns and their settlements, twelve princes according to their nations.

Two words are used to designate the dwelling places of Ishmael's descendants – towns and settlements. The first is *khats-re-hem* and would be places like living as tent dwellers in the wilderness. The second is *tivotam* and is translated castles or towers sometimes. This would be mountain tops, fortified caves, etc.

¹⁷ These were the years of the life of Ishmael: one hundred and thirty-seven years; and he breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people.

I have already mentioned that the only people in the generations or *toledot* from Adam to David without a vav were the generations of Ishmael and Levi. Interestingly, Ishmael and Levi, along with Levi's son Amram – the father of Moses the Lawgiver, all died at the same age of 137 – the only three in the Bible to die at this age.

It's too much of a coincidence. Ishmael, who pictures the law, and Levi and his son Amram, through whom came Moses and Aaron, all died at the same age. I think God is telling us quite clearly that the law cannot save and He is doing it through hints like these.

¹⁸ (They dwelt from Havilah as far as Shur, which is east of Egypt as you go toward Assyria.) He died in the presence of all his brethren.

This final verse about Ishmael is given to remind us of when God spoke to Hagar in chapter 16 where the same words are used –

He shall be a wild man;
His hand *shall be* against every man,
And every man's hand against him.
And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." (v. 12)

Once again, we see God's transcendence over time. He sees what will occur, tells us what will occur, and then He shows us what occurred in fulfillment of His word. These details aren't boring repetitions. They are exciting features of God's workings in history and for the sake of His chosen people.

The words used here, "he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren" have a multiple meaning and all apply beautifully to the sons of Ishmael. The phrase can mean he will live in the presence of, in the face of, or to the east of.

Fittingly, these descendants moved east of Israel, they are in the face of Israel, and they are in the midst of Israel – exactly as the Bible foresaw. Here we are 4000 years later and the Bible is still being validated in this line of people.

The spiritual lessons we are to learn from Abraham and Ishmael are that we can only find salvation and reconciliation with God through faith. The deeds of the law only

separate us further from God. They make us knowledgeable of our sinful state and the law is given then to direct us to the knowledge of our need for Jesus.

He alone fulfilled the law and now He offers to you His righteousness in exchange for your failures. Let me take a moment and explain Christ's work and what you can do to receive it...

Closing Verse: *Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:19,20*

Next Week - Genesis 25:19-24 – (Divine Election - The Older Shall Serve the Younger)

Living by Faith or Dying by the Law

Abraham again took a wife, and Keturah was her name
And she bore to him Zimran, Jokshan, and Medan,
Also Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah, from her these six boys came
And then her son Jokshan begot Sheba and Dedan.
And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, Letushim, and Leummim
And the sons of Midian are by name and number five
Ephah, Ephher, Hanoch, Abidah, and Eldaah it would seem
All these *were* the children of Keturah to keep her name alive

And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac
But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines too
And while he was living he sent them eastward with a backpack
Away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east, it's true
From the Bible the years of Abraham's life we can gauge
It was a total of one hundred and seventy-five years
Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age
And was gathered to his people, old and full, dying with no fears
And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave
Of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre in the field of Ephron
The son of Zohar the Hittite, which for silver he gave
The field he purchased from the sons of Heth after Sarah was gone

There Abraham was buried, and Sarah his wife

And it came to pass, after Abraham's death, you see
That God blessed his son Isaac in his life
And Isaac dwelt at the Well of the One Who Lives and Sees Me
Now this is the genealogy of Ishmael, Abraham's son
Whom the Egyptian, Sarah's maidservant to him bore
And these are the names of Ishmael's sons, each one
According to their generations, let's name the whole store
The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebajoth; then Kedar, and Adbeel
And Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, and Hadar
Also Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah all sons of Ishmael
These, their names, by their towns and settlements, near and far

Twelve princes according to their nations
These *were* the years of the life of Ishmael
One hundred and thirty-seven years in his generations
And he breathed his last and died, so sounds the funeral bell
He was gathered to his people when he died
They dwelt from Havilah as far as Shur
As you go toward Assyria by Egypt on the eastern side
In the presence of all his brethren his name does endure

Thus is the story of these Bible men
But the story continues on after them
Everything leading eventually to Jesus
Who would come and give His life for us
What a gift, what a treasure
That God has given in His word
He pours out blessings which are beyond measure
Because He is a great and awesome Lord

And so Lord help us to live aright
And bring glory to You in all we do
Help us to live by faith and not by sight
Help us to be faithful followers of You

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 25:19-23

(DIVINE ELECTION - THE OLDER SHALL SERVE THE YOUNGER)

Introduction: Before I started the Genesis series, I did a whole host of doctrine sermons. I preached on heaven, hell, the Holy Spirit, Christology, the rapture, the Trinity and so on. However, I didn't preach on Election or Predestination. Today's passage is used by Paul to explain this and so this is where we will go too.

Unfortunately, it's become common to reject doctrine in preaching and teaching and to just give life application sermons. In fact, it is now the standard in many churches. I was in a church here last year and the pastor, during his sermon, said that it wasn't even a good thing to argue doctrine because it divides the church.

I was stunned at this. The Bible is, first and foremost, a book of doctrine. Without properly understanding it, you end up with cults, neurotic people, and egotistical leaders. If one doesn't understand doctrine, then whatever the pastor says becomes, by default, the church doctrine.

Instead of the Bible, his word is what matters. If you don't think this is important, you will. When a family member or a friend commits suicide you will inevitably ask questions of a pastor. I know because I get at least three or four of these every year either by phone or email from people I don't even pastor.

Who will counsel you if you have marital troubles – the Bible or someone's opinion? If you're a Christian and you do something terribly wrong – suppose you kill someone – does the Bible say you will lose your salvation?

I have to tell you, today's topic, if misunderstood, will lead you to believe that maybe you have. Maybe you can't ever know if you're saved. Can you know? If you don't have doctrine, you have nothing. Calling on Jesus and getting saved isn't so important if He might "un-save" you.

Here is a statement which was placed on a post on Facebook recently. Can you tell where the error lies?

"If you seriously believe that Christ actually paid the penalty due for your sins, then there are only three possibly consistent conclusions: (1) Everyone for whom Christ died will be saved, but He did not die for every individual (Calvinism), (2) everyone for whom

Christ died will be saved, and He did die for every individual (Universalism), or (3) everyone for whom Christ died will not necessarily be saved, in which case the only possible conclusion is that Christ's sacrifice was imperfect; His atonement was not sufficient to save us.”

The problem is that it leaves out an obvious fourth option. This person didn't take the time to think his post through, or more probably, he ignored what is correct because it doesn't fit with his theology that says we don't have free will in salvation. Calvinism rejects that.

The answer – Christ paid the penalty for all sins potentially (unlimited atonement offered), but only those who receive His substitutionary atonement will actually have them forgiven (limited atonement actual). This is what the Bible teaches. That one must call on the Lord to be saved. Anyone can, but not everyone will.

Can you imagine a preacher saying that Christ didn't die for every individual? So much for Peter's words that the Lord isn't willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

As tedious as the second portion of our sermon might seem, I'd ask you to pay heed to what God has in His word concerning two children who fight in their mother's womb which leads to God revealing their destinies before they are even born.

Text Verse: *What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. Romans 9:14-16*

Too often we forget that God is sovereign over creation. When we forget, we tend to blame Him for evil that occurs and we call Him unfair in how He deals with us. But just as the pot has no right to accuse the potter, we have no right to accuse our Creator. He is God and we are man and so... May God speak to us through His name today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Generations of Isaac

¹⁹ **This is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son.**

We now come to the eighth set of “generations” listed in the Bible. Last week we saw those of Ishmael which was a branch off the main line leading to Jesus. This genealogy of Isaac returns to the main line. So far we have seen the following generations listed –

The generations of the heavens and the earth (2:4); the generations of Adam (5:1); the generations of Noah (6:9); the generations of the sons of Noah (10:1); the generations of Shem (11:10); the generations of Terah (11:27); the generations of Ishmael (25:12)

According to the layout and structure of Genesis, this genealogy will commence with the birth of his sons. However, in order for us to see the sovereignty of God we’re given a recap of how and when he obtained his wife, Rebekah. After this we’ll see some insights of what happens before the children are born.

The coming verses show us that God is completely in charge of everything that happens. Just as He orchestrated the union of Isaac and Rebekah, He will choose when and how their children will be born and He will show us again, the doctrine of Divine Election.

¹⁹ (con’t) **Abraham begot Isaac.**

These words are given to confirm Isaac is the legitimate and chosen son of promise. One thing I’d like you to think about concerning these two men is how their lives resemble the figures they represent – God the Father and God the Son.

Abraham is the man of faith who forged his way into the unknown, heading to the Promised Land, conquering enemies, and living in anticipation of the promised son. When the son came, he obtained a wife for him. In so many ways, he typifies God the Father.

However, Isaac consented to be sacrificed. He is a man of patience, obedience, and acquiescence. Abraham initiated, Isaac carried out; Abraham led, Isaac followed; Abraham commenced, Isaac continued. He pictures God the Son, ever obedient to the Father.

²⁰ **Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian.**

The year was 2149AM at the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah. This verse uses the term Syrian. Some translations will say Aramean. The location means either. The Hebrew term is Arami or Aramean, but the exact spot is Padan Aram which is located in Syria.

Padan means “plowed field” and so this is the flatlands of Syria. Interestingly, Syria is just as much in the news today as it was then. It is a land of turmoil, war, and death which we see on TV every night.

²¹ Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she *was* barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived.

Just like Sarah, who was barren for the much of her life and even for 30 years after entering the Land of Canaan, Rebekah is also barren. Her condition will last for 19 years.

Because of the inordinate amount of time without having a child, Isaac prayed to Jehovah, for Rebekah. For all we know, they could have started praying for a child after the first year. God works in His own timing and to meet His own purposes.

Eventually though the Lord granted the plea and Rebekah conceived. The long period between marriage and birth demonstrated to Isaac and Rebekah, as it does to us, that the conception wasn't merely a natural occurrence, but a gift of grace.

The structure of the Hebrew here is worthy of note. When it says “Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife” it uses the term *lenokhakh ishto*. Some scholars look at this as meaning that he prayed either in the presence of, or with, his wife.

No matter how he prayed, both Abraham and Isaac were molded through the exercise of faith and prayer before they were blessed with children. In today's world, we want everything right now and we become impatient with even small delays.

However, God continues to work in each of us in the way He worked through these heroes of faith. Some of you have family members who don't know the Lord and you are there praying. Some of you have family in jail, lost in alcoholism, or perhaps drugs. And God is pleased to allow your prayers to continue.

Eventually and according to His wisdom, a response will come. It may not always be what we want, but it will come. Let's see how Jesus instructs us from Luke 18 in times like this –

Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, ² saying: “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. ³ Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, ‘Get justice for me from my adversary.’ ⁴ And he would not for a while; but

afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man,⁵ yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'" ⁶ Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. ⁷ And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? Luke 18:1-7

²² But the children struggled together within her;

Children will fight as children do, but this is an unusual occurrence because they beat each other up in the womb. The Hebrew word is *yithrosatsu* and these two were really punching and bruising each other. Mom was worried about both their safety and hers as well.

²²(con't) and she said, "If *all is well, why am I like this?*" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

Mom's speech here is in the imperfect sense and so she is basically asking less about "why is this happening" than "if I have to go through all of this trouble, then why did I bother getting pregnant."

This apparently isn't uncommon to many moms the first time they get pregnant. And so off to the Lord she goes to find out what the deal is. From this verse, we can guess that there is, by now, a fixed way of inquiring of the Lord for the family of God.

It may have been to go to Abraham or a priest. Or it may have been to simply go to the Lord in prayer at a specific location. However it was done, Rebekah does, in fact, get an answer...

II. Divine Election and Predestination

²³ And the LORD said to her: "Two nations *are* in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; *One* people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."

The natural order of family life is once again reversed as has already happened several times in Genesis. The younger will be ahead of the older. And thus we again see the doctrine of Divine Election introduced into redemptive history.

This doctrine will find its ultimate fulfillment in the work of Jesus and which is so clearly explained by Paul in Romans. Before they were even born, God elected the older to serve the younger.

However this serving and subordination isn't limited to the children. Rather the verse says "two *nations* are in your womb." It is therefore speaking both of the immediate and the future. In this then is also a picture of the true people of God, the elect.

I dare not even attempt to tell how much is in this verse concerning the doctrines of the Bible, the foreknowledge of God, and the confusion that results from what is being said. Seminaries have entire courses on concepts which arise from what the Lord tells her now and also what later writers of the Bible say about it.

What is being stated has led to some of the most heated battles in church history. If you follow what Calvin taught, you can trace it here. If you follow what Wesley taught, you can come here. In the end, and of all of the countless arguments about theology, there is always one right answer. God is clear, but we misunderstand.

Malachi speaks of these two children at the time before the coming of the Lord in relation to the attitude of the people in Israel –

² "I have loved you," says the LORD. "Yet you say, 'In what way have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved; ³ But Esau I have hated, And laid waste his mountains and his heritage For the jackals of the wilderness." Malachi 1:2-3

Paul builds on the words to Rebekah and combines them with what Malachi said in Romans 9:10-13 –

¹⁰ And not only *this*, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, *even* by our father Isaac ¹¹ (for *the children* not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), ¹² it was said to her, "The older shall serve the younger." ¹³ As it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."

Based on this, we find the doctrines of election and predestination. Paul actually speaks of predestination in Romans 8:28-30. Let me read you what he says so you have the starting point for the rest of the sermon –

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

He says God foreknew certain things about the people of the world and based on that He predestined some of them to be conformed to the image of Jesus, just as He foreknew the destinies of the two children in Rebekah's womb.

What I am going to give you is a breakdown of four major views on predestination. I'm going to use some huge words but I don't want you to be worried, I'll do my best to explain what they mean, which is correct, and why. And I'll give simple concepts to help.

When a job came open at a Church of God in Sarasota, I told my friends who attended there that I couldn't be their preacher because they have faulty doctrine in that denomination. They asked "Why" and I told them the difference. Their answer –

"Well I believe what you believe." My question is, "Then why don't you leave that church? You're only getting bad doctrine." This is important. Should you be a Methodist, a Roman Catholic, a Baptist? Do you know what your church believes? Why not?

One thing is for sure, and it's found throughout the Bible and is summed up in Jonah 2:9, "Salvation is of the Lord." Within this thought is an entire debate about salvation, including election which stems from God's words to Rebekah. Because of this, we need to look at four of the major views which people hold about it.

In order they are supralapsarianism, infralapsarianism, sublapsarianism, and Wesleyanism. As I said, only one can be correct and that is the one I have always defended and will continue to defend, sublapsarianism.

Let me explain the wrong ones, who believes them, and why. The first is *Supralapsarianism* (supra - above). It says that election, or predestination, is logically prior to the decree to permit the fall. In other words, even before sin entered the picture, election was made for all people.

This view involves Hyper-Calvinists and is known as double-predestination. It is held by only a small, radical, and biblically unsound group of people. This view inevitably leads to judgmental egoists who feel God loves them and hates everyone else.

Because God predestined humanity *before* He permitted the fall of man, He therefore *elected* some for salvation and *elected* others for condemnation. He created them saved or condemned. That is their state and they have no choice in the matter. This means that God provides and applies salvation only for the elect; limited atonement
To explain, we'll use ducks in a river. God creates a pond and the ducks. He puts the ducks in the pond, but after the ducks enter the pond, there is a cataclysm and water starts draining from the pond into a river heading toward a waterfall. When the ones He created for salvation come along, He pulls them out of the water – whether they want it or not.

And the ones He created for condemnation... He actually pushes them down the river and into the waterfall before they can get out. This is a mean and angry God. But this is what some people believe. Double predestination means that God actually hates the non-elect, even though He created them.

With this doctrine, there is absolutely no reason to evangelize anyone. Why bother telling anyone about Jesus or sending out missionaries? God chose and that's that. It is as close to ascribing evil to God as one can come because it, in fact, does.

The second is *Infralapsarianism* (infra - below). This concept says that the decree of election is logically after the decree to permit the fall. This is held by strong Calvinists, but it is not double-predestination.

God created all and then permitted the fall. Since then, He has and will continue to elect some and will pass by others. He provides and applies salvation only for the elect (limited atonement.) He chooses who will be saved and they have no choice in the matter.

RC Sproul, if you know who he is, would be in this category. This view still holds to limited atonement like the first view. In both views, God loves only the elect *in terms of salvation*. A problem with this is that, God is love – He loves everyone equally. There is no increase or decrease in His love for us from His perspective.

Let's go back to the ducks to understand. God creates a quiet pond and the ducks. He puts the ducks in the pond, but after the ducks enter the pond, there is a cataclysm and

water starts draining from the pond into a river heading toward a waterfall. When the ones He decides should be saved pass by, He pulls them out of the water – whether they want it or not.

The others simply head down the river and are destroyed in the waterfall. At least He doesn't push them down the river, but He also doesn't bother helping any of them out. They were simply not a part of his plan. This isn't a hateful God, but He is rather uncaring about those He didn't elect. Poor ducks...

Like the first view, there's no reason why someone would bother telling about Jesus or sending out missionaries. They will dispute this, but it is the logical result of such a view. If God chooses us for salvation apart from our will then honestly, what is the point? Are God's plans going to be thwarted by us somehow?

Also, proponents of this view would say that if it was intended for all to be saved, then all would be saved – because God's sovereign intentions must come about. Therefore, if it wasn't *intended* for all to be saved, then it was only intended for some, the elect.

But this is a false dilemma. The atonement of Jesus is an **offering** and it is *intended* to save all, but it only applies salvation for those who believe. Calvinism, wrongly assumes that the atonement of Jesus has only one purpose which is to procure the elect's salvation – Jesus died so we can be saved.

In fact, Jesus' sacrifice according to Roman's 1 has another purpose – to reveal the righteousness of God in judgment. God sends His Son to die in your place and you turn Him down. Even without the cross we are condemned. How much more just is God in judgment because of it!

The result of the idea of limited atonement is that it denies that God really desires all people to be saved. This is contrary to His omni-benevolence and also to the Bible itself that "none should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

So you understand this view more clearly you need to consider the concept of free-will. Do we freely choose Christ, or does God choose us apart from our will. The two options are known as monergism and synergism.

Monergism teaches that regeneration is completely the result of God's work and man has no part or cooperation in it. It is salvation by irresistible grace leading to

regeneration and then to faith. In other words, a person is saved before they are saved. It is convoluted and it involves unclear thinking and a twisting of the Bible.

Also, this view actually usurps God. If you have no choice in your salvation, then how do you know you're saved? How can anyone make a claim that they're saved when they didn't have anything to do with their salvation? In other words, you are speaking *for God* by claiming salvation at all.

Of course, their answer is, "I believed after regeneration; therefore, I am saved." However, there are false gospels and people believe them. There are people who believe wrongly and yet claim they are saved. When they find out they're wrong, they change their belief (hopefully) in order to be saved. So when were they saved? When they believed correctly!

False gospels imply there is a true gospel and the spirit of the antichrist implies there is a true Spirit. Belief must precede regeneration. And it does. This is what the Bible teaches. Your faith brings salvation. Finally, monergism denies free will, but free will is necessary for love because forced love isn't love at all.

Synergism teaches that we freely choose Christ and then are regenerated to life. This is exactly what the Bible teaches numerous times, both by Jesus' words (e.g. John 3:16) as well as the apostolic writings (e.g. Ephesians 1:13, 14). An argument against this though is that the Bible says we are dead in our sins and that it is Jesus who restores us to life. The argument is, "How can a dead person choose life?"

RC Sproul says it this way – "You have as much power to awaken yourself from spiritual death as a corpse has the power to awaken himself from physical death."

This is a category mistake. We are *spiritually* dead in our sins. We are not dead beings. God made us with the ability to reason, to choose, and to decline. In fact, this is exactly what Genesis 3:22 implies. Mixing these categories leads to bad theology, such as monergism. Go back and watch my sermon on free will in Genesis 2.

The Bible teaches what we would call anthropological hylomorphism – we are a soul/body unity. The spirit of man is dead, but the spirit of man is tied to the soul. Paul, speaking to saved believers in 2 Corinthians 5, says the soul without a body is naked. The spirit of man is made alive when we call on Christ, even if the body later dies.

This is eternal life and it occurs the moment we believe. We don't become a soul/body/spirit unity. Rather it is our soul which is now spiritually alive. Adam's spirit died at the fall, faith in Christ regenerates that spirit. As I said, the spirit of antichrist which John speaks of confirms this.

The third wrong concept of our four major categories is Wesleyanism – named after John Wesley. This view says that God's election is based on His foreknowledge but not necessarily in accord with it. In other words, God's decrees are conditional - He changes His mind.

This is the beginning of major error and it goes back to a guy named Jacob Arminius who lived in the 1500s. His view denies eternal security. It reveals a God who is changing and makes mistakes.

John Wesley couldn't decide what was right and so he followed the teaching of Arminius after asking God for a sign and then throwing lots twice. But we don't get our theology from happenstance and chance. Instead we get it from the Bible.

John Wesley, the Methodists, the Church of God, Mennonites, and others who hold this view are wrong. Like the previous view, they believe that God created all and then permitted the fall. Then He provides salvation for *all people*.

God knows who the elect are based on the foreseen faith of those who believe. Because of this faith, He applies salvation only to believers, but believers *can lose* their salvation.

For a duck example, God creates the pond, the river, and the ducks. He puts all the ducks in the pond and they eventually go to the river which is heading toward a waterfall. As the ducks come by, He leaves His favorite perfect duck on the shore quacking for the ducks to come out...

"There's a waterfall ahead. If you don't come out, you'll get quacked up." Some of the ducks come out and some decide they like the river. Those that come out, however, can never know if they have upset the perfect duck and have to go back in the river.

There is never true safety and in fact, these ducks can't really tell the river from the shore. The poor ducks spend their entire life trying to please a group of lower ducks that the perfect duck left behind.

If the lower duck (a pastor), says they have been bad ducks, then off they go to the river again. Imagine being one of these poor, unsure, and ever-worried groups of ducks. Poor ducks...

Our final view is what is correct. First, it makes sense from a philosophic standpoint. Second, it makes sense from a moral standpoint. And third, it is the only view which is supported by the Bible. And it answers the question of why we fell in the first place.

It also answers where evil came from without ever ascribing it to God. I explain this in my Genesis 2 & 3 sermons. Without this view, one is forever searching for where evil came from. This is a question Dr. Sproul and others must and do ask. They can never find an answer to it because their theology leaves no room for it.

Their mistaken idea is that God created everything perfect and so if man fell, then God must have blown it by creating a being that could fall. This is particularly true because if intent to sin is evil (as Jesus clearly says), then Adam fell before the fall because he lusted after the fruit before he ate it. But they know God didn't create evil, so "Whence comes evil?"

The correct view is *sublapsarianism* (sub - under/after). God's order to provide salvation came before His order to elect the people of the world (Rev 13:8) – "I will send my Son to die, and then that all who call on Him will be saved." It provides *unlimited atonement* for everyone *potentially*, but only for God's people who choose Christ *actually*.

Like the previous two views, this view holds that God created all and then permitted the fall of man. He provides salvation for all people, but the elect of God are those who believe. God passes by those who do not believe based on their rejecting His offer of Jesus. It isn't that He doesn't care about them, it is that they don't care about Him.

This view *applies* salvation only to believers who cannot lose it. Yes, there is security, eternal security, in the arms of Christ. A theological basis for this view is that God is omni-benevolent. In other words, He loves all of the people of the world.

Yes Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.

There is no hatred of the person and no active passing by people. He offers to all and the elect respond. He desires all to repent and come to Him for His unmerited salvation and favor. This doesn't mean there is good in us, it means we *see the good in Him* and we come to it.

As far as our ducks are concerned, God creates the pond, the river, and the ducks. He puts all the ducks in the pond and they eventually end in the river which is heading toward a waterfall. As the ducks come by, He leaves His favorite perfect duck on the shore quacking for the ducks to come out and offering bread which will sustain them and guide them...

“There’s a waterfall ahead. If you don’t come out, you’ll get quacked up.” Some of the ducks come out and some decide they like the river. Those that do come out are protected by this perfect duck. If they stray, it is not to the river.

There is a force field that will never allow them to go toward that terrible place again. These imperfect ducks are saved from it despite themselves. God was pleased that they believed and though they may have forgotten it (2 Peter 1:9), He never did.

They are eternally secure in the fold of His perfect duck, and this is despite the crummy pastor ducks who come behind him.

The first two views hold to salvation only for the elect. The third view holds to salvation for *believers* but that they can lose it. The correct view holds to salvation for believers even though it is offered to all – and that when accepted it is a done deal, the salvation cannot be lost.

There is ample biblical support for both eternal salvation and salvation offered to all. Any verses which appear to contradict these views (such as John 6:44) are taken out of context by the theologically confused Christian.

I will give two examples for you to understand what I mean. John 6:44, is used against what I am saying – “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

The simplest refutation of this is John 12:32 which uses the exact same word for draw – “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself.” Therefore, the context of John 6:44 must be considered to understand what Jesus was saying.

We can’t just rip verses out of context to come to a conclusion in our theology. By referring to John 5, especially verses 40-44, the difficulty is explained in the opposition of their will, their free will. Their love of honor and praise of men prevented them from believing in Him.

It wasn't a lack of power to do what they should. It was erroneous opinions, pride, and obstinacy, mixed with contempt for Jesus. All of these are based on free will, not God's forced will. They were not drawn by the Father because they exercised their will in opposition to Jesus.

The second and maybe most often used verses used to deny our ability to choose come from Romans 3:11, 12 –

There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.”

Calvinists use these verses to say that no one seeks after God. Period. But Paul is quoting the Old Testament which is speaking of the atheist. As these were the only scriptures at the time, Paul expects that his audience would check the context.

Philosophically, the view I've supported today must be true. God doesn't think sequentially – either syllogistically or discursively. Instead, all His thoughts are immediate and intuitive. Despite this, He wills things to happen in certain temporal sequence.

In other words, there is no change in God and God is outside of time. He created time for our benefit and we are living in what He created. Everything within this bubble is already known to Him, even though it isn't known to us.

His sequence of events within creation include 1) His will to create before the fall. 2) The fall of man based on man's free will. 3) After the fall comes an offer of salvation. If, accepted, God 4) seals the believer with the Holy Spirit.

According to Ephesians 1:13, this happens upon “having believed” and therefore this must be an eternal decision. Salvation is “according to the good pleasure of His will” not independent of it as Wesleyanism teaches.

The error of Calvinism and the error of Wesleyanism both lie in a false understanding of the sequence of events pertaining to salvation, and that misunderstanding is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of man.

What God says to Rebekah about the two children in her womb is the key to explaining what Paul is telling us in Romans. It demonstrates that God doesn't predestine some to eternal happiness and/or some to eternal torture without regard to free will.

This is what the first two views state and is appalling in its ramifications. It demonstrates either a malicious or an uncaring God. Rather, there is a bestowing of opportunity for knowing and doing upon some men which is greater than others.

According to His own wisdom, without regard to our merits, he bestows upon us life, time, and place. Some have been created for noble purposes and some for ignoble purposes according to that placement. All who have the opportunity to hear the message are given the opportunity to respond to it.

In substantiation of this, all we need to do is look at the future of these people – the Israelites and the Edomites, who are named in both Malachi and Romans. After being subject to the Israelites, the Edomites were eventually assimilated into the Jewish society.

Then, this same group was cut off from God's favor when they rejected Jesus. That lasted for 2000 years, exactly as the Bible predicted would happen. However, the day has come when they were regathered and have been returned to their land.

The Bible, in both Testaments says that someday Israel will come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and that "all Israel shall be saved." This includes the Edomite people that were assimilated into Israel.

And even more than that, there are Jews who have accepted Christ since the first century and who continue to do so today. They are provided the same salvation and the same promises as anyone else that come from any line of the sons of Adam.

Were, this verse to have said, "Two babies are in your womb, and two children shall be separated from your body. One child will be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger" then people might have some type of argument for a different view.

But this verse doesn't say that. Instead it says, "Two nations are in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."

Every word of God is pure and every word is intended to lead us to a right understanding of who He is and what He desires for His creatures.

There is only one option concerning the ducks on the river – God is calling out to them and He allows them the choice of coming to its banks. Once they are there, he will never allow them to suffer the possibility of destruction again.

Concerning the sufficiency of atonement, we are saved by the grace of God and we continue in that salvation despite ourselves. Concerning the scope of atonement – limited or unlimited – the answer is unlimited atonement potential, limited atonement actual.

Jesus Christ died for all people and the entire Bible supports this. He tasted death for all, however, not all are saved. Only those who accept God's **gift** will receive it.

Closing Verse: *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16*

Next Week – Genesis 25:24-34 (Heaven's Riches for a Meal)

God's Grace, Our Choice

This is the genealogy of Isaac, Abraham's son
Abraham begot Isaac into the line of the Promised One

Isaac was forty years old when He took Rebekah as wife
The daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram
The sister of Laban the Syrian became his spouse for life
And so she became the daughter in law of Abraham

Now Isaac pleaded with the Lord for his wife
Because she was barren, and the Lord granted his plea
And Rebekah conceived bearing in her womb new life
But after a while in her womb there was difficulty

The children struggled together within her and she said
If all is well, why am I like this?
So she went to inquire of the Lord and there she pled
It's because she knew something was amiss

And the Lord said to her in a striking prophecy
Words that proved He is in control of all history

Two nations are in your womb as a mother
Two peoples shall be separated from your body
One people shall be stronger than the other
And the older shall serve the younger, you see.

And thus we have the doctrine of divine election
And we can see that God predestines all according to His will
In each person He understands their future selection
Of whether we will choose heaven, or if we choose hell

He allows us the choice and yet in advance He knows
What we will do about His Son Jesus
But once the choice is made, His child He hallows
And thus His grace is poured out on undeserving us

What a great and awesome Lord
Who came to save us from a certain pit of hell
And to understand His truth we have His word
And in it, of His grace and love and mercy it does tell

Thank You God for our Lord and Savior Jesus
Thank You for the saving grace He bestows on us

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 25:24-34 (HEAVEN'S RICHES FOR A MEAL)

Introduction: Last week, we looked at some details concerning the doctrines of election and predestination. Today, we'll see how the lives of these two babies fighting in the womb will prefigure Adam and Jesus as they grow up.

The question I want you to think about is this, "What good would all the things you have, or are looking forward to having, do for you if you were to die today?"

I didn't realize until I was almost done with preparing this sermon that I'd come an entirely wrong conclusion about what we should learn from the account. As usual, if we rely too heavily on other people's commentaries, we're bound to miss what we're actually supposed to know. Let's not make this mistake today!

Text Verse: *For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. ⁸ Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.*

-2 John 1:7, 8

There are deceivers and there are deceivers. Some people deceive to get ahead in life, some to hurt other's chances at doing so. But then there are those who go out to deceive the world by denying that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. What does this mean? That Jesus didn't live? No.

George Washington came in the flesh and nobody cares about that. He was a man who came from other men. This isn't speaking about someone actually existing, but rather it's speaking about the incarnation of Jesus Christ – the eternal God putting on flesh to replace the fallen deeds of Adam.

Jehovah's witnesses deny this, muslims deny this. In fact, denying the incarnation is so serious that John calls those who do so an antichrist. Jesus came for a specific purpose and to accomplish a specific task, a part of which is prefigured in today's verses and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Jacob and Esau

To understand the context of what we'll see, let me read you the pertinent verses from last week –

Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah as wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan Aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian. Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she *was* barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If *all is well, why am I like this?*" So she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her: "Two nations *are* in your womb, Two peoples shall be separated from your body; *One* people shall be stronger than the other, And the older shall serve the younger."

The foreknowledge of God has been relayed to Rebekah and His plans for the life of these boys and their posterity will come about just as He has spoken. History has borne out the prophecy.

²⁴ So when her days were fulfilled *for her* to give birth, indeed *there were* twins in her womb.

As we noted a moment ago from last week's account, Isaac pleaded with the Lord for Rebekah to have a child. In His grace, He didn't just bless her with one, but with two. God is abundantly good to us as He unfolds the future and reveals it in the present.

Rebekah's days were fulfilled and from conception to birth is 9 months or about 270 days – now the time has arrived. Here at the moment of delivery, mom is ready to meet her boys. For those of you who love the details, the word for "twins" here is the Hebrew word *thomim*.

If you listen closely, you'll hear the name of another noted biblical figure, the Apostle Thomas, the doubting one. *Thomim* or in its singular form *thaom* is directly translated to Thomas. He is noted in John 11:16 by his other Greek name as well –

Therefore Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him." (NASB)

The word Didymus means the same thing, two-fold or twin, or as we might say “ditto.” So now, when you meet someone named Thomas, you have all sorts of things you can tell him.

²⁵ And the first came out red. He was like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau.

Esau is born first and so, without going any further, we know from the prophecy that he and his line will serve the next to be born. When he came out, he was red. It isn't stated whether the red is from the blood of birth adhering to his hair or if his hair was naturally red, but Charlie's guess is the latter. His hair is red.

One ancient Jewish scholar sees in this red color that he would be a shedder of blood, fierce, and cruel. This is born out by his descendants later in the Bible and so it's a good supposition.

What's also noted about him is that he was born with so much hair on his body that he looked like a hairy garment all over. This is a genetic occurrence known as hypertrichosis. Because of this, they named him Esau. Esau means “made.”

What the parents were implying then is that in the womb he was made more like a man than a child because of his premature development. Because of the early development, his youth would be more passionate and precocious than others his age.

What it also means for his future is that he is more earthly than spiritual. This will become perfectly evident as we go on and the pattern of what Esau points to is fulfilled in the writings of Paul in the New Testament. The word describing him as “red” is used about only one other person in the Bible, the great King David –

And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he disdained him; for he was *only* a youth, **ruddy** and good-looking. 1 Samuel 17:42

David, like Esau was thought to be, was a man of blood.

²⁶ Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob.

The one who will be served comes out last and as an indication of their future, he is holding Esau's heel. Because of this, he was given the name of Ya'akov or Jacob. This

name has a few different meanings which are based on the idiom “takes hold by the heel.”

The idea is that in grabbing someone by the heel, you will trip him up. But there is also the idea of a deceiver, one who supplants, or one who follows closely behind. All of these fit his life and circumstances. But grabbing the heel, or “following after,” is the idea that we want to get here. It points to Jesus.

There is a meaning and a mystery in the name of Jacob which looks forward to much of his life, both as one who deceives and one who gets deceived. But because he follows after Esau, there is also a wonderful pattern Paul will explain to us later.

As you’ll see in the verses ahead, the account of these boys picture fallen Adam and the risen Christ. Jacob’s first act in life is remembered by the prophet Hosea many generations later –

He took his brother by the heel in the womb,
And in his strength he struggled with God. Hosea 12:3

²⁶ (con’t) **Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.**

Isaac was born in the year 2109AM and was married at the age of 40. Now 20 years later his children are born to them in the year 2169AM. Although Abraham’s death has already been recorded, he will be alive for 15 more years and is probably a happy grandpa.

²⁷ **So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents.**

In one verse, we’ve skipped over enough years to see the boys grown to where they are old enough to live and work alone. God only includes what is necessary to show us His thoughts and to lead us to Jesus. Here, in this first verse about their adulthood, God shows us two types or pictures in the two men.

The first picture is Esau. His name as I said means “made” just as Adam was *made* from the dust of the earth where a word similar to Esau’s name is used in Genesis 1:26, *asah*, when God said, “let Us make man in our image.” He was a complete man which is pictured by Esau in his exceptional birth – a developed man.

He is a hunter – one who obtains his living from the ground and he is a man of the ground. He is a picture of Adam who was taken from the ground and who was destined to obtain his sustenance from the ground that he came from. Esau can be summed up in the words from Genesis 3 which God spoke to Adam –

¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life. ¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. ¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, And to dust you shall return.” Genesis 3:17-19

As a hunter, he is like Nimrod and Ishmael who came before him. Both of them, along with him, picture fallen man fighting to live off the toil of the earth; they are all earthly and unspiritual.

Jacob, on the other hand is a picture of Christ. He is noted as a mild man. In 2 Corinthians 10:1, Jesus is termed gentle and meek by the Apostle Paul. But the word used for “mild” here is the word *tam*. This word means more than mild, but specifically “blameless” or “perfect.” Just a perfect description of the Lord he pictures.

Jacob is also noted as one dwelling in tents. Again we see Christ, first dwelling in the tabernacle among the children of Israel, later He dwelt in the Temple in Jerusalem, and finally He put on a tabernacle of flesh and dwelt among us as John records –

And the Word became flesh, and did tabernacle among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of an only begotten of a father, full of grace and truth. -John 1:14

The picture of Christ that Jacob makes as he dwelt in a tent is ultimately fulfilled in Revelation 21 –

“Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.” (vs. 3)

Unlike Esau who hunted wild animals, Jacob is a shepherd, once again picturing the Good Shepherd who came to guide His flock from earth to their heavenly home. Esau is destructive in game; Jacob is constructive in sheep. And thus we see Adam and Christ.

²⁸ And Isaac loved Esau because he ate *of his game*, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

The Hebrew literally says that Isaac loved Esau because of the venison in his mouth – very descriptive and showing his love for the meat as much as the boy. Rebekah, on the other hand loved Jacob, but no reason is given.

It could stem back to the prophecy that she was given before they were born, or it could simply be because Esau stunk like the dickens when he came home from hunting. We don't know, but please note it doesn't say either parent didn't love the other child.

They merely favored one over the other. Almost every commentator in the world seems to want to find fault with the parents here, but I don't see it that way. The Bible is simply commenting on the facts and very few are given.

The words of Malachi show us that if our thoughts about Isaac and Rebekah are negative, then our thoughts about the Lord's dealing with these two should be negative as well because the Lord deals much more harshly with Esau.

Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved; ³ But Esau I have hated, Malachi 1:2

In the end, opposites attract. Isaac wasn't an adventurer and Esau was. Rebekah made a great adventure, leaving her home and family to go to the land of promise, and Jacob is the type to stay home, read books, and watch TV. This is how it was and there is no need to point fingers and accuse. Just accept what is given.

II. Trading Heaven's Riches for a Bowl of Stew

²⁹ Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he *was weary*.

The words here for "cooked a stew" are *yazed nazid*, or boiled a boiling. Jacob was in the house cooking food. An ancient Jewish source connects this cooking with a time of mourning and states that it was most likely at the time of the death of Abraham.

If so, and this is completely speculation, then they would be 15 years old. As Jacob is cooking, Esau comes in wearily from the field. This once again aligns with the curse of Adam –

“Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat *of* it All the days of your life.” -Genesis 3:17

He’s been in the field toiling and he is hungry and tired. Esau is Adam in our unfolding story. And Jacob is Jesus, at home and cooking up the greatest meal in all of history.

³⁰ And Esau said to Jacob, “Please feed me with that same red stew, for I *am* weary.” Therefore his name was called Edom.

I do mission work every Saturday and one of the people I’ve gotten to know is called 39. For a while I didn’t know why he was called that. Eventually I found out that he played football at the same high school I went to and he was number 39. The name stuck.

Esau looks at the red stuff in the soup bowl and he very well may not have even known what it was because he simply says, “Please with *the red, the red.*” Or in Hebrew, *na min ha’adom ha’adom*. He’s hungry and tired and he simply wants to eat, but because of the description, he gets a nickname, Edom.

It very well could be that people already called him that because of his color, but now the name sticks because of his exclamation. And here we see him again as a picture of Adam. Adam was taken from the red clay of the earth and thus received his name.

And here we have Edom, which is the identical root for the name Adam. Both are red, both are earthly, and both are tied to *the red, the red* ground from which they came and from which their sustenance comes.

³¹ But Jacob said, “Sell me your birthright as of this day.”

Jacob intends to gain from what he knows is a quick-willed twin, and so he offers him *the red, the red* if he will sell his birthright. Under the Law of Moses, a birthright was a double portion of what the other children would get.

If there were six children, then the oldest would get 2/7th of the estate. This birthright is different than that. It included being the chief of the clan and receiving all authority and all title to the estate. Just as Isaac got everything from Abraham, this same birthright would then pass to Esau. Jacob wants this.

It also involved being in the family next to the parents, the parental blessing, the promises which would lead to the Messiah, and eventually to the inheritance of the promised land, as well as the right to the priestly functions of the family.

If you're able to see it, all of these things point to the position and status of Jesus. Jacob lets Edom know that if there was to be a meal, it would involve a transfer of these rights to Jacob.

Jacob is looking for an exchange – that which is earthly for that which is spiritual. Edom like Adam was willing to give up his spiritual inheritance for what is earthly and Jesus was willing to give up what was earthly for that which is heavenly. This is where Jacob first finds a fulfillment in his name – heel grabber.

He is looking to grab the position of the older by obtaining the birthright. And this refers back to the play on words concerning the soup. The word boil is *yazed* and comes from the word *zid* or *zed*, to boil in a literal sense. But just as we in English use boil to mean “rage,” the word in Hebrew means to “act proudly or presumptuously.”

Jacob is taking advantage of the situation which has presented itself to obtain the deed to the estate and all that goes along with it. Jesus will take advantage of another situation to obtain fallen man's title deed and all that goes along with it.

And so Jacob tells Esau to sell him the birthright this day. In other words, in the open and in complete and full terms. If that is agreed on, then Esau gets his soup. Does anyone see Jesus and the Lord's Supper here? Jesus has come to receive the promises of Adam. His red blood is the item of transfer.

If we, in Adam, want what His cup offers, we must give up any attempt at obtaining those things ourselves. We cede our right to Him to be our priest, to having claim on our estate, to all the promises of the Messiah and the rightful ownership of the Promised Land.

If we accept His offer – His blood – for us ceding our rights, the transfer is made. However, in our case, what we lose is gained in being granted *life*. This isn't stretching this at all, and the next verse confirms it...

³² **And Esau said, “Look, I *am* about to die; so what *is* this birthright to me?”**

Anokhi holekh lamut – “I am to die.” Esau was a real whiner about his stomach and the importance of having a meal – ask my wife,,, that’s me to a T.

I want you to not misunderstand me, there is a real occurrence which the Bible later condemns, and there is a spiritual occurrence that we need to note, as sons of Adam, and hold fast to.

In the real occurrence, Esau is giving up the treasures of heaven for a mere bowl of soup. The Bible will later call him a profane person because of this. To Esau, the prospect of his physical life was of more value than the spiritual things he would have received. In his thinking if he died, they wouldn’t have mattered anyway.

It could be that he truly was hungry and exhausted and his thought is “Well, if I die, Jacob will get the birthright anyhow.” But there is nothing to show that he was a step away from death except his own words and there is every reason to believe this isn’t really the case.

The birthright is as much a spiritual thing as it is an earthly blessing and so it would only be of value to someone with faith to understand it. If we were to look at a modern parallel, it would be education. If we are willing to look forward and understand the benefits of an education, then we will pursue it.

A better example might be someone who is willing to read and study their Bible. Unless you understand the spiritual aspect of the book and your necessity to grasp it, it means nothing to you.

It is the place where all of heaven’s treasures are revealed and yet we sell it off for TV or playing on the Wii. The most glorious heavenly treasure on earth is sold for soup.

The Geneva Bible says this about this verse – “The reprobate do not value God's benefits unless they feel them presently, and therefore they prefer present pleasures.”

What I want you to know though, and I don’t want you to miss it, is that the spiritual aspect of what we see here is exactly the opposite. *Anokhi holekh lamut* – “I am to die.”

We are all destined to die. We are all Esau, walking in and looking for soup. When we die, none of our treasures will matter. Like Esau figured, someone else will get them anyway. Solomon explains this in Ecclesiastes 2 –

Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. ¹⁹ And who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also *is* vanity. ²⁰ Therefore I turned my heart and despaired of all the labor in which I had toiled under the sun. ²¹ For there is a man whose labor *is* with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not labored for it. This also *is* vanity and a great evil. (vs 18-21)

The question we have to ask is, “Am I willing to give up *everything* for one meal?” If that meal *will* give us life, then isn’t the exchange worthwhile? And there is only one meal which will satisfy. You see, in this meal we move from Esau to Jacob; from the authority of Adam to the authority of Jesus.

Just as Edom became subservient to Jacob, we too, sons of Adam, must cede our rights and authority to Jesus in order to have life. Now, hopefully now, you can understand Jesus’ words to His disciples in John 6 about *the red, the red* meal we’re looking at –

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵ For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.” (vs 53-55)

³³ Then Jacob said, “Swear to me as of this day.” So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

The 16th Century bishop, satirist, and moralist Joseph Hall had this wise thought, “There was never any meat, except the forbidden fruit, so dear bought, as this broth of Jacob.”

For nothing more than a lunch which was as much water as it was lentils, all of Esau’s treasures were sworn away. And for the same soup Jacob inherited many glories in the years ahead. And each one of them, we need to remember, is still noted today. This wasn’t just a walk in life which ended when they did.

Instead it was an account which people around the world still read about 4000 years later. The question that should come up in our own minds is, “What will I most be remembered for?” Who knows, maybe our life’s mistakes or victories will be seen by everyone who comes after us as well.

And even if they're not, we still are living in God's sight and he knows the moral state we're in, even if others don't. Again, I'll turn to the Geneva Bible for their thoughts, "Thus the wicked prefer their worldly conveniences over God's spiritual graces: but the children of God do the opposite."

³⁴ And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised *his* birthright.

This is the first time bread is mentioned in the entire chapter. Esau gave up his birthright for bread and *the red, the red* that would keep him alive for a few more hours. We have been asked to give up our birthright for Bread and the Red that will give eternal life.

Without trying to sensationalize the life and lessons we should get from Esau, we need to at least note the attitude he presents. As I said, there is a physical aspect and a spiritual aspect to this story. And although the two are diametrically opposed in how we handle them, they come from the same account.

For the physical lesson, the author of Hebrews tells us the type of person that Esau really was. The morality he displayed becomes an example to each of us of how not to live, especially considering spiritual matters –

Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; ¹⁶ lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. ¹⁷ Hebrews 12

Paul writes in Philippians 3 about those who set their mind on the things of the world. What he says so closely resembles Esau, that it needs to be considered –

¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ¹⁸ For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹ whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is* their belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame— who set their mind on earthly things. (vs 17-19)

However, in the spiritual aspect of what we see in today's story, we actually do *have to be willing* to sell everything for a single meal – a spiritual meal. Continuing on in the

same passage from Philippians, Paul explains to us what we receive when we give up our rights to this world –

²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself. -Philippians 3:20-21

I said a while ago that being the firstborn granted the birthright. This would make one chief of the clan and they would receive all authority and all title to the estate. In today's passage, this authority was passed from Esau to Jacob.

This transfer is a picture of the transfer from Adam to Christ. As a son of Adam, we have a right to our own birthright this fallen world – it is our inheritance. Adam had the title to the Eden and gave it up for a bite of fruit. Edom did the same thing for a bowl of soup. Both meals were temporary and unsatisfying.

Jacob received the birthright through a vow sworn by Esau and it was irrevocable. Jesus now asks each of us to give up our inheritance here in the earthly realm under Adam and submit to His rule and authority. Jacob replaced the firstborn Esau. and Paul clearly explains that Jesus replaces the first man, Adam –

However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸ *As was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*.

The question for Adam's seed is, "Do we want to live an ungodly and profane life like Esau and give up heaven's riches for what is earthly and temporary, or do we want to sell our earthly riches for a spiritual meal which will grant us heaven and eternity."

Remember what the prophecy about these two stated –

And the LORD said to her:

"Two nations are in your womb,

Two peoples shall be separated from your body;

One people shall be stronger than the other,

And the older shall serve the younger." -Genesis 25:23

There are two people groups on earth right now. One is serving the older and one is serving the younger. I never fully grasped God's words through Malachi until I wrote this sermon. Remember when I read them earlier –

*Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved;
³ But Esau I have hated, -Malachi 1:2b*

The Bible says that we are children of wrath by nature. We are earthly and serving the first man, who is Adam, but we can become heavenly and serve the second, who is Christ. When we make that choice – all symbolized in the Lord's Supper, we go from being children of wrath, to adopted Son's of God and beloved.

Closing Verse: *"In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. 2 Corinthians 6:2 (see Gen 25:33) "Swear to me as of this day."*

Next Week: Genesis 26:1-14 (A Famine in the Land)

Heaven's Riches for a Meal (A Double Entendre)

When Rebekah's days were fulfilled to give birth
Indeed there were twins in her womb
The first came out red, like the clay of the earth
He was hairy as a garment, like mohair I presume

So they called his name Esau because like a man he was made
I wonder if those who saw him stood back and were dismayed?

After Esau his younger brother then came out
And his hand took hold of Esau's heel
So his name was Jacob because with no doubt
He was a heel grabber and supplanting was his deal

When Rebekah bore them, Isaac was sixty years of age
And his life was now turning a brand new page

So the boys grew and Esau was a skillful hunter
A man of the field was his type of life
But Jacob was a mild man and not a physical grunter

He dwelt in tents; instead of arrows he used a butter knife

And Isaac love Esau because he ate of his game
But Rebekah loved Jacob and the man he became

Now Jacob cooked a stew
And Esau came in weary from the field
And Esau said to Jacob, "I'm famished through and through
Please feed me some of that red stew before my life I yield

Therefore Edom was called his name
Both his color and the color of the soup were the same

But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day
And Esau said, "Look I'm about to die."
So what is this birthright to me, tell me I pray?
Then Jacob said, Swear as of this day between you and I

So he swore to him and to Jacob he sold his birthright
And Jacob gave Esau bread and some lentil stew
Then he ate and drank, arose, and went out of sight
Thus Esau despised his birthright, he told it "Adieu!"

Here we are pictured by these boys
And we have choices in this world to make
Will we pursue all the earthly toys?
Or will we give them up for heaven's sake?

We can sell our birthright for that which perishes
Or we can sell it for the thing that God most cherishes

If we sell it for a bowl of soup that Adam did make
Then it is a sad choice that we have made
But if we sell it for the heavenly cake
Then by God above it was a glorious trade

Eat of the bread and drink of the blood
Of the Lord Jesus provided freely to all
And when you do it shall be understood

That through this act Christ in you has reversed Adam's fall

Great and glorious, splendid God above
Let us shout out to You with praises and love

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 26:1-14 (A FAMINE IN THE LAND)

Introduction: Today we will see God directing things which will lead to the movement of Isaac and his company. I believe this move will set up a chain of events that look forward to things that will happen in the end times. And when I say the “end times,” I mean things that are beginning to happen in the world right now.

Many of these early Genesis stories are given to show us what will happen in the future as God moves through and guides redemptive history. Solomon’s words from Ecclesiastes assures us this is so –

That which **is** has already been, And what **is to be** has already been; And God requires an account of what is past. 3:15

God tells us that if we pay attention to the past, we can see where we are heading in the future. Great stuff...

Text Verse: *Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On those who hope in His mercy, To deliver their soul from death, And to keep them alive in famine.*

-Psalm 33:18, 19

Whether in feast or famine, the Lord is there for His people. In the end, even death can’t separate us from His goodness. The sure promises of the Bible will all be realized in those who love Him and are called by Him and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Promise of Abraham

The previous three sermons spoke of the death of Abraham, the conception and birth of Jacob and Esau, and the selling of the birthright by Esau. These things, according to Genesis 25:11 came about in the area of Beer-Lahai-Roi. This is where we start today.

¹ There was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham.

Once again, God is directing the course of human history and the story of Himself and what He is doing. And He is doing it by using nature. He directs a famine which will

direct the moves of Isaac, just as one directed Abraham many years earlier in Genesis 12–

“Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine *was* severe in the land.” (10)

This was about 100 years earlier and at the earliest stages of Abraham’s time in Canaan. What we should see here is that if the account notes that famine, then it is aware of what happened in the rest of Abraham’s life as well. And we will see the same things happening today that happened during the life of Abraham.

Because of this, we can note the similarities and the distinctions to understand why God has included the story for us. One distinction comes up immediately. In the famine at Abraham’s time, he moved to Egypt for relief. However, this famine moves Isaac from Beer Lahai Roi to Gerar as we see in the second half of verse 1 –

¹ (con’t) **And Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines, in Gerar.**

Abraham also moved to this area, and there are more similarities that we’ll note in the verses ahead. The main thing to keep asking ourselves is, “Why did God include this?” It’s not just a story, but a revelation of Himself and what He is doing in history.

On his journey south, Isaac went to the same land that Abraham lived in for many years. Abimelech is the king of the Philistines, but this probably isn’t the same Abimelech of Abraham’s time. The name might be like Pharaoh – a title for a leader.

Gerar means Lodging Place. It’s a place for a sojourner, and this is what Isaac is doing there now. Lodging and sojourning.

² **Then the LORD appeared to him and said: “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land of which I shall tell you.**

Just as the Lord appeared to Abraham, He now appears to Isaac. Whether he showed up visibly in human form or through a vision or dream isn’t mentioned, but it is the Lord, Jehovah. In other words, He is coming as the Protector of the covenant and the Director of the plan of Salvation.

This direction then is given to specifically fulfill His plans for humanity in the future and/or show us what will occur in the execution of that plan. Every detail of history is being guided towards His end goal.

Because He tells Isaac to not go down to Egypt it's telling us that's probably what he was planning on doing, just as Abraham had in the past. There is hardship in Canaan, but food in Egypt. But this time the Lord's plan doesn't include a trip to the land of Pharaoh.

³ Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you;

The Lord tells Isaac to "dwell in this land." This could be taken one of two ways. The first is that it means the Land of Canaan in general or the land of the Philistines where he is now. Either way, the result is the same. He says, "I will be with you and bless you."

Despite the famine, Isaac will not only survive, but he will be blessed. Isaac has no need to fear the difficult times where rain is lacking because the water he needs will be provided throughout the drought. We'll see this come about at the end of the sermon today and what lies ahead next week.

As the Geneva Bible says about this verse, "God's providence always watches to direct the ways of his children."

^{3 (con't)} for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.

The Lord made promises to Abraham in Genesis 12 when he was first told to move to Canaan, then again in Genesis 13 after he separated from his nephew Lot, then again in Genesis 15 when God made a covenant with him.

He does so again in Genesis 17 at the time of the rite of circumcision, and finally in Genesis 22 when he asked him to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah.

Out of all of these, the oath he's referring to is the one that came after the binding of Isaac on Mount Moriah. At that time, and in the hearing of Isaac, we read this –

"Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, ¹⁶ and said: 'By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— ¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as

the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. ¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” -Genesis 22:15-18

This is the oath being referred to and which will be repeated again and again in the pages of the Bible as God reminds us of the coming fulfillment of the promise. Never again will God swear by Himself in this manner and so He reminds His people of the vow that He made once for all time as we see in the next verse...

⁴ And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;

Until I studied the Hebrew for this verse, I always believed in a double fulfillment of it – one in the people of Israel and one in the work of Jesus. The reason is that the promise seems to have been fulfilled prior to Nehemiah’s time –

“You also multiplied their children as the stars of heaven, And brought them into the land Which You had told their fathers To go in and possess.” Nehemiah 9:22

This seems to be the fulfillment of the promise, but in the Lord’s words to Isaac is an unusual plural term – “I will give your descendants all these lands.” The term for “lands” is *ha’arazot* and it’s mostly used to speak in plural form of the surrounding nations or even the nations of the world and not just the nations in Canaan.

In fact, Ezekiel uses the term to speak of all the nations where the people of Israel were scattered in the exile in modern times. This includes pretty much every nation on earth because Jews can be found pretty much everywhere.

This verse then, I believe is speaking only of the blessings of Christ to all nations of the world and to the millennial kingdom and the Messianic rule of Christ from Jerusalem, when all nations of the earth will be under His authority.

This is the promise of the 2nd Psalm where the Lord speaks prophetically to Himself concerning the rule of the nations –

“I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, ‘You *are* My Son, Today I have begotten You. ⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give You **The nations** for Your inheritance,

And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel.'" (vs 7-9)

⁵ because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."

This reminds us of the man of faith, Abraham. But it also reminds us that he was obedient and diligent in exercising his faith through the keeping of the things God had directed for him.

When his final act of faith was behind him on Mount Moriah, the great oath was given and it shouldn't be lost on any of us that it was given in the presence of Isaac who was almost sacrificed.

Now these many years later the promise is repeated to Isaac as he stands as the bearer of the line which will lead to the Messiah. This must have been an abundantly thrilling thing for him to hear from the Lord. First daddy Abraham and now him...

There is something which might seem confusing in here. Isaac is told that Abraham *obeyed the Lord's voice* – meaning His word, and *kept His charge* – meaning the things he was to observe. It also mentions His commandments, statutes, and laws.

But these weren't given to Abraham in order for him to receive the blessings. Instead the blessings came by promise alone years earlier. The promises were one-sided and unconditional.

What Isaac is being told is that Abraham is being commended for doing these things after the promise. Just as God made the promise from His fountain of grace, the confirmation of it proceeds from the same bubbling spring and so Isaac should be even more ready and more willing to pursue the Lord's will.

II. Nothing New Under the Sun

⁶ So Isaac dwelt in Gerar.

Here we have an immediate note of obedience concerning Isaac. The Lord told him to "dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you" and Isaac, listening to what the Lord had just said about Abraham's faithfulness, determined to be just as obedient.

He was asked to dwell in the place of lodging, Gerar, and he did. This is also something God asks of each of us. He saves us, not to just take us home to heaven, but to remain in the world. While we are in our temporary lodging place as pilgrims we are to not go down to Egypt.

Egypt is a picture of chaos and bondage. It is the life of sin from which we are redeemed and we are not to return to. This then is a picture of the faithful and obedient Christian who dwells in the temporary world, free from the life of sin.

More specifically though, I think this is a picture of the people of Israel today. This will become clearer soon. He is in the land he was told to live in and he has been promised to be blessed. Despite the assurance, he does what Abraham had done twice over eighty years earlier –

⁷ And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, “She is my sister”; for he was afraid to say, “She is my wife,” because he thought, “lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to behold.”

This is usually thought of, and should be considered, as an intentional lie. Unlike Abraham who merely withheld a part of the truth because Sarah was his sister, Isaac is deceptively claiming the same about Rebekah. He does it for the same reason as Abraham did the first time, because Rebekah is a real beauty.

If this is in chronological order following Genesis 25, Jacob and Esau are at least 15 years old. This means they would be out doing their own thing with people in the camp or maybe even tending to flocks. If the boys were around, everyone would know that Isaac was lying. So either this isn't chronological or they have grown up.

In an attempt to partially redeem Isaac, I'd like to show two other occasions in the Bible which demonstrate that what he says is actually acceptable as an idiom, even if it is deception on his part. The word for sister, *ahot*, is used a jillion times in the Bible. This particular form is *ahoti* – my sister.

Ahoti is used exactly 18 times. Six of these times, a full third of its use, isn't speaking of a literal sister. The first time is in Proverbs when speaking of wisdom –

My son, keep my words, And treasure my commands within you. ² Keep my commands and live, And my law as the apple of your eye. ³ Bind them on your

fingers; Write them on the tablet of your heart. ⁴ Say to wisdom, “You *are my sister*,” And call understanding *your* nearest kin, Proverbs 7:1-4

The other five times *ahoti* is used in a non-literal sense is actually speaking of a spouse, exactly as Isaac is. And all five are in the Song of Solomon, a book which pictures Christ and the Church just as Isaac and Rebekah are also such a picture. Listen to the beautiful words from the Song of Songs 4:9,10 –

You have ravished my heart, **My sister**, *my* spouse; You have ravished my heart
With one *look* of your eyes, With one link of your necklace. ¹⁰ How fair is your
love, **My sister**, *my* spouse! How much better than wine is your love, And the
scent of your perfumes Than all spices!

Therefore, the term *ahoti* can be, and is used, as a familiar idiom and therefore, although somewhat duplicitous, it is actually acceptable from a biblical standpoint when speaking of a spouse or someone else as close to a person as a literal sister.

I call my wife “mom” or “Beauty” almost all the time. She is a mom, but not my mom. For all we know, Isaac may have called Rebekah *Ahoti* and simply decided to call her that to others as well just as Solomon called his Shulamite wife.

⁸ Now it came to pass, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked through a window, and saw, and there was Isaac, showing endearment to Rebekah his wife.

This is a curious verse to consider because it says that Isaac had been in Gerar a long time before Abimelech noticed they were married.

Whatever a long time is – and the word can mean days or years, nobody took time to get to know them well enough to find out the truth and nobody seemed to notice them or their boys together as a family.

What’s also unusual is that the king himself is the one who figures it out. However many people are in the land, it’s the king who takes time to look out his window and see the two of them sporting together in a way that would only be between two married people and not as a brother and sister.

Abimelech means Father of the King. I don’t think he is a picture of God the Father as at Abraham’s time though. We’ll see why next week, but for now I’ll say that I believe Isaac

– married, but not willing to acknowledge it – is a picture of the Jewish people living in the land prior to the re-establishment of Israel in 1948.

At that time, they were outside of the covenant graces of God, just as Isaac is living outside of the truth even though he's in the land God told him to dwell in. This should become clearer in the verses ahead, but I believe it is picturing the Jewish presence in the land prior to 1948.

III. A Hedge of Protection

⁹ Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, “Quite obviously she *is* your wife; so how could you say, ‘She *is* my sister’?” Isaac said to him, “Because I said, ‘Lest I die on account of her.’”

The contrast is striking and ironic. What Isaac had kept hidden for a long time is now responded to immediately. Abimelech is beside himself and for good reason as we'll see in another verse. He has no doubt that Rebekah is Isaac's wife and he wants to know what the deal is.

Isaac responds honestly and to the point, just as Abraham did in exactly the same situation and in exactly the same place many long years earlier, that he might die on account of his wife. If he were to be killed for Rebekah, then she would be taken anyway.

His thought is probably that either way, she would be harmed if someone took her. If he were alive, he could fight to retrieve her, but if they killed him first, then she would be a goner without a defender. It does show a lack of faith in God's promise though.

Now, think of those Jews in the world prior to the reestablishment of Israel. They were not united as a people or standing together as one, but were merely residents in a land and often hiding the truth of who they are and what they represent in the world, particularly in the lands where they were dispersed.

¹⁰ And Abimelech said, “What *is* this you have done to us? One of the people might soon have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt on us.”

What's important here is that the Lord intervened before anything could happen, just like he did with Abraham. If something did happen to either of them, then the Philistines

would have been in violation of the treaty Abraham made with Abimelech about eighty years earlier and which is found in Genesis 21 –

Now therefore, swear to me by God that you will not deal falsely with me, with my offspring, or with my posterity; but that according to the kindness that I have done to you, you will do to me and to the land in which you have dwelt.”

-Genesis 21:23

Abimelech asked for a treaty and the treaty was cut between the two of them. It was binding on them and it is still binding today in the land of Israel. He remembered the covenant and he was a man who had reverence for the word which they agreed upon.

If one of his people violated Isaac or Rebekah, they would have the same punishment come upon them. God is ever faithful to watch over the agreements of men which are made in His name. Remember this when you consider your wedding vows, oaths in court, or any other time you invoke His name.

This verse is the point which we see in modern history where the ancient treaty is brought to mind once again. It is the re-establishment of Israel and the confirmation of who Israel is and their connection with the bride – the people of God.

This is no stretch at all and I am convinced this is what is being prefigured. You will too by the time we've finished chapter 26.

¹¹ So Abimelech charged all *his* people, saying, “He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

The order is given by Abimelech to his kingdom. It is an order for protection of Isaac. God has ensured safety to Isaac and his family and has placed a hedge of protection around them.

As of the reestablishment of Israel, God has likewise once again placed a hedge around them. Nothing could be clearer in the world today. In 1948, in 1967, and in 1973 they won wars with impossible odds against them and they are being readied for the great end-times scenario which lies ahead of us.

From the next three verses, we'll begin to get a look at Israel in today's world and begin to make the connections which will set up the world of those end times. As I quoted

earlier, “That which **is** has already been, And what **is to be** has already been; And God requires an account of what is past.”

12 Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold; and the LORD blessed him.

Now....now that Isaac is living properly and acknowledging his wife openly and faithfully we read this verse “Then Isaac sowed in that land.”

God has again favored Israel. From the time that they were reestablished, they have been blessed as no other people on earth. Their cows produce more milk than our cows. Their harvests are immense. The land is producing a hundredfold, and the Lord has blessed them. The pattern of what was in Isaac now is in Israel.

Listen to what Isaiah says about Israel once they were brought back into the covenant graces of today - “You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married.” (62:4) (my delight is in her///married)

Isaac has acknowledged Rebekah and God has once again delighted in Israel. The parallels are right there to be seen. Now that this has taken place he reaps an inordinate amount during a time of famine. Israel also is reaping from land which was totally barren for 2000 years. The soil is rich and the harvest is bountiful.

But hidden within this verse is a concept which is so deep we can't cover it even minutely – I can only give a hint of what the Bible reveals. The term for “reaped a hundredfold” is *meah shearim*. The word is the same root and basic spelling as barley – *seorim*.

Barley is known as the crop of hairy ears because of its hairy appearance. The root of this word is *se-ar* or hair. Hair in the Bible indicates an awareness of things. The goat for example is used in Leviticus for the sin offering and it is known as sa-ir. We have an awareness of sin in the hairy goat sin offering.

In Numbers there is a type of person known as a Nazirite. This is someone who made a vow or was consecrated to the Lord. During the time of that vow, they were never to cut their hair. Samson was a Nazirite from birth as were Samuel and John the Baptist. Paul took a Nazirite vow in Acts.

The hair on their head was a reminder of their state, just as the hairy goat is a reminder of sin. The barley harvest that Isaac is reaping (*meah shearim*) is a reminder of God's covenant to him and the abundant blessing he received was because of his time of living faithfully within that covenant.

Now are you seeing modern Israel in this? Despite their unfaithfulness, they have been returned to the land. They are now living in the land as was promised by God throughout the Old Testament. It is the time of hair – the time of awareness, the time of the barley harvest, and the mighty reaping of the grain.

Like I said, this study is so deep, we could on for hours, but be assured that what is being spoken of in Isaac is realized in the reestablishment of Israel. And to see the truth of this we move on –

¹³ The man began to prosper, and continued prospering until he became very prosperous;

V'yigdal haish v'yelech haloch v'gadel ad ki gadal meod. "And the man was Great; and he went, going on, and was Great, until that he was exceeding Great." Simple repetition which becomes forceful and magnificent! It is an amazing thing to read.

This is Israel today - the blessings and the prospering even until they have become very prosperous. Isaiah said these words over 2700 years ago –

Those who come He shall cause to take root in Jacob; Israel shall blossom and bud, And fill the face of the world with fruit. -Isaiah 27:6

This was written at a time when it wasn't even possible and yet it has come true in our lifetime. Fruit from Israel is found around the world, and not just literal fruit, but the fruit of their labors in every way possible. They have flooded the world with the blessings of technology, medicine, food, and prosperity.

And as always, always in the world we live in, along with blessing and prosperity comes something else... something dark, and cold, wicked, and sinister. It is something that inevitably ruins everything it touches...

¹⁴ for he had possessions of flocks and possessions of herds and a great number of servants. So the Philistines envied him.

Isaac inherited all that Abraham had and now he has even more. He has grown to the point that he is the greatest man in the land. Israel has inherited the land of promise once again and has brought all of the wealth it obtained from the world into the Land of Israel. Once again they are now the greatest people in all the land.

“So the Philistines envied him.” If you can’t see the repetition in this verse in today’s world, you’re either blind or you may be an anti-Semite. The Palestinians, the Jew haters of the same land and bearing the same name as 4000 years ago, are green with envy. They are shiftless, wicked, and lustful stallions wanting to steal the blessings of God from the people of God. And as I say time and again, Israel is but a microcosm of the world we live in. The Geneva Bible says this about this final verse of today – “The malicious always envy the graces of God in others.”

There will always be unions to extort from owners. There will always be obamas to steal from those who produce. There will always be liberals who steal from conservatives. And all the while, they fritter away what they have so that in the end, there is nothing left but more envy and more theft.

What has been will be again and that which has been done will be done again, and there is truly nothing new under the sun. Next week we will continue the journey of Chapter 26 and we will head into the future and see events which are happening right now which will be realized in just short days ahead.

Stand back and see God’s amazing plans unfold, even in our lifetime.

Closing Verse: ⁵ *For I,’ says the LORD, ‘will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’”* ⁶ *“Up, up! Flee from the land of the north,” says the LORD; “for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven,” says the LORD. Zechariah 2:5, 6*

Next Week - Genesis 26:15-35 (That Which Has Been)

The Blessings of Abraham

There was a famine in the land
Besides the first famine in the days of Abraham

And Issac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines in Gerar
Then the Lord said to him “Don’t move; stay where you are.”
Do not go down to Egypt as you intended to

Rather, live in the land of which I shall tell you

Dwell in this land and I shall be with you and bless you also
For to you and your descendants all these lands I give
I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham, you know
I will make your descendants multiply in the land which you live

They will be as the stars of heaven, a number that can't be guessed
And I will give to your descendants these lands so large
And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed
Because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge

And he kept my commandments, statutes, and laws
He was upright before me, walking without any flaws

So Isaac dwelt in Gerar and the men asked about his wife
And he said, "She is my sister" because he feared for his life

Lest they kill me for Rebekah who is beautiful to behold
She is a pearl and a treasure more precious than fine gold

Now it came to pass after a long time
That Abimelech the Philistine king looked through a window
And saw Isaac sporting with Rebekah the lady so sublime
And realized that what Isaac had said really wasn't so

Then Abimelech called Isaac and said
Quite obviously she is your wife
So how could you say "She is my sister" instead
Isaac responded, "I feared for my life"

And Abimelech said, "What is this you have done?
One of the people might soon have lain with your wife
And you would have brought guilt where there was none
And then it would have been the end of that person's life"

So Abimelech charged all his people and said
He who touches this man or his wife
There will be no mercy for that person instead

It will be death for him, the ending of his life

Then Isaac sowed in that land
And his crop was magnificently grand

He reaped in the same year a hundredfold
And the Lord blessed him just as he was told

The man began to prosper, and continued prospering
Until he became very prosperous, much increase he did bring

For he had possessions of flocks and of herds also
A great number of servants he had as well
So the Philistines envied him just as you know
And their jealousy is a sad, sad story to tell

All of these things are written in the book
To show us of things to come surely and without a doubt
So open your Bible daily and be sure to take a look
God's plan is revealed to those who seek Him out

Thank You Lord for this wonderful word
And for Your faithfulness to your people
Praises belong to You, our great and precious Lord
Let Your praises ring under every church steeple

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 26:15-35 (THAT WHICH HAS BEEN)

Introduction: Last week we saw events which I believe focused on the reestablishment of Israel up until modern times. Today we'll see some parallels which I am certain will be fulfilled in the days ahead. As I perceive the world, they're already in motion. This is an exciting adventure which I hope and pray will bless you.

Text Verse: *Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.'"*³ *Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation. Isaiah 12:2, 3*

There are wells of water and there is the well of water. Some satisfy for a moment and then we need more, but there is one which will fill us eternally. As Jesus told the woman at the well, "...the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." Let's heed His words and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Green with Envy

Last week we saw Isaac sow and reap a hundredfold becoming very prosperous and because of this the Philistines envied him.

¹⁵ Now the Philistines had stopped up all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, and they had filled them with earth.

Last week I connected the story of Isaac with the events leading up to and following the re-establishment of Israel in 1948. I'm certain this is correct and is the reason God has placed these stories in here – to show us what will occur again.

Here today we see the Philistines had stopped up all the wells which Abraham's servants had dug in the days of Abraham. The immediate reason is because they were jealous of him and his wealth, and so in an attempt to slight him, they filled the wells.

This is exactly what people do all the time. When they're jealous of what others have, they will destroy it. In the case of wells, you can fill them with dead animals or salt to poison them or fill them up with stuff to in order to make them completely inaccessible.

The story tells us that the reason they did this was because they envied him. This is in direct violation of the agreement which was made between Abraham and Abimelech 80 or so years earlier and it shows the distrustful and jealous nature of the people of the land.

Remember what we saw last week though. The Philistines are the same people as the Palestinians today. Same name, same dirty habits, and the same green-eyed envy. What Israel builds because of God's blessings, they destroy out of jealousy.

¹⁶ And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we."

Imagine that... the Palestinians telling Israel to go away from them because they are mightier than they are. This is what happened to Isaac and this is exactly what the people very close to the same location did just a few years ago. They booted Israel out of Gaza.

The thought of the story doesn't just imply that Isaac was mightier in strength, but in goods and blessings from God as well. He inherited Abraham's camp which would have been in the hundreds if not thousands and he inherited the blessings of God to boot.

Rather than working with Isaac and being blessed along with him, the Philistines kicked him out. And as obvious as it is, whether actively or passively, this is exactly what our government is doing to anyone of industry and hard work.

Instead of joining in and participating in their blessings, they rob them through taxes and unfair legislation until they either close their doors or move to another country. This is the state of Israel in the mid-east today too. It is the state of conservative labor in the capitalist world, and it is how things always turn out.

Blessing ends in envy and taking by theft of that which people aren't willing to work for.

¹⁷ Then Isaac departed from there and pitched his tent in the Valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

Isaac departs now from living closely with the Philistines and encamps in the Valley of Gerar. This area is about halfway between Gaza and Beer-Sheba. As you can see, the same thing that happened in Isaac's time has happened in modern Israel. Get a map and look for yourself.

Don't be deceived by the papers or news media who side with the Palestinians. God has placed these things here and expects us to pay attention. As we draw nearer to the end times, it will become clearer and clearer to those who read and believe their Bible.

It's good to note that Isaac doesn't fight with the people. Instead, he simply... picked up and moved. Israel could have annihilated the Palestinians and kept the entire land they lived in, but they simply packed up and left.

¹⁸ And Isaac dug again the wells of water which they had dug in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham. He called them by the names which his father had called them.

All of the hard work that was accomplished, and the sources of water that were dug by Abraham are destroyed after he died. This shows the cowardice and envy of the people even more.

They waited until Abraham died to do this, knowing that he would have gone in and destroyed them by force. But Isaac is a new generation. They're jealous of the blessings and abundance he has and they take advantage of his easier demeanor.

And so they simply attempt to destroy what they believe is the source of his blessings. Can you see modern Israel here? They are hemmed in by these same people with their same jealousy and greed. But Isaac moved back to the area and re-dug the wells, calling them the same names as Abraham called them.

By doing this, he is attempting to reestablish the link which proves that he is the rightful owner of the wells. If you go to Israel today, you can see all kinds of places that were laid waste during the Diaspora which are now rebuilt.

When Israel was gone, the land was of no value and the inhabitants did nothing but sit idly by after destroying what was once there. But Israel has moved back into the land and reestablished it, just as Isaac did then. Many of the places have the same ancient names that existed before Israel was dispersed. This ties them again to the land of their past. (Explain the column recently found.)

¹⁹ Also Isaac's servants dug in the valley, and found a well of running water there.

The term for well of running water is *beer mayim chayim* or well of living water. It is a source of continuous life and blessing to the people of God for their health and prosperity.

Although this is speaking of water, which is the source of prosperity in the land at that time, I feel confident that there is a modern parallel which isn't speaking of water at all. What is the modern source of wealth and prosperity in the middle-east today?

Anyone who said gas or oil is right. In 1999 a maritime drill struck gas in commercial quantities just 250 meters beneath the Mediterranean 25 miles out from Israel's southern port of Ashdod. Production began in 2004 at what is called the Mari-B, and some 2.8 billion cubic meters of gas are piped ashore each year from reserves that may be as large as 22 bcm.

Another field, known as Tamar, a name which comes right from the Bible, was discovered in 2009 off the northern end of Israel's coast. Tamar, where the gas is much deeper down, holds 238 bcm. Tamar was the world's largest gas find in 2009.

But this is dwarfed by another find which is a bit further off the coast. This one is named Leviathan and has a potential of 453 bcm. And all of these, of course, have the surrounding nations crying foul and there are shouts of protest as to Israel's rights to them.

If you're not seeing the modern parallels of this ancient story about Isaac and his wells, you're not looking very closely. The term "well of living water" can be described perfectly by this paragraph from the Economist Magazine from an article in 2010 –

"As a former chief rabbi of Norway and later an Israeli politician linked to the Labour party, he is urging the government to follow Norway's example by putting the state's share of profits into a sovereign wealth fund and earmarking the income for social welfare. "A one-time chance," he says, "to bring truly historic change to Israeli society."

Just as water blessed Isaac, the gas and oil God placed in the land of Israel will be a similar source of blessing, but also of contention.

²⁰ But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the name of the well Esek, because they quarreled with him.

Although we can't tell which wells Israel will give up in the future, we know that the do-nothing Palestinians and the Muslim world at large will continue to contest everything Israel works for through diligence and by God's blessing. Cries of "It's ours" will fill the blogs and magazines of the world.

The name Isaac gives the well is Esek, which means "contention" or "quarreling." I'm sure some astute journalist in Israel will pick up on the name in the future and use the term again.

²¹ Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that *one* also. So he called its name Sitnah.

Isaac finds another well and the leeches quarrel over that one too. What they are unwilling to look for and earn on their own, they fight over when the opportunity arises. This is an exact description of the people around Israel in the mid-east today.

Isaac names this well Sitnah, which is the feminine form of the word Satan and it specifically means *enmity* or *hatred*. Just as the people of God are the bride of Christ, the Muslim people are the bride of Satan. They are at enmity with Israel. If you don't believe my comparison is accurate, listen to the words of John –

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. 1 John 2:22

Are you seeing the parallels here from a story which took place 4000 years ago and today's modern land of Israel?

²² And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, because he said, "For now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

I can see it already; there will be two major gas or oil finds by Israel and the terrorists around them will claim they own them both. Israel will simply pull up stakes and walk away from them in an attempt to appease them.

Only when a third well is found will they stand firm and refuse to be quarreled with. If you think I'm making all this up, just pay attention to the days ahead. I'll lay down my last dollar in belief that this is coming, and probably soon.

Rehoboth means broad or spacious and it will be so obvious that the land and the well were dug by Israel that it will be beyond controversy. From this well, as the verse says, they will be fruitful in the land. Coming soon to an oil find in Israel near you.

It very well could be that these wells are also representing the land itself. Israel was kicked out of Gaza, next they will certainly be kicked out of what is called the West Bank, and they will also lose ½ of Jerusalem as Zechariah says will happen.

Only through these transactions will there be a covenant of peace between Israel and her enemies. So if not oil, then it is land.

II. A Covenant is Made

²³ Then he went up from there to Beersheba.

This is the spot that Abraham was at when he made a treaty with Abimelech. It's also where Isaac and Abraham departed from and returned to when they went to Mount Moriah. It is a place where God's people have found peace and restoration. The same will be the case for Isaac this time...

²⁴ And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I *am* the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I *am* with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham's sake."

The Lord, or Jehovah, appears now to Isaac and speaks to him the same words of comfort that Abraham had received. He is with him, will bless him, and multiply him. This is all based on the oath He made with Abraham. He is there and His words will be fulfilled.

And simply to assure us that the same Lord who spoke to Abraham is with His people now, we read an amazingly similar passage in the book of Acts when Jesus spoke to the Apostle Paul –

⁹ Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; ¹⁰ for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city." ¹¹ And he continued *there* a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. -Acts 18:9-11

We may not have visions of the Lord now, but because of the surety of His word, we have every confidence that He is right here with us, keeping His covenant promises and attending to our security and blessing.

²⁵ So he built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD, and he pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.

We have here a parallel account from the life of Abraham – “Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.” Gen 21:33

In the same place where Abraham called on the name of the Lord, Isaac does too. This is the first recorded altar built by him. As the head of the family, he is also the priest and he is now serving the God of his father Abraham, the Lord, Jehovah.

This is his acknowledgment that he has placed His entire faith and hope in the Lord alone. In this spot, the servants dig another well, thus establishing a foothold in the area and making an implicit claim to the surrounding land.

If we look for a modern parallel of this, it would be the coming temple in Israel. They have already anointed a cornerstone for the temple and they are preparing to begin sacrifices. All of the temple instruments have been made and are waiting to be used.

²⁶ Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath, one of his friends, and Phichol the commander of his army.

This, along with the next five verses, is very similar to what happened with Abraham in Genesis 21. In fact, two of the three people who have come to Isaac have the same names – Abimelech and Phichol.

Abimelech means Father of the King and Phichol means “Strong” or literally “Mouth of All.” But along with these two comes another person, Ahuzzath. His name means “Possession.” The verb of his name means to take hold of, seize, or grasp and is used anytime two naturally disconnected entities become firmly united.

All of their names are important concerning what will come about.

²⁷ And Isaac said to them, “Why have you come to me, since you hate me and have sent me away from you?”

Isaac probably looked at these three like a cowboy with a mouth full of chewing tobacco looks at someone they distrust. “What’re you doing here?” He was probably completely surprised that they’d show up at all and he even uses a specific word to show them how he figured they felt.

The word for “hate me” is *senetem* and is a reminder of the fighting over the wells, one of which was called Sitnah, or hatred. “Just like the well I named, so is the attitude you have.” And their response is exactly what we will see in the future as Israel continues to prosper in the midst of their satanic neighbors...

²⁸ But they said, “We have certainly seen that the LORD is with you. So we said, ‘Let there now be an oath between us, between you and us; and let us make a covenant with you,

Despite their jealousy and hatred of Isaac, they see that the Lord is with him. And the same is, and will be, no less true with the Muslims who hate Israel. They can cry out “allah” from every minaret in the world, but in their hearts, they know there is one God and it is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And so they ask for an oath and a covenant. And yes, the Bible says such a covenant is coming in the future. Daniel 9:24-27 is the framework of the entire end-times setting for Israel of the future and which includes the events of the book of Revelation.

In those verses, it says a covenant is coming between the anti-Christ and Israel – a 7-year covenant. If you don’t believe this is coming, study these things a little more. I assure you, the things that have been will be again.

²⁹ that you will do us no harm, since we have not touched you, and since we have done nothing to you but good and have sent you away in peace. You *are* now the blessed of the LORD.’”

Either Abimelech and the other two are blind as to what happened between Isaac and the people who kept stealing his wells, or they are bald faced liars. They may not have touched him or harmed him directly, but they did so indirectly, causing him to move from well to well and finally telling him to leave their land.

If history is repeating itself, they were well aware of what was happening, just as the antichrist will be aware of what has been happening to Israel prior to their covenant. But, as Proverbs says –

When a man's ways please the LORD,
He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. Proverbs 16:7

What is happening here to Isaac is a repetition of what happened when the same group came to Abraham in Genesis 21:22 –

And it came to pass at that time that Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham, saying, “God *is* with you in all that you do.

III. The Impetus for War

³⁰ So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank.

In the next three verses, you can almost see what's coming in the future and how it will set up the final end-times scenario. Isaac welcomes these three in and makes them a feast. I can see Israel being the one to welcome in those hostile to her and sharing their many blessings with them.

As they always are, they are gracious and forgiving regardless of how badly their enemies treat them. As a people, they are the epitome of letting go and moving on when the opportunity permits.

³¹ Then they arose early in the morning and swore an oath with one another; and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.

Yes, Daniel 9:27 says this when speaking of the antichrist – “Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week.”

There will be a 7-year treaty between Israel and those who have been hostile to her, a treaty which will be broken by her enemies after 3 ½ years. It will probably be broken based on something similar to what we see in the next verse...

³² It came to pass the same day that Isaac's servants came and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, “We have found water.”

The same day that the treaty is made between Isaac and these three, another well is dug which discovers water. Once again, if I were a betting man, I would bet my bottom dollar that immediately after the signing of the 7-year covenant with the antichrist,

Israel will find so much wealth in the ground that it will make everything else pale in comparison to it.

I can already see the cries of “foul play” by the surrounding people. They’ll say that Israel purposely waited until after the agreement to reveal what they’ve found. I’m not a prophet and I don’t see the future except as it’s given in the past.

And I am as confident of this as anything else. I could be completely misreading what’s being told here, but I doubt it. Like all of the other stories we’ve seen, there is a future fulfillment and there is every reason to believe that what I’m telling you is correct.

Israel has to be isolated and ready to be extinguished before the Lord returns. Daniel 12 says so – “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders *be?*” ⁷ Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that *it shall be* for a time, times, and half *a time*; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these *things* shall be finished.” (vs 6-7)

Along with Israel facing complete annihilation comes the promise of the return of the Lord to rescue them. This can’t happen unless things are lined up for it to happen and I believe Genesis 26 is showing us how it will all transpire.

And as surely as these three have come to Isaac, there will be the unholy trinity who makes the deal with Israel – Satan, the antichrist, and the false prophet.

Even the names of these three imply this: Abimelech – Father of the King (Satan), Phichol – the Mouth of All (the antichrist), and Ahuzzath, Abimelechs’ friend – Possession (the false prophet).

³³ So he called it Shebah. Therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.

And so he calls it Shebah which means “oath.” The word Shebah here has an added letter on the end of it, a letter like our “h.” The addition of this letter then makes the word signify more than just an oath, but that which is full or abundant.

The well found then and the well of the future will be filled to overflowing. However, Sheba is also the word for seven and because of the agreement, the place is called Beersheba, the well of the oath or the well of the seven. As you can see, the coming seven-year covenant with the antichrist is being referred to here.

It should be noted again that the same thing happened at the same place with Abraham. Therefore there are two wells which were found and those two wells still exist there today to testify to the accuracy of this story.

Moreover, the Bible time and time again uses the number two to signify a difference – usually of things at enmity with each other. There are two testaments in the Bible, one based on law and one on grace. One shows fallen man, the other man restored. There are day and there is night. There is darkness and there is light.

There is good and there is evil. There is Cain and there is Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Adam and Christ. There is Saul and there is David. There is life under heaven and there is life under earth. There is heaven and there is hell. There is life and there is death.

Each of these is in contrast, just as the two wells are in contrast. This pattern is so clearly laid out, that we even see it in the New Testament epistles. Anytime there are two epistles written to the same group of people we will see the pattern in the second letter.

In 2 Corinthians we see the power of the enemy and the work of Satan. In 2 Thessalonians, there is the working of Satan and the man of sin, also called the lawless one, who is the antichrist. In 2 Timothy we see the church in ruin as opposed to the church that rules in 1 Timothy.

In 2 Peter there is the coming apostasy. In 2 John the term antichrist is specifically mentioned. We could go on and on with these patterns, but this is enough to show without a doubt that this second well being found and named is pointing to the seven year covenant between Israel and the antichrist. It is coming.

To be fair though, I have to note that when there are two things, they also can be contrasting and yet confirming. The two testaments contrast and yet they confirm. The second Person of the Trinity has two natures – God and Man. They contrast and yet confirm.

The two witnesses of Revelation contrast – one a gentile and one a Hebrew and yet they confirm. Amos 3:3 shows us how this works – “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?” Even if things are at enmity in one way, they confirm in another.

In the end, you can't know good without evil. So even what is evil shows us what is good. Likewise, the two wells of Beersheba also contrast, and yet they confirm. They stand as the testament to the name and nature of the place, even to this day in modern history and into Israel's difficult future.

³⁴ When Esau was forty years old, he took as wives Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite.

Suddenly, here in verse 34, we make a transition to Esau. And interestingly, it notes that he has taken two wives. He married at the same age as Isaac, but instead of one wife, he marries two.

Instead of a wife from Mesopotamia and God's people who are under a blessing, he marries two from Canaan, the people of the devil who are under a curse. Esau is living for what is carnal, Isaac lived for that which is spiritual. Beeri – my well.

It's as if Esau's inclusion here is to confirm to us everything we've already talked about, the contrast between good and evil.

³⁵ And they were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah.

Isaac, which means "Laughter," didn't laugh much around Esau's wives. They were, as it says "a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebekah." Esau looked to gain worldly power and influence by marrying these two ladies, but in the end, he only brought unhappiness and trouble to himself and his parents.

This is how the chapter finishes – on an unhappy note. In the end for all of us, we have choices to make. Some of them will end in prosperity, some in grief. The only sure thing that we can count on is God's promises. The closer we stick to Him and His word, the better off we'll be.

Esau didn't and his family life was strained and his marriages were a source of grief. Each of you should know that if you need advice in life's decisions, you can come and talk with me any time and we'll go to the word and try to find a happy resolution for your problems there.

Let me take a couple of minutes though and mention Jesus and the cross. Until you've settled things with Him, there really is no peace and there really is no point in going to

the Bible for comfort. Once you have Jesus right, then everything else from His word will start to make proper sense to you...

Closing Verse: *“Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. ²⁹ Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD, Proverbs 1:28, 29*

Next Week: Genesis 27:1-20 (A Blessing in the Face of Death)

A Pact with the Devil

Now the Philistines had stopped up all the wells
Which his father’s servants had dug in Abraham’s day
And they filled them with earth, as the story tells
And Abimelech said, “It is time for you to go away.”

You are much mightier than we
Then Isaac departed from there quietly

And he pitched his tent in the Valley of Gerar some distance away
And there is where he dwelt and breathed his breath
He dug again the wells of water which were dug in Abrahams’ day
For the Philistines had stopped them up after Abraham’s death

He called them by the names which his father had given
Also his servants dug in the valley and found a well there
But the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled to make him give in
“It’s ours they said.” So he named it Esek because they wouldn’t share

Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that one also
So he called it Sitnah and moving again, did he go

And there he dug another well
And they did not quarrel over it
So he called it Rehoboth, as you can tell
There was room enough for him to sit

“For now the Lord has made room for us
And we shall be fruitful in the land”

Then he went up from there to Beersheba without a fuss
Blessing and prosperity were at hand

And the Lord appeared to him the same night and said
I am the God of your father Abraham
Do not fear, I am with you now instead
I will bless you and multiply your descendants in the land

For my servant Abraham's sake thus you have my word
So he built an altar there and called on the name of the Lord

And he pitched his tent there the story does tell
And there Isaac's servants dug another well

Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar
With Ahuzzath his friend and Phichol commander of the army
And Isaac said to them, "Why have you come thus far?
Since you hate me and sent me away in a manner smarmy

But they said, "We have certainly seen that the Lord is with you
So we said, "Let there now be an oath between us and you

"Let us make a covenant with you that you will do us no harm
Since we have not touched you and only done you good
And we have sent you away in peace, have no alarm
You are now the blessed of the Lord, as we have understood

So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank
Then they arose early in the morning and an oath they swore
Then Isaac sent them away and each he did thank
And they departed in peace as they shuffled out the door

It came to pass the same day
That Isaac's servants came and told him about a well
They had dug it and it turned out ok
"We have found water" is the story they did tell

So he called it Shebah, this is the name he did say
Therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day

When Esau was forty years old he took as wives
Judith the daughter of Beerli and Basemath the daughter of Elon
They were both Hittites who brought grief to his parent's lives
They were a source of grief to them from the first moment on

In the end, we are a product of our choices
We can choose wisely or foolishly, but the choice is ours to make
If our decisions are based on Jesus, surely God rejoices
And He will bless us for His own name's sake

And so let us pursue Him at all times and in all ways
And let us bring Him glory and honor all of our days

Above all, let us look to the Lord, our Savior Jesus
Who has done such marvelous wonders for each one of us

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 27:1-20 **(A BLESSING IN THE FACE OF DEATH)**

Introduction: If you've ever looked at a book of the stories of the Bible, maybe you've seen a picture of Jacob deceiving Isaac. Without a doubt, you'll see an old man in a bed with a long white beard and a young boy there at his side attempting to imitate his older, hairier brother.

I have to tell you how wrong that picture is and you'll see why in a while. Although pictures of Bible stories are fun and interesting to look at, they're often as wrong as right. Have you ever seen a picture of the Israelites marching around Jericho with the ark?

If so, you can see the congregation, the priests, the poles, and the ark with its gold covering and the little cherubim on top of it. That's wrong too. Does anyone know why? The reason is found in the book of Numbers chapter 4 –

“When the camp prepares to journey, Aaron and his sons shall come, and they shall take down the covering veil and cover the ark of the Testimony with it. ⁶ Then they shall put on it a covering of badger skins, and spread over *that* a cloth entirely of blue; and they shall insert its poles.”

The ark was never to be seen by anyone except the high priest and that only once a year. If it was to be moved, only the priests could look at it and only for the purpose of covering it.

Details like these help us mentally keep the biblical narrative in focus and sharpen our awareness of what really is going on in the Bible. May our mental images of the Bible be based on the truth contained there. Only then can we understand the reality of what God is conveying to us in His word.

Text Verse: *With Him are strength and prudence.
The deceived and the deceiver are His. Job 12:16*

If we see deception in the world, we may ask why God allows it to happen. In the case of Jacob and Esau, it came about to meet God's purposes, which He spoke of even before their birth.

So let us understand that both the deceived and the deceiver are His and in the end His plans will come to pass exactly as they should. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Preparation for a Blessing

¹ Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, “My son.” And he answered him, “Here I am.”

We have to do some backdating to know when this most likely happened and how old Isaac is. Joseph was thirty when he stood before Pharaoh and that means that he was about 39 when Jacob came to Egypt. He was right around 130 years old.

So when Joseph was born, Jacob was about 91, which was after he had spent 14 years in Padan-aram. That means that Jacob and Esau are 77 at this time and it makes Isaac 136. Therefore, this is about the year 2245AM and its 61 years after Abraham died.

The ages of these people are significant for several reasons. We know that Isaac's eyes are dim now at 136 and he will live until he's 180. So he lives with blindness for over 40 years. Another important point is that even though he's 77, Jacob hasn't married.

And another thing to think about is that what happens here isn't something between a couple of young children, or teenagers, and their mother, but between two well aged men and a mother who is even older than they are.

If she was 15 when she got married (and that's just a guess) and then she had to wait 20 years to have children, then she has to be at least 112 and maybe older. This wasn't a fight between two teenagers which was prompted by a young impulsive mother – by any stretch of the imagination.

Isaac is very old and his eyes aren't working and so he calls for Esau, his firstborn. It's important to note that none of what is going to occur would have happened if Isaac's eyes weren't dim and therefore, behind the scenes we see God's hand guiding the story.

When Moses died it says this about him in Deuteronomy 34:7 – “Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor diminished.” God is in control of every aspect of our life, even to our illnesses.

² Then he said, “Behold now, I am old. I do not know the day of my death.

Here is Isaac stuck in his tent with bad eyes and he probably felt as if life were coming to a close. Because of this, he wants to put his house in order even though his death is more than 40 years away.

This is something that the wise have been doing and continue to do 4000 years later. If we’re planning on being here forever, we have very mistaken plans. As Adam Clarke says, “He who lives not in reference to eternity, lives not at all.”

³ Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me.

If you look at this verse in the right way, it is an amazingly touching thing. Isaac is the patriarch of an entire camp with dozens and maybe hundreds of servants, plus warriors, and their family members and more. Plus he probably has thousands of animals of every kind available.

What Abraham possessed has been increased by Isaac. And yet, he calls for his son who is in his 70s and asks him to get his things together and go out and hunt game for him. This is as personal as it gets. It would be like flying home for the holidays just because you wanted a meal prepared by mom and for no other reason.

The wild game would have its own taste and the fact that it was hunted by Esau would make it all the more endearing to him. The blessing he was going to offer was to be special and so he wanted what preceded it to be special as well.

⁴ And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring *it* to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die.”

Although he’d lost his sight, he hadn’t lost his taste. And so he asks for something tasty before he would bestow the blessing. Some scholars look at this verse and see in it a connection to a religious ritual where a meal is participated in before, or when, the rite is conducted.

There’s no reason to doubt that and it goes along with the biblical theme of meals in conjunction with important events, such as the Passover, the Lord’s Supper, and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Isaac is participating in an ancient tradition and is ready to bestow a blessing upon his son.

A lot of people castigate him here for intending to bless Esau instead of Jacob because of the prophecy that was given to Rebekah which said the older would serve the younger. Their claim is that he has either ignored this or forgotten about it.

But it could be that Rebekah never even told him. We can't know and the Bible doesn't say. It also doesn't rebuke him in any way. In this case, we simply see a father wanting to bless his firstborn before he dies. The fact that he is unable to see is what shows us God's intentions are being met in this story.

II. The Faith of Rebekah

⁵ Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to Esau his son. And Esau went to the field to hunt game and to bring *it*.

Rebekah, whether we agree with the actions she's going to take or not, is an important part of what happens and its effect on the world we live in. It was to her that the word was spoken about the older serving the younger. And it is she who is close enough to Isaac to hear what he intends to do.

And right or wrong from our perspective, it was the Lord who directed her to be married to Isaac, who kept her from becoming pregnant for 19 years, who caused twins to be conceived in her womb, and who molded her into the person she is in every way we can conceive.

In other words, everything about her has been shaped and has led her to this moment where her decisions will direct the outcomes. She hears Isaac's words to Esau and so she acts, first by telling Jacob what she heard...

⁶ So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son, saying, "Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau your brother, saying,

⁷ 'Bring me game and make savory food for me, that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.'

There is a difference between what Isaac said and what Rebekah says. In verse 4, Isaac said to Esau "that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die." But here it says, "that I may eat it and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death."

The differences are big and it isn't just her adding in something that Isaac said but wasn't recorded. The words for "before my death" are different than "before I die" even in the Hebrew.

When Isaac spoke to Esau, he used the term *beterem*, which means "before" in time. But when Rebekah speaks to Jacob, she uses the term *liphnay* which means before as in the presence of something – *liphnay* literally meaning "in the face of."

She also says "in the presence of the Lord" rather than "that my soul may bless you." I can only think that she is seeing this as the Messianic blessing that she knew belonged to Jacob because the Lord had told her.

What I think she is saying by using the term *liphnay* is that this promise was to come to Jacob not before Isaac's death in time – "I need to give this before I die," but before Isaac's death which was a result of the fall – "I need to give this *because* I will die; my death is in the presence of the Lord."

The blessing then, as Rebekah understands it, is for the reversal of the curse of death upon mankind – a blessing she knows must go to Jacob. What is always perceived of as evil intent on the part of Rebekah, is, as I see it, is an act of faith even if it is deceptive.

This follows the theme of the women of faith we've already seen and will continue to see. Lot's daughters slept with their father in the faith that they were bringing in the Messiah – which in fact they did. Rebekah is acting in faith by ensuring the younger son receives the blessing the Lord had told her about.

Rahab the harlot acted in faith in rescuing the spies at Jericho. Ruth acted in faith by moving to Israel with her mother in law. And Mary acted in faith, accepting her role as the mother of the Messiah. Rebekah is acting in the same manner as these other great women who exercised their faith in God's unfolding plans.

⁸ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice according to what I command you.

Rebekah is so determined about what she intends, that she uses two terms to convince Jacob. The first is obey and the second is command. Just imagine your own mother saying, "I want you to listen very carefully and I want you to do exactly what I say." This is the intent and force of her words to Jacob now...

⁹ Go now to the flock and bring me from there two choice kids of the goats, and I will make savory food from them for your father, such as he loves.

The question for this verse is, “Why would she tell Jacob to get two kids of the goats?” That is a lot more than Isaac could eat in several meals. The actual reason is that the kid of the goat apparently tastes somewhat like a young roe or fawn.

By taking two of them she could cut out the choicest pieces from both to make the whole meal appear like it was from one deer. Then by adding in seasoning, someone who knew how to cook could make it a truly deceiving meal.

So Isaac is going to be deceived in more ways than one. However, there is a spiritual reason for the Bible to mention the two goats. As I said last week, throughout the Bible the number two signifies a difference – usually of things at enmity with each other.

There are two testaments, one based on law and one on grace. One shows fallen man, the other man restored. There is day and there is night. There is Jesus and there is Barabbas. The Bible includes the fact that Rebekah asked for two kids because in this there is a contrast.

There is deception, but there is the fulfillment of God’s plan. As EW Bullinger says about this sort of thing “...*One* excludes all difference, and denotes that which is sovereign. But *Two* affirms that there is a difference there is *another*; while *One* affirms that there is not another!”

This is what is going on here. God has made a choice in Jacob, but He has allowed the fulfillment of that choice through Rebekah and Jacob who are going against His immediate will (don’t deceive) but fulfilling His ultimate will (the older shall serve the younger).

If you can see this, then your eyes are seeing the amazing work of God as His plans are being fulfilled through fallen people. Jacob’s son Joseph explains this immensely well in Genesis 50:20, “But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.”

¹⁰ Then you shall take *it* to your father, that he may eat *it*, and that he may bless you before his death.”

Once again Rebekah uses the same term that she used before. Instead of “before his death” meaning before the time of his death, she says “before his death” or “in the face of his death” meaning the blessing is to be given as a result of his death – the fall of man and the coming of the Messiah to reverse that.

She is a woman of faith looking forward to her Savior and the prospect of eternal life, just as so many faithful and yet misunderstood people have done already in Genesis. Where we want to look for fault, we actually find faith.

As I said, we saw it in Lot’s daughters and we found it in Abraham, we’ll come across it in the harlot Rahab and in others. We’ve seen it in modern times too. Corrie ten Boom broke the law by hiding Jews, but her deceit served a more important purpose.

¹¹ And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, “Look, Esau my brother *is* a hairy man, and I *am* a smooth-skinned man.

This reminds us of Genesis 25:25 – “And the first came out red. *He was* like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau.”

Not only was Esau born hairy, he stayed hairy his whole life. This affliction, known as hypertrichosis, can be so bad in some cases that it’s called werewolf syndrome.

As twins, this malady surprisingly didn’t affect them both, but only Esau. But there is a reason for this. As I said in a sermon a few weeks ago, hair in the Bible indicates an awareness of things. The goat is used as the sin offering and it is known as sa-ir. It is given as an awareness of sin committed.

A Nazirite is someone who made a vow or was consecrated to the Lord. During the time of that vow, they were never to cut their hair. The hair was a reminder of their vow and of their separation to God. Esau’s hair is mentioned because it is more than just a physical affliction. It is a reminder of the state of fallen man; Esau is a picture of Adam.

Jacob, the son of promise is instead a smooth skinned man. The difference in their physical makeup is a picture of their spiritual heritage. But what is interesting is that in order to receive the blessing, Jacob will need to emulate his older brother who is hairy.

Isn’t this then a picture of Jesus in itself? The sinless Son of God who knew no sin became sin so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He became like us so that we could become like Him. All of this beautiful symbolism in this story!

¹² Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing.”

It’s funny that Jacob is less concerned about the act of deceit than he is about being caught. But it shows that he had an awareness of the wrong that he was committing, even if the intentions of Rebekah were faithful ones.

Deuteronomy 27:18 speaks in terms which are similar to this – “Cursed *is* the one who makes the blind to wander off the road.”

Although this is a spiritual and not a literal road, it is still an intentional deceit of the blind and he understands that a curse, rather than a blessing could be the result.

An important consideration though is recorded in Numbers – “How shall I curse whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce *whom* the LORD has not denounced?” (23:8) Rebekah already knows the blessing will come upon Jacob.

Once again we see a portion of the gospel here. Jesus took on our sin and our curse just as Jacob took on Esau’s likeness, the hair which symbolizes the awareness of sin, but God the Father blessed Jesus, just as Isaac will bless Jacob.

III. Jacob the Deceiver

¹³ But his mother said to him, “Let your curse *be* on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get *them* for me.”

I have to remind you of what I said earlier. Rebekah is well over 100 years old and she has known since her pregnancy that Jacob is the son of promise. A mother won’t ever forget this type of thing and she is so certain that she knows the outcome that she says, “Let your curse be on me.”

As the Geneva Bible says about this verse – “The assurance of God’s decree made her bold.”

In the book of Luke it says concerning the things that occurred at the time of Jesus’ birth that Mary kept those things and pondered them in her heart. Rebekah has kept and pondered the oracle given to her for many long years and she is determined to see it fulfilled.

¹⁴ And he went and got *them* and brought *them* to his mother, and his mother made savory food, such as his father loved.

We can't miss the fact that two animals died in order to make the meal for Isaac. The blessing only comes after the meal and the meal is proof of the death. When we take the Lord's Supper, Paul says "We proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."

Only after we take the meal is the blessing bestowed. It is an implication that He died so that we can live. This is the reason why it makes absolutely no sense for a person to take the Lord's Supper if they don't believe in Christ. If you believe that He died for your sins and then was resurrected, you'd be a fool to not accept that.

If you don't believe it, then the meal has no point or purpose. Rebekah is preparing a tasty meal for Isaac in hopes of the resurrection and of the blessing on Jacob that will lead to that day.

¹⁵ Then Rebekah took the choice clothes of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son.

There is a speculation about this verse which I'll share. Rebekah puts **choice clothes** belonging to Esau on Jacob. The term is *ha-khamudot*, meaning "the precious." Some people have taken this to mean that they are special garments for ministry. Because Esau was the oldest son, he would perform the priestly functions in the house as Isaac was blind. The ancient Greek translation of this verse uses the term *teen stoleen* which is the same words they use to describe the garments of the high priest along with the word "holy" in Exodus 28.

If this is right, then it would explain why she had them instead of Esau's wives after 37 years of marriage and it would also explain why she chose these for him to wear. The blessing of the Messiah would be appropriate for one wearing priestly garments, a picture of the coming High Priest. (See Zechariah 3:1-5)

It would also explain the words of Isaac when he gives the blessing after his meal which we will see next week.

¹⁶ And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck.

Rebekah shows the cunningness of a lady. She not only makes the deceiving meal and gets out clothes to deceive, but she uses the hair of the goats she had just cooked to cover Jacob. The camel-goat of the mid-east has black, silk-like hair and was used as a substitute for human hair even by the Romans.

It's so convincing in this manner that we have a great parallel passage in the time of David in 1 Samuel 19 –

¹¹ Saul also sent messengers to David's house to watch him and to kill him in the morning. And Michal, David's wife, told him, saying, "If you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be killed." ¹² So Michal let David down through a window. And he went and fled and escaped. ¹³ And Michal took an image and laid *it* in the bed, put a cover of goats' *hair* for his head, and covered *it* with clothes. ¹⁴ So when Saul sent messengers to take David, she said, "He *is* sick."

In the use of these two goats on Jacob we see a picture of the Day of Atonement recorded in Leviticus 16. The high priest of Israel, wearing his priestly robes (like Jacob), came before the Lord with two goats, just as Jacob is – one as a sacrifice of atonement and one as a scapegoat to carry the sins from the camp.

Jacob is coming before his father wearing the priestly robes of Esau and the skins of two goats. He is here picturing Jesus our Substitute and High Priest, and yet He is the Son of promise who will receive the blessing.

¹⁷ Then she gave the savory food and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

This is now the fifth of six times that the term "savory food" has been used in this chapter and it's only used two other times in the Bible, both of which are in Proverbs 23 and both have a similar connection. Here is the first time from Proverbs 23 –

¹ "When you sit down to eat with a ruler, Consider carefully what *is* before you; ² And put a knife to your throat If you *are* a man given to appetite. ³ Do not desire his delicacies, For they *are* deceptive food."

I can tell you that it took one meal by my wife for me to decide she is the one I wanted to marry. She wasn't being deceptive but I can guarantee you that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Apparently, the way to spiritual blessings follows the same path.

¹⁸ So he went to his father and said, “My father.” And he said, “Here I am. Who *are* you, my son?”

¹⁹ Jacob said to his father, “I *am* Esau your firstborn; I have done just as you told me; please arise, sit and eat of my game, that your soul may bless me.”

Let's not make the error that *I think* that what Rebekah and Jacob have done was the right thing for them to do. Jacob lies directly by claiming to be Esau. He lies that he has done exactly as Esau was told because he has goats belonging to Isaac and not a deer which came from the wild. So his lies are also mixed with false actions.

He also deceives by wearing Esau's clothing and by hiding his own hairless nature with goat's skins. What he has done, as prompted by his mother, *is wrong*. Having said that, the purposes of God came about exactly as God knew they would.

Clarke's commentary reflects what most commentaries state – “It was the design of God that the elder should serve the younger, and he would have brought it about in the way of his own wise and just providence; but means such as here used he could neither sanction nor recommend.”

This is nonsense. This is exactly how it was intended to come about before the foundation of the world. The pictures point to Jesus. This doesn't mean that God caused it, but that He knew this is how it would transpire. So in this account we see the amazing work of God.

He told Rebekah that the older would serve the younger before they were ever born. Because of this, certainly because of this, she came up with the plan which is given us in the account today. And yet God isn't to blame even though He is the One who led her to do these things by telling her the outcome before it came about.

Anyone that can't see the free-will of man and yet the divine direction of God in the Bible is nuts. God is guiding human history and everything that comes about is because He intends for it to come about. And yet when evil is a part of what happens, it in no way was brought about by Him. (See my early Genesis sermons).

Anyone of us who thinks we can do something wrong and then blame God is deluding themselves. And yet anyone who thinks that God is somehow unaware of every evil thing we have done or will do is similarly deluded. We live in the presence of pure holiness and absolute greatness.

²⁰ But Isaac said to his son, “How *is it* that you have found *it* so quickly, my son?” And he said, “Because the LORD your God brought *it* to me.”

The question Isaac asks is obvious. Jacob sounds like Jacob and Esau sounds like Esau. His eyes may be dim, but his hearing is fine. Here we see God’s providence all over the account. His eyes are bad so he can’t tell which son is there. But his taste buds and his hearing are fine.

His taste is what prompted him to send Isaac out for wild meat. This wouldn’t have happened if his taste buds were bad. His good hearing will lead him to feel Jacob to see if it is really Him, thus proving that he is sufficient for the blessing. And this points to Jesus. He was convincingly like Adam because He came as a man.

Isaac’s curiosity is aroused enough to question how he found an animal so quickly. The voice and the early lunch have him wondering. Of all of the deception so far, this is the worst. Jacob doesn’t just lie that he was fortunate to find an animal, but he invokes Lord’s name – “...the Lord your God brought it to me.”

Saying “The Lord **your** God” though doesn’t imply anything on the part of Jacob. He is neither trying to hide from Jehovah, nor is this implying that Esau wasn’t a believer in Jehovah.

The term is used 403 times in the Bible – by the Lord Himself, by believers, and by non-believers. It is a standard way of speaking which people use even today. It is simply an acknowledgement that the person being spoken to is a follower of Jehovah.

This might seem like a peculiar point to stop today’s sermon, but stop we will. I want you to remember a few things though. Despite her deceit, Rebekah was a woman of faith and was acting in faith. Her deceit and Jacob’s deceit was wrong, but it was wrong that the Lord worked out for good.

And so a lesson for you is to consider the wrong you’ve done in your life and which you hopefully feel guilty about. If you have called on Jesus and been saved by His blood, He’s forgiven you and He has used it to bring you to where you are now.

You’re going to fall again and when you do, understand that the Lord will be using that too. However, let’s not intentionally do wrong to help make the Lord look good. Paul warns us about that attitude in Romans 3 and we’ll close with that.

But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is* God unjust who inflicts wrath? (I speak as a man.) ⁶ Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world? ⁷ For if the truth of God has increased through my lie to His glory, why am I also still judged as a sinner? ⁸ And *why* not say, “Let us do evil that good may come”?...

Closing Verse: But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴ But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned *them*, ¹⁵ and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 3:13-15

Next Week – Genesis 27:21-29 (The Dew of Heaven and the Fatness of the Earth)

Poem – In the Face of Death Comes a Blessing

Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old
And his eyes were so dim he couldn't see
That he called Esau his older son and so he told
Yes he said to him, “My son, please hear me

And he answered him, “Here I am.”
Are you in need, are you in a jam?

Then he said, “Behold, I am old, I know not my death's day
Now then, please take your weapons your quiver and your bow
And go to the field and hunt game for me, do as I say
And make savory food, such as I love – I like it tasty you know

Bring it to me that I may eat, yes be a good guy
That my soul may bless you before I die
Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke
To Esau his son and her heart was glad
And Esau went to the field, he was no slow poke
He went to hunt game and to bring it to his dad

So Rebekah spoke to Jacob her son quietly
Indeed I heard your father speak to Esau saying

Bring me game and make savory food for me
That I may eat it and bless you, for this I am praying

I will bless you in the presence of the Lord
Before my death, now you have my word

“Now therefore my son, obey my voice in what I command
Go now to the flock and bring me the things that I demand

Two choice kids of the goats are what I need
Go and I will make savory food for your father with speed

I will make them for your father these nummy numms
Then you shall take it to your father that he may eat
And that he may bless you before his death comes
And upon you will be the Lord’s blessing so sweet

And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother
Look Esau my brother is a hairy man
I am smooth, we don’t resemble one another
Perhaps my father will see through this plan

And if he feels me I shall seem a deceiver to him
And I shall bring a curse down upon myself
The chances of a blessing would become rather slim
This could turn out bad, like rotten cheese on a shelf

But his mother said, “Let your curse be on me my son
Only obey my voice and go get them for me so we can be done

So he went and got them and brought them to his mother
And she made savory food such as his father loved
Then Rebekah took choice clothes of her elder, Esau his brother
Which were in her house and put them on Jacob, her beloved

And she put the skins of the kids of the goats on his hands
And also on the smooth part of his neck too
Then she gave the savory food and the bread, all part of her plans
Which she had prepared into the Jacob’s hands, it’s true

So he went to his father and said, "My father"
And he said, "Here I am. Who are you my son?"
Jacob said, "I am Esau your firstborn. I hope it's not a bother."
Just as you told me, so I have done

Please arise, sit and eat of my game
That your soul may bless me just the same

But Isaac said, "How is it that you found it so quickly?"
And he said, "Because the Lord your God brought it to me."

This story has a moral and a purpose for us
And although it contains intrigue and lies
Ultimately through what happened came Jesus
And understanding what happened will make us wise

Every word of God is glorious and pure
And will establish for us a foundation so sure

And so let us carefully consider the story
And reflect on how it shows us God's glory

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 27:21-29

(THE DEW OF HEAVEN AND THE FATNESS OF THE EARTH)

Introduction: Here we have this story of deceit and intrigue which God has given to us to see pictures of His Son who came in the form of a man. The symbolism we'll see in today's sermon is astonishingly beautiful and wonderfully woven into the unfolding plan of God.

Simple and obscure words which seem to have no relevance except tying sentences together turn out to make astonishing parallels in the life of Jesus and in His interactions with those around Him. Not a word is given by God which doesn't have an important purpose and so we need to handle His word carefully and prayerfully.

Text Verse: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,... Ephesians 1:3*

The blessings of God have come upon a specific line of people, even from the very beginning of man's history on earth. All of these blessings have had the purpose of leading to the Messiah, the Christ of God who is Jesus. God has given us a choice of participating in them or being eternally separated from them.

Either way, whether we receive them or not, we will bow to the One from whom they flow. Every tongue will confess His glory and Lordship and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Jacob's Voice, Esau's Hands

Our story continues on today in the tent of Isaac as he prepares to pronounce his blessing. May our eyes be opened to the beautiful pictures which this story continues to display.

²¹ Isaac said to Jacob, "Please come near, that I may feel you, my son, whether you *are* really my son Esau or not."

What we have to keep in mind is something that I brought up in a sermon in Genesis 25 where Esau sold his birthright to Jacob. At that time, I made the connection between Esau and Adam and Jacob and Jesus. It was very clear and if you missed that sermon, it would help for you to go watch it.

I mentioned it again last week too and showed that Isaac's blindness, and yet his ability to hear well and to still taste food all worked to tie the story in as a picture of Jesus. The blindness allowed for Jacob to receive the blessing, which otherwise would not have happened.

The healthy taste buds made Isaac send Esau out for wild game instead getting a meal from the flock. If his taste buds were bad, there never would have been time for Jacob to obtain the blessing.

And the good hearing brought about Isaac's distrust of the situation and so he physically is asking to feel his son to ensure he is suitable for the blessing. This is a picture of Jesus coming as a person to replace Adam, just as Jacob is replacing Esau.

The test of feeling Jacob pictures the truth of Jesus' human nature. All of this was planned by God to show us the story of Jesus. As I say, time and again, we need to ask questions when we read the Bible. Why is this story recorded? How does this point to Jesus? What does God intend for us to see?

These are real people and real stories of their lives, and yet they only account for a miniscule portion of what they did in those lives. God has selected these things in hopes that we will open our eyes and see His Son, not in a one for one comparison, but in the overall picture of the story.

Isaac wants to ensure that it is Esau he is speaking to. He's already wondered how the food was obtained so quickly. He probably figured, "Well, it's 8 am and I'll be hungry around 12:30. Esau will have to find the animal, shoot it, carry it home, cut it up, and cook it."

Instead though, lunch is ready and it's only 10:45... "Hmmm, I'm not even hungry yet. How did he get the food so fast?" And so he is curious. He even felt him to make sure he was hairy. What is the connection to Jesus? The answer is found in Hebrews chapter 2 –

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of

the people. ¹⁸ For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (14-18)

Isaac is checking to determine if this is really his son Esau. Esau pictures Adam who is a fallen man of the earth. His hair, as I already noted last week, has the biblical symbolism of awareness and in particular, an awareness of sin; of our fallen state.

The book of Hebrews says that Jesus had to be made like His brethren and that He himself has suffered, being tempted. The symbolism of Isaac feeling Jacob is realized in the humanity of Jesus. He had hair like Adam, He had flesh like Adam, and yet to Him belongs the birthright and the blessing, just like Jacob.

Isaac wanted to know if this was really his son or not, and we need to know that Jesus really is the Son of Man.

²² So Jacob went near to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, “The voice *is* Jacob’s voice, but the hands *are* the hands of Esau.”

Of course God the Father knows God the Son, but the picture is as clear as it could be. The sweet heavenly voice of the Lord, the voice that spoke the universe into existence, is concealed in the body of a Man and with the hands of Adam.

The divine Word of God of course is the voice of the Lord, but the hands are the hands of Adam. The picture one sees in this verse is as clear as crystal when you know who Jesus Christ is.

Jacob went near his father boldly to show him that he in fact met the requirements of the blessing. Jesus is no different. He came forward in the flesh in order to receive the blessing of promise which He Himself had spoken to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

It all begins with Jesus and it all belongs to Him. In this verse it says that Isaac felt Jacob, but it focuses on his hands. They're noted as the confirmation of the person. In the same way, Jesus' hands are universally thought of as the confirmation of His manhood and His act upon the cross. John 20 shows us this very clearly -

So he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

²⁶ And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to

you!” ²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” ²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”

It is Thomas, the Twin, who confirms Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and humanity. All of this is pictured in the twins Jacob and Esau. If you remember, the word used to describe them is *thaom*, meaning twin, from which we get the name Thomas.

Jesus picked His disciples by name and each name has relevance to His work - and we see it prefigured here in Genesis. How can we not believe that this is the word of God when it is so intricately woven together for us? The perfection of the Bible is astonishing.

Hebrews chapter 9 continues with the fulfillment of the symbolism we see in Jacob coming to his father –

¹¹ But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. ¹² Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.

Notice how the author of Hebrews says that the more perfect tabernacle was not made with hands. And yet, Jesus went behind the veil with His own blood, presenting His hands!

The voice of Jesus speaks, “I really am a man and I really shed my blood – see my hands.” Isaac is determining if it is Esau who is in fact Jacob just as God the Father confirms Jesus has replaced Adam. The voice and the hands – the power of the word and the beauty of the Lord!

²³ And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him.

The two are indistinguishable - Esau and Jacob, Adam and Jesus. Jacob came in Esau's likeness and Jesus came in Adam's likeness. Again, let's see the confirmation which is given in the New Testament –

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled,

concerning the Word of life— 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 1 John 1:1, 2

Isaac could have given the blessing to Esau at any time in his life and as we know from last week, Esau is now 77 and Isaac is 136. The blessing came at a time when Isaac was so old that he simply couldn't tell the difference. Had he given the blessing at an earlier stage of life, this never would have happened.

But so that we could see the symbolism that Jesus is a physical replica of Adam, it came at a time when no difference could be discerned. The wisdom of God is written all over the account of an old man, blind and bedridden. And so the blessing is granted.

²⁴ Then he said, “Are you really my son Esau?” He said, “I *am*.”

Isaac is still wondering if he's doing the right thing and so he asks one more time if it is really Esau. The stress on whether it is Esau has been brought to focus now at least five times and he has mentioned the name Esau three times. This is connecting us back to Genesis 1:26 which states –

“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...”

Esau means “made” and man was “made” or *asah* according to Genesis 1 in God's image. The story is continually bringing to mind the connection between Jacob resembling Esau, and Jesus resembling the man *made* from the dust – Adam.

Nothing could be clearer and provides the surety that we need, even from the Old Testament, that Jesus is the divine Son of God who came in human flesh. Beautifully intricate and glorious in purpose is God's word.

²⁵ He said, “Bring *it* near to me, and I will eat of my son's game, so that my soul may bless you.”

It can't be missed that the meal is as important to Isaac as is giving the blessing. The two are tied together in his mind and he states it as such – Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's game, so that my soul may bless you.

The blessings of the Bible are noted around the giving of offerings.

Noah's offering in Genesis 8 preceded the Lord's blessing. Melchizedek brought out bread and wine and blessed Abraham. Abraham's offering of Isaac on Mount Moriah led to the oath and blessing of the Lord.

Even the High Priestly blessing found in Numbers 6 directly follows the offerings mentioned in the Nazirite vows. The two are separate concepts, but they are noted one right after the other. Isaac will bless only after the offering is received.

²⁵ (con't) **So he brought *it* near to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank.**

The same terminology is given in response to Isaac's request – *hagishah li* leads to *v'yagesh lo*. "Bring it near to me"; so he brought it near to him. The meal precedes the blessing and obedience precedes the bestowal of it.

Jacob brings the meal and he brings him wine. The word here is *yayin* and indicates fermented drink, not grape juice. It's the same which so far made Noah drunk, which Melchizedek brought out for Abraham, and which both of Lot's daughters made their dad drunk with as well.

The Bible only forbids the drinking of alcohol twice in its pages. Both times are under the law and for specific reasons which can only be found under the law.

The blessing of wine is noted as often as the trouble it brings and the lesson the Bible wants us to learn is that we are to control it, not let it control us. If we can't control it, we should not drink it; if we can, we may.

²⁶ **Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near now and kiss me, my son."**

This is the first time in the Bible that the act of kissing is mentioned. It has been about 2245 years since the creation and there were possibly billions of people on earth before the flood and by this time there are again many millions.

There were certainly a jillion kisses in those 2245 years, and yet not one has been mentioned in the lives of any person until now. And so the significance should not be lost on us. The kiss is tied to the son's blessing.

This word for kiss will only be used 35 times in 35 different verses of the Old Testament and another word will be used twice. This means there are only 37 mentions of kissing in the Old Testament.

The father kisses the son and he receives the blessing. Now we are asked to do the same. The 2nd Psalm shows you the picture God intends you to see –

¹⁰ Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
¹² Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish *in* the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

Just as Jacob received the blessing with a kiss, we too participate in the blessing when we kiss the Son.

II. The Father's Blessing

²⁷ And he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him and said:

In last week's sermon, I said that there is a speculation about the clothes Jacob is wearing which belong to Esau. Rebekah put the choice clothes belonging to Esau on Jacob. The term used for those garments was *ha-khamudot*, meaning "the precious." These were probably special garments for ministry.

Because Esau was the oldest son, he would perform the priestly functions in the house. Especially because Isaac, being blind, could no longer perform them.

This verse seems to confirm this. It says, Isaac "smelled the smell of his clothing, and blessed him." I always assumed that the words Isaac uses in the blessing meant that it was Esau's natural smell that Isaac liked, but after thinking through these words carefully, I see it differently.

In the next verse, the blessing begins and it is in the stated form of a keen and alert mind, not one drunk by wine, but one with elevated senses. What Isaac says is in a poetic style of parallel clauses. It is also contains unusual forms that are noted as poetic.

Instead of saying “behold” which is often *hineh*, it says “behold” which is *re-eh*. The reason is that the next word is *re-akh* which means “smell.” It becomes poetic because of the alliteration. *Re-eh re-akh beni ke-re-akh sadeh asher berakhow adonai.* (4:22) –

**27 (con’t) “Surely, the smell of my son
Is like the smell of a field
Which the LORD has blessed.**

It’s beautiful to hear when pronounced properly. Like I said, I assumed that “the smell of my son” was speaking about Esau’s manliness, but it’s not. It’s speaking about the clothing which has been kept by Rebekah. The smell is like “the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed.”

What is it that we use to smell the smell of a field? We use incense. The smell of priestly incense would cling to these special garments just like the smell of patchouli clings all over me to hide my real smell - even when I take the clothes off, they smell like patchouli.

Incense heightens our mental state and reminds us of the goodness the Lord provides – whether it is grass, or flowers, or fruit. A field which the Lord has blessed is vibrant and alive and this is the intent behind incense. When blessed by the Lord, it is the very Garden of Eden – a field of delight, an inheritance fit for a king.

The blessings of a priest are being passed down from father to son. Again, the fulfillment is found in Jesus –

⁵ So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but *it was* He who said to Him:

“You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.”

⁶ As *He* also says in another *place*:

“You *are* a priest forever
According to the order of Melchizedek”... Hebrews 5:5, 6

The bestowal of the priestly right came upon Jesus, just as it now comes upon Jacob from Isaac.

**²⁸ Therefore may God give you
Of the dew of heaven,
Of the fatness of the earth,**

Isaac uses the term *ha'elohim* or "the God" in his blessing. There is the true God and there are false gods. Isaac's blessing concerns the true God. May He "give you of the dew of heaven" is speaking about the rains which God gives to provide the crop's increase.

Without them the land dries and dies, but with the rains come abundance and prosperity. "The fatness of the earth" speaks of the richest of soil which will produce the most bountiful of crops. It is the nutrients which give life to the seed and bring them up in a harvest beyond normal, even to overflowing.

^{28 (con't)} And plenty of grain and wine.

May the rains of heaven and the rich soil bring your increase so that they bring about "plenty of grain and wine." In Deuteronomy 8, the blessings of the land of Israel are noted by Moses before the people moved into it –

⁷ "For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; ⁹ a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones *are* iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰ When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you."

Of course, in this blessing there is a spiritual element as well. Jacob would receive what Isaac pronounced and it would continue on through his 12 sons and the people of Israel, but there is also the spiritual aspect.

The dew of heaven is the increase given by God found in the gospel message. The fatness of the ground is the rich soil of those who would hear it. Jesus explains this in His parables. There is a literal fulfillment and there is the symbolic or spiritual one as well.

⁴And when a great multitude had gathered, and they had come to Him from every city, He spoke by a parable: ⁵“A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. ⁶Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. ⁷And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. ⁸But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.” When He had said these things He cried, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

⁹Then His disciples asked Him, saying, “What does this parable mean?”

¹⁰And He said, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given* in parables, that

‘Seeing they may not see,

And hearing they may not understand.’

¹¹“Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. ¹²Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. ¹³But the ones on the rock *are those* who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴Now the ones *that* fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. ¹⁵But the ones *that* fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep *it* and bear fruit with patience. Luke 8:4-15

Isaac’s blessing is upon the son of promise and God’s blessing is upon His Son who was promised. The first part of the blessing was one of material prosperity. The part found in the next verse is one of power and authority...

**²⁹ Let peoples serve you,
And nations bow down to you.**

Isaac, who is the son of promise through Abraham, passes on the blessing of authority over the people groups they would encounter. This blessing is stated in anticipation of the fulfillment of the prophecy given to Rebekah before Jacob and Esau were born.

They would separate into different nations and the older would serve the younger. Isaac’s words now confirm that Jacob will fulfill the role as prophesied. But more than just his brother, all people who they would encounter would be subject to them.

Of course, the spiritual fulfillment of this is found in Christ who will rule the nations as prophesied in the 2nd Psalm –

⁷ “I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
‘You *are* My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give *You*
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession.
⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’”

The ultimate fulfillment of this is found in the book of Revelation.

²⁹ (cont) **Be master over your brethren,
And let your mother’s sons bow down to you.**

This continues the preeminency of Jacob over Esau. He is the only recorded brother of Jacob, although there could have been others not recorded. Eventually the line of Esau was, in fact, subordinate to Israel and was finally assimilated into them.

Israel has been given the blessing of both power and authority over his brothers. But in the spiritual blessing we see this fulfilled again in Christ. Esau pictures Adam and thus the people of the world. Jacob pictures Jesus.

In Ephesians 6, Jesus is called our Master, and in Philippians 2 we are told that every knee shall bow to Him –

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

²⁹ (cont) **Cursed *be* everyone who curses you,
And blessed *be* those who bless you!”**

This final part of Isaac’s blessing is repeated from Genesis 12:3 when God made the same promise to Abraham. It passed through his son Isaac and now it is passed on to

Jacob. And once again we see the fulfillment in Jesus. Paul tells us about it in Galatians 3-

⁸And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." ⁹ So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

We need to remember that it was Isaac's *intention* to bless Esau, just as it was God's design for man to rule the earth. But Esau was out in the field looking for food when the blessing came, and Adam still had the taste of the forbidden fruit in his mouth when his curse came. But God's plan, in the end, will right every wrong.

As you can see, the Bible isn't just a group of disconnected stories without regard to an overall point and purpose. Instead, it is a demonstration of the wisdom of God as He works out His immensely beautiful plan of reconciling the world to Himself.

He has used real people to picture an overall story of man. Esau is Adam, Jacob is Jesus. We are all sons of Adam by birth, but Jesus put on garments of flesh and came in the likeness of Adam to restore that which was fouled up.

Paul, writing to Timothy says that Jesus was manifest in the flesh and vindicated by the Spirit. (1 Timothy 3:16) Now He offers us the same opportunity. We can move from Adam to Him. We can be a part of the blessing and victory instead of the curse and the condemnation.

Next Week - Genesis 27:30-40 (It's Not Deja Vous)

Closing Verse: Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him;
All nations shall serve Him. Psalm 72:11

Kiss the Son

Isaac said to Jacob, Please come near to this spot
That I may feel you my son
Whether you are really my son Esau or not
I want to make sure I'm blessing the right one
So Jacob went near to Isaac his father
And he felt him and then he said
The voice is Jacob's, certainly not another

But the hands are those of Esau instead

And he did not recognize him because his hands were hairy
Like Esau's hands, so he blessed him though he was wary

Then he said, "Are you really my son Esau?"
He said, "I am. It is true."
He said bring it near to me and I will eat it all
My son's game, so that my soul may bless you

So he brought it near to him and he ate
And he brought him wine and he drank too
Then his father Isaac said to him "It's great!"
"Come near now and kiss me, my son; I will bless you

And he came near and kissed his father's head
And he smelled the smell of his clothing too
And he blessed him and in the blessing he said
Listen my son that which I pronounce upon you

Surely the smell of my son is like the smell of a field
Which the Lord has blessed
Therefore may God give you
Of the dew of heaven,
Of the fatness of the earth,
And plenty of grain and wine.
Let peoples serve you,
And nations bow down to you.
Be master over your brethren,
And let your mother's sons bow down to you.
Cursed *be* everyone who curses you,
And blessed *be* those who bless you!"

This is the blessing of Isaac to Jacob his son
And it has proven true in the world's history
But it also point to Jesus, the rightful One
Upon whom the blessing falls ultimately
It is He who has inherited all things from the Father
And He is the One to take the place of Adam, you see

To Him belongs all glory, it is not for another
It is He who prevailed over death for you and for me
And so to our Lord we bow our knees
And to Jesus we give our lives willingly
Into our heart he looks and He sees
The soul who has trusted in Him for all eternity

Forever we shall sing your praise
Yes glory to the King for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 27:30-40 (IT'S NOT DEJA VOUS)

Introduction: The story we've been looking at is hard for us to accept unless we look carefully into what happened and why. Before Jacob and Esau were born, God knew the outcome. He looked at the hearts of the two boys and made His divine choice as to who would receive the birthright and the blessing.

As with all things in the Bible, faith is the key. Let me give you an example to think about.

If you have two employees, and a long term plan of what you want accomplished, which would you prefer to have? You make a list of things you want done daily which will keep the employees busy, but you also give to them insights into the long term vision.

The first person does exactly what he is told to do but without any regard to the ultimate goal. He is so concerned about fulfilling the details that the final objective has no relevance in his daily actions.

The second is obedient, but may miss the mark occasionally. However, his eyes are constantly on the end goal of the company. It is his one main objective. He understands the need for the daily tasks, but they don't consume him, they guide him to the goal.

Which is the better choice and why? Think about that for a while.

Text Verse: *"I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel, And batter the brow of Moab, And destroy all the sons of tumult. ¹⁸ "And Edom shall be a possession; Seir also, his enemies, shall be a possession, While Israel does valiantly. ¹⁹ Out of Jacob One shall have dominion, And destroy the remains of the city." Numbers 24:17-19*

It never ceases to amaze me what God has done in His beautiful creation and in His plan of redemption. And His word is such a treasure because everything about it keeps pointing to Jesus. God in His wisdom gave twins to Rebekah and determined that one would serve the other.

That prophecy has come to pass just like everything in the Bible either has or will come to pass. We have a sure word and a hope grounded in the surety of the truth of God and

so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Missed Blessing

As we've seen in the past sermons about Jacob and Esau, they prefigure Christ and Adam. Last week, we saw that Christ came as a Man and prevailed over Adam's transgression and this was pictured in the blessing of Jacob instead of Esau.

As I said then, what Jacob did was deceptive, but God recorded it to show us the pattern of what would occur – not the deception, but that Christ really came as a Man. It isn't a 1 for 1 picture.

What Jesus did was without deception, but so that we can see the patterns of Adam and Christ, we have been given this story. We now continue on with the account.

³⁰ Now it happened, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

No sooner does Jacob leave Isaac's tent, then Esau comes into it. There is a repetition in the verse which commentators look at as this being as close as it gets – *Ya'akov v'hi akh yaso yasa* – Jacob came and was yet gone gone...

The Jewish scholar Jarchi sees the doubling of the word *yaso yasa* or "gone gone" as the one going out and the other coming in at the same time.

No matter whether they stopped to talk about the weather, just waved as they passed each other, or just missed each other by a breath, it was exceedingly close and points directly to the hand of God upon this entire thing.

Esau was hunting and God provided an animal at the exact spot and time where he would be back, have it prepared, and brought in at this exact moment. There is no chance in this account, but the deliberate timing and foreknowledge of God.

Jacob, who is Israel, was to receive the blessing and through him and his people would come Jesus. Nothing is left to chance and nothing happened apart from God's infinite wisdom.

Whether Rebekah and Jacob's actions were right in our eyes doesn't change what we are to learn – God made and oversaw the selection of both the birthright and the blessing.

³¹ He also had made savory food, and brought it to his father, and said to his father, "Let my father arise and eat of his son's game, that your soul may bless me."

Right at the beginning of this chapter, Isaac said this to Esau –

"Now therefore, please take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me. ⁴ And make me savory food, such as I love, and bring *it* to me that I may eat, that my soul may bless you before I die."

Esau has done exactly what he was asked to do and this verse repeats it. Esau didn't skip anything and he was completely obedient and yet he missed out on the blessing. In this, we can see many people in the world today, crossing all the "t's" and dotting all the "i's" and yet they lack the faith God seeks.

God gives us His word, the Bible, and in it are all kinds of do's and don'ts – things anyone can do and many spend their whole life doing, and yet they will be excluded from the prize. Paul explains why in Romans 9 –

³⁰What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; ³¹ but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. ³² Why? Because *they did* not *seek it* by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. ³³ As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense,
And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

This isn't limited to Jews alone, but to anyone who pursues God's favor through works apart from faith. Jacob may have been cunning in how he obtained his father's blessing, but he had faith in what he did.

Esau followed his father's instructions, but God saw his heart. He was working his deeds in order to be blessed instead of living by faith in order to be blessed. The tastiest food in the world is no substitute for the loving mother's hand who prepares the simplest meal, and the favor of God rests only on those who live by faith.

³² And his father Isaac said to him, “Who *are* you?” So he said, “I *am* your son, your firstborn, Esau.”

Isaac must have thought he was hearing things or confused in his head because the recognizable voice of Esau is speaking, but he’s just had a meal and blessed who he thought was Esau. “I’ve done this before.” No Isaac, it’s not *deja vous*.

Imagine you’re talking to someone and then realize they aren’t the person you thought you were talking to. When that happens, you have a moment of stupor and you try to sort things out. This is where Isaac is and to help him along, Esau responds in a way which is truthful but at the same is not correct.

He says “I am your son.” This is correct, but then he says, “I am your firstborn.” This is truthful, but it’s not exactly correct. He sold his birthright to Jacob and so even though he is technically the firstborn, he no longer has the rights of the firstborn, including the right to claim he is the firstborn, even though he is. Confused?

And he finishes with “Esau.” He gives his name as he received it when he was born, not as it was changed when he sold his birthright. What he is saying is literally the truth, but it is deceptive none the less.

We can see the same concepts running through the people of Israel and those who are the true sons of God. In Exodus 4 we read this –

Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD: “Israel *is* My son, My firstborn. (vs. 22)

Afterward, however, God gave Israel the law which included circumcision, but there was more than just circumcision. In order to be considered a true member of the faith, more was necessary. Paul explains this in Romans 2 –

²⁵For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? ²⁷And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, *even with your written code* and circumcision, *are* a transgressor of the law? ²⁸For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹but *he is* a Jew

who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.

Both Deuteronomy and Jeremiah speak of the circumcision of the heart, Paul is building on what the law already says. A Jew cannot claim the title without bearing what goes along with the title.

Likewise Esau couldn't legitimately bear the title because he no longer bore what went along with it. And if he couldn't bear the title, then he really wasn't entitled to the blessing either.

³³ Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, "Who?

The Hebrew here says that Isaac "trembled with a great trembling greatly." He was so confused and so overwrought that he literally shook violently at what occurred. This is the same word used to describe the trembling of the people at Mount Sinai and even the quaking of the mountain itself in Exodus 19 –

¹⁶Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who *were* in the camp **trembled**.
¹⁷ And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. ¹⁸ Now Mount Sinai *was* completely in smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain **quaked** greatly.

Just as with the events at Sinai for the people of Israel, Isaac's trembling came from astonishment at the divine sign. We know because of what he will say in the continuation of verse 33...

³³ (con't) Where *is* the one who hunted game and brought *it* to me? I ate all *of it* before you came, and I have blessed him—and indeed he shall be blessed."

With sudden clarity, Isaac sees completely what has just happened. The people at the foot of Sinai received no greater insight into the work of God than Isaac has now seen. The food was received, the blessing was given, and indeed Jacob shall be blessed.

The heavens have opened Isaac's dead eyes to the fulfillment of the plan of God which was prophesied while the two boys were still in Rebekah's womb. What his physical eyes missed because of blindness, his spiritual eyes have now comprehended.

With lucidity of mind, he has come to realize that the blessing isn't subject to his affection for Esau, but is a right which was entrusted to him by God's grace, just as it was to his father before him. Because it is of *divine Source* it is transferred by *divine choice*.

He has been impelled by a higher authority to pass on what he received to the son chosen by the One who originally bestowed it. The will of man was excluded in this transfer and therefore man could not randomly choose to withdraw it; Isaac can't take it back.

Isaiah 14 shows us that this is true. All things come about by the sovereign will and purpose of God –

For the LORD of hosts has purposed, And who will annul *it*? His hand *is* stretched out, And who will turn it back?" (vs. 27)

The particular special note for us today is that of all of the things that Isaac could have been remembered for in the great Hall of Faith which is recorded in Hebrews chapter 11, the blessings upon these two men is what was chosen. There it says –

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. (vs. 20)

Isaac realized that the blessing he had pronounced rightfully belonged to Jacob and so he said to Esau, "I have blessed him—*and* indeed he shall be blessed." What I have spoken I have spoken and the blessing will remain upon Jacob.

God looked at his words here and credited it to him in His own word for all time as righteousness – "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau." There was no going back and there was only the determination that what had occurred was by divine guidance.

Edom gave up his rights and Jacob stepped in and claimed them. Likewise, Adam made his choice and gave up paradise. Jesus came and received it back. Now Adam's children can accept what Jesus has done or they can remain in Adam.

³⁴ When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, “Bless me—me also, O my father!”

Isaac trembled with a great trembling and now Esau cries with an exceedingly great and bitter cry. The emotional level is probably as high as in any room ever in human history. The Latin Vulgate says Esau roared. It is as if he were a lion in the anguish of hunger.

Barakheni gam-ani avi (0:600 min) “Bless me—me also, O my father!” Unfortunately by the divine Providence the blessing had been given and what was spoken could not be reversed. Once again, as with a jillion other examples in the Bible, when God’s divine will is spoken, what comes is done for all time.

As sad as this is for Esau, we can take comfort in exactly this fact. When God seals a believer in His Son, it is done for all time. His will can never be thwarted. Salvation is, by necessity, eternal. What Esau lost in his blessing is done. The same is true in Christ for all who call on Him as Lord – it is done.

II. Words Have Meaning

³⁵ But he said, “Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing.”

Isaac in his clear thinking puts less blame on Jacob than he is excusing his actions to Esau. If two people were out and there was an accident, the response to the police would be different based on their relationship.

If they weren’t friends, the one talking to the cop might say, “He was driving way too fast. Because of his recklessness, we had an accident.” But if they were friends, he might say, “My friend was trying to get me to work and I was pressuring him to get me there.”

The difference in how we present an argument is based on who the affected parties are and the circumstances that brought about the case. Isaac is excusing his actions to Esau more than blaming Jacob. This is clear based on a word used in the next verse.

³⁶ And *Esau* said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob?”

Young’s literal translation of the Bible gives us the best sense of what I think Esau says, “And he saith, ‘Is it because one called his name Jacob that he doth take me by the heel these two times?’” In other words, “Is he doing this because of the name he was given?” He isn’t sure of the reason behind the action.

If Isaac had blamed Jacob directly, Esau would have responded as many translations state it, in an affirmative way. But instead, he is asking it from a state of unknowing and reaching for an answer. “Why? And is this the answer – because of his name?”

But we’ve already looked at why. Earlier, in verse 31 I said, “Esau followed his father’s instructions, but God saw his heart. He was working his deeds in order to be blessed instead of living by faith in order to be blessed.”

Paul, speaking about the promises of God to Abraham apart from works of the law shows us how this works in Romans 4 –

¹³“For the promise that he would be the heir of the world *was* not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if those who are of the law *are* heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect,...”

Esau wasn’t under the law, but he was seeking the promise in the same way. He was doing exactly what Isaac had ordered but without faith in what the promise signified. Let me ask you something similar to what I asked you earlier -

Which will God be pleased with? The first is a person who follows every detail of the Bible scrupulously, but doesn't believe what the Bible says. Rather, he is doing it because as a priest, he gets a great salary, great benefits, and a light workload.

The second is a guy who is absolutely in love with Jesus, reads and cherishes his Bible, does what he can to be a good and obedient Christian, but falls short of what the Bible expects time and time again - making errors and then asking God to forgive him and change him so that he is pleasing to God.

The fact is, God has no respect for the first and has great and tender care for the latter, such as David and Paul. It is faith and an obedient heart that God desires rather than scrupulous attendance to the precepts while not believing the intent behind them.

The first is Esau. The latter is Jacob. Esau was living life and doing what was necessary to get to the next meal, but he never saw any use for what lay ahead. Dad’s promise of a blessing was met with complete obedience to the tasks, but with no regard to the ultimate goal that the blessing would provide.

Jacob missed the mark by being a deceiver, but it was with the intent and goal of the

promised blessing. And he allowed himself to be prompted along by his mother who carried the prophecy, just as we are to allow ourselves to be prompted by the word of the Bible and the Spirit who likewise carry for us God's direction.

36 (con't) For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright, and now look, he has taken away my blessing!"

In an attempt to answer his own question as to why, Esau now states two inaccuracies. The first is that Jacob took away his birthright, which in fact he sold for soup. The second is that he took away the blessing, which in fact now belonged to Jacob *because of* the birthright.

Also, Jacob didn't take it away. Instead Isaac gave it away to Jacob, even if it was done under false pretenses. But because of his perceived wrongs, he says Jacob supplanted him and uses a word which is the same root as "Jacob" and means "to grasp the heel."

36 (con't) And he said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?"

This is an obvious question and Isaac's answer may seem all the more surprising when we see that Jacob would later make pronouncements over all 12 of his sons and two of his grandsons as well. "Isn't there more than one blessing in your tent for me dad?"

37 Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?"

Jacob will bless two of his grandsons and make pronouncements over all of his sons, but he will do it in a way which will make distinctions between them and which will find a fulfillment in each one of them individually. We'll see this in Genesis 48 and 49.

However, Isaac's blessing on Jacob was an all-encompassing bestowal of the good things to be found leading to the Messiah as well as authority over his brothers, and other earthly and spiritual blessings. Because of this, his question is obvious, "What shall I do now for you, my son?"

38 And Esau said to his father, "Have you only one blessing, my father? Bless me—me also, O my father!" And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

The words of Hebrews chapter 12 ring forth from this verse in Genesis –

¹⁴ Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: ¹⁵ looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; ¹⁶ lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. ¹⁷ For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

There is a godly way to walk and an ungodly and profane way to walk. Esau chose the ungodly way and in the end, it cost him. We can go back and ask ourselves – "Did God's prophecy about Esau serving Jacob before he was born cause this or did it simply look forward and see the outcome of Esau's choices?"

The answer is clear. Esau made his choices and God knew what they would be. Likewise, God gives us freewill to make our own choices. Choose wisely as they may have eternal consequences.

III. Esau's Blessing

³⁹ Then Isaac his father answered and said to him:

Before we finish this verse and read the blessing, I want you to note that it never mentions that Isaac ate the meal brought to him by Esau. To Isaac, the meal was as important as the intended blessing. Only after eating and drinking was Jacob blessed.

If you think it through, Esau sold his birthright for a meal, but he received his blessing without there being a meal. It's a great picture of us and our relationship with the Lord, or our lack of it. The spiritual significance of Jacob's blessing is lacking from Esau's.

Despite this and despite what is said in his blessing, which is as much a curse as it is a blessing, Esau probably went away pleased. To a person like him, the act meant more than the substance.

**³⁹ (con't) "Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth,
And of the dew of heaven from above.**

The first thing to note which is different from Jacob's blessing is that Isaac says nothing about his smell. When he blessed Jacob, he said, "Surely, the smell of my son *is* like the smell of a field Which the LORD has blessed."

If the *personal* smell of Esau was what Isaac loved, he would have said this again, but he doesn't. This confirms the thought about the garments that Rebekah placed on Jacob. They were priestly garments which smelled of incense used in conducting rituals.

The second important thing to note is the translation of what Isaac says here. Let me read it again and then compare it to the NIV –

Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth, And of the dew of heaven from above.

Your dwelling will be away from the earth's richness, away from the dew of heaven above.

One says his dwelling will be *of the earth's riches* and one says it will be *away from the earth's riches*. In this case, translations like the KJV and the NKJV are literally right, because he gives the same blessing using the same words, but they are actually wrong.

Isaac blessed Jacob beginning with the dew of heaven and then the fatness of the earth. He began his blessing to Esau with the fatness of the earth and then the dew of heaven. This establishes a contrast. Therefore the words he uses are in a contrasting sense.

"From the dew of heaven" can mean either getting from the dew of heaven or being away from the dew of heaven. His blessing to Jacob is the first and his blessing to Esau is that latter. This portion of Esau's blessing is in contrast to what Jacob received. The NIV is a better translation here. History bore it out in where Esau lived. The next verse shows us this.

⁴⁰ **By your sword you shall live,
And you shall serve your brother;**

Jacob got the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth which resulted in "plenty of grain and wine." Esau doesn't get either and that results in living by the sword and being subject to Jacob. The reason why I'm being detailed about this is because differences in translations are important.

If you stick with one translation, you very well may miss what God really intends for you to see. Translators do the best they can, but they bring their preconceptions with them. This is the same as commentaries and preachers.

We all have ideas about what God is telling us and it's based on our personal thoughts about Him or our relationship with Him. Esau will live away from the riches of heaven and earth and will live by the sword and under the rule of Jacob.

⁴⁰ (con't) **And it shall come to pass, when you become restless,
That you shall break his yoke from your neck."**

This final portion of the blessing on Esau is hard to pin down directly to one period in time. The Edomites were subjected to Israel starting with Saul the first king. They rebelled several times and they finally shook them off under King Ahaz in 2 Kings 16.

However, the ancient Jewish Historian Josephus says that about 129 BC John Hyrcanus –

“subdued all the Idumeans; and permitted them to stay in that country, if they would circumcise their genitals, and make use of the laws of the Jews; and they were so desirous of living in the country of their forefathers, that they submitted to the use of circumcision, and of the rest of the Jewish ways of living; at which time therefore this befell them, that they were hereafter no other than Jews.”

They were assimilated into the Jewish people but even then Herod, the king at the time of Jesus was from Edom and they continued to be in rule until the Jews were dispersed in AD70.

What I see as the ultimate fulfillment of this portion of his blessing is that breaking Jacob's yoke from their neck is pointing directly to Jesus. We all have yokes on us and we all are in some type of bondage as humans. Directly its bondage to sin because of Adam.

Indirectly we may be in bondage to a bank, an agreement, or whatever. There is only one place of real freedom and that is when we get restless with the things of this world and look forward instead to the things of eternity.

Edom was subjected to Israel who was the steward of the law. But Paul in the New Testament calls the law bondage. It is a yoke of submission which he tells us to not get enslaved in. There is one way to be free from its constraints and that is found in Jesus

Closing Verse: *Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30*

Next Week: Genesis 27:41-46 (The Brother's Anger, A Picture of Church Reformation)

You Shall Serve Your Brother

Now it happened as soon as Isaac had finished Jacob's blessing
And Jacob had scarcely gone out from Isaac his father
That Esau his brother came in from hunting and food dressing
He had made savory food and brought it to dad, it was no bother
And he said to his father, "Arise and eat of his son's game"
Do this dad so that your soul may bless me
And his father Isaac said to him, "Who are you? What's your name?"
So he said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Esau, you see"
Then Isaac trembled exceedingly, and said, "Who?"
Where is the one who hunted game and brought it to me?
I ate all of it before you came, yes it's true
I have blessed him and indeed he shall be blessed abundantly
When Esau heard the words of his father
He cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry
And said to his father, "Bless me-me also, with another
How could this have happened, I need to know why

But Isaac said, to Esau his son, yes he was confessing
"Your brother came with deceit and has taken away your blessing
And Esau said, "Is he not rightly named Jacob?' as he shook
For he has supplanted me these two times
He took away my birthright and now just look
He has taken away my blessing... I can't believe these crimes
And he said to his father quite pitifully
Have you not reserved a blessing for me
Then Isaac answered and to his son Esau he said
Indeed I have made him your master, you see
And all his brethren I have given to him as servants, he is the head
With grain and wine I have sustained him abundantly
What shall I do now for you, my son

I have given him my blessing, my only one
And Esau said to his father in an excited state
Have you only one blessing my father, just one?
Bless me-me also, O my father; make me also great
And Esau lifted up his voice and wept at what had been done
Then Isaac his father answered and said to him:

“Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth,
And of the dew of heaven from above.
By your sword you shall live,
And you shall serve your brother;
And it shall come to pass, when you become restless,
That you shall break his yoke from your neck.”

And so ends the story of how the blessing did pass
From Esau to Jacob in Isaac’s tent
And from the account we see how Jacob did surpass
His older brother thus meeting God’s intent
Each of us can also receive an eternal blessing
By calling out on the Lord Jesus’ name
And by donning white garment as our dressing
In heaven’s scroll will be written our name
Praises and honor to our glorious Lord above
Who has showered us with His eternal love

And so to Him we lift our voices in praise
And so let us walk in His light all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 27:41-46

(THE BROTHER'S ANGER, A PICTURE OF CHURCH REFORMATION)

Introduction: Today we have just a few short verses to consider, but I believe that what's being seen in them is a picture of the true people of God within the church and even a picture of what necessitated the Protestant Reformation and many other breaking away actions in the church since then.

There always have been true believers, and those who profess faith but have none. This was true in Israel and this has been true since the founding of the church. I'll give two examples – one from the Old Testament and one from the New for you to consider.

The first is from Ezekiel 8. He has a vision and during that vision he's taken to Jerusalem and sees the pagan practices going on right in the temple, by those who are supposed to be the people of God –

Then He said to me, "Son of man, lift your eyes now toward the north." So I lifted my eyes toward the north, and there, north of the altar gate, was this image of jealousy in the entrance.

⁶ Furthermore He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel commits here, to make Me go far away from My sanctuary? Now turn again, you will see greater abominations." ⁷ So He brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, there was a hole in the wall. ⁸ Then He said to me, "Son of man, dig into the wall"; and when I dug into the wall, there was a door.

⁹ And He said to me, "Go in, and see the wicked abominations which they are doing there." ¹⁰ So I went in and saw, and there—every sort of creeping thing, abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed all around on the walls. ¹¹ And there stood before them seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, and in their midst stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan. Each man had a censer in his hand, and a thick cloud of incense went up. ¹² Then He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the room of his idols? For they say, 'The LORD does not see us, the LORD has forsaken the land.'"

¹³ And He said to me, "Turn again, *and* you will see greater abominations that they are doing." ¹⁴ So He brought me to the door of the north gate of the LORD's house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz.

¹⁵ Then He said to me, “Have you seen *this*, O son of man? Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these.” ¹⁶ So He brought me into the inner court of the LORD’s house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, *were* about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east.

¹⁷ And He said to me, “Have you seen *this*, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose. ¹⁸ Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them.”

In the New Testament it is no different –

¹ Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ² speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, ³ forbidding to marry, *and commanding* to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴ For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; ⁵ for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. 1 Timothy 4:1-4

As you can see, false worshippers fill the halls of history and reach both back before the cross and forward after it. If you noticed some of the similarities between both accounts and the Roman church, then you’ve been paying attention. I am not against Catholics, but I am against their church doctrine.

There is one Lord and He has given one word for the people of God. As we will see, this conflict between two brothers prefigures the conflict between these two ideologies.

Text Verse: ¹⁰ Then Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read it before the king. ¹¹ Now it happened, when the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, that he tore his clothes. 2 Kings 22:10,11

Good King Josiah was one of the great kings of Israel. When the Law of Moses, which had been forgotten for so long was found, it was read to him and he mourned over how God’s word had been neglected. He began great reforms in Israel to turn the people’s hearts back to the Lord.

In church history, this has happened as well on several occasions, most notably at the time of Martin Luther and the great protestant reformation. Man turns from God's laws, but God brings in new men to restore the truth.

May we determine in our hearts to never stray from His good word to us. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Elder's Hatred

The last three sermons, all from Genesis 27, highlighted the way in which Jacob obtained the blessing from Isaac which Isaac had intended for Esau. Today we have just six verses left in chapter 27 and which form, as I said, a pattern realized in the Protestant Reformation of the Church as well as other church reorganizations.

The details of this chapter are happening when Jacob and Esau are 77 years old and Isaac is 136. Therefore, this is about the year 2245AM and its 61 years after Abraham died.

⁴¹ So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob."

Esau is naturally upset at what happened between him and Jacob. Isaac asked him to go hunting and make a meal for him so that when he came back he could bless him. While he was gone, Jacob deceptively obtained the blessing that he was promised.

There is room for anger in every person, particularly at sin. But there is no room for anger if it will allow the devil in. We saw this first when Cain slew Abel. The Lord told him at that time –

“So the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? ⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire *is* for you, but you should rule over it.” Genesis 4:6, 7

Cain didn't heed the lesson and it ended in murder. The same thing happened between two of David's sons after he became King of Israel as 2 Samuel 13 records –

²⁸ “Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, “Watch now, when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say to you, ‘Strike Amnon!’ then kill

him. Do not be afraid. Have I not commanded you? Be courageous and valiant.”²⁹
So the servants of Absalom did to Amnon as Absalom had commanded. Then all the king’s sons arose, and each one got on his mule and fled.”

Amnon, half brother of Absalom, had forcefully slept with Absalom’s sister Tamar and then rejected her and Absalom held a grudge which again led to the murder of his brother.

David, Absalom’s father, may have been thinking of what happened when he wrote these words in the 4th Psalm –

⁴ "Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah ⁵ Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, And put your trust in the LORD."

Paul built upon David’s words and said this to us in Ephesians 4 –

²⁶ "'Be angry, and do not sin': do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷ nor give place to the devil."

So getting back to Esau, it’s possible that he actually thought about regaining the birthright, and thus the blessing, by killing Jacob. He said, “The days for mourning my father are at hand” meaning that his dad was old and he expected him to die soon.

He had already gotten married at the age of 40, but Jacob is 77 and still unmarried. If his brother were to die before he married, then the birthright and the blessing would ostensibly revert to him.

It would also be a slap at the God he had rejected because he would also defeat the oracle God had stated to Rebekah before they were born about the older serving the younger. This shows the profane mind of one who would attempt to cast off God’s rule.

It also shows that he was probably afraid of his dad, even though he was old, blind, and stuck in bed. As the Geneva Bible says, “Hypocrites only abstain from doing evil for fear of men.”

Unfortunately for Esau, he would fail on all accounts, Jacob discovered his intent and fled, and his father would live more than 40 more years, to the age of 180. During this time, Jacob will have two wives, 12 sons, and at least one daughter, maybe more. God’s divine plan prevailed as it always will.

John Gill writes of another possibility concerning this entire scenario that I want to point out, even though I don't agree with it. One of his contemporaries named Schmidt looks at the passage in a completely different way than all other interpreters.

He sees "the days of my father's mourning are coming" not that his father would be mourned for, being dead, but that his father, being alive, would himself mourn for Jacob, being slain by Esau.

And so he renders the next clause, "for I will slay my brother Jacob" which will make Isaac mourn and maybe die of grief. If this is correct Esau is showing an ill will to Isaac for confirming Jacob's blessing and to Jacob because he got the blessing.

Either way, whether he intended to kill Jacob after his father was mourned for, or kill Jacob and thus make his father mourn, Esau intended to kill Jacob and throw off God's rule in the process. I believe this short account prefigures church reformation and the next verse is where we begin to see this...

⁴² And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, "Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you *by intending* to kill you.

Please try to follow my logic here. In the past, Rebekah has been a picture of the church, the people of God. If you didn't see the sermons on Genesis 24, you really need to watch them to understand, but nothing could be clearer.

There is strife between the two children which goes back to their time in the womb. There God spoke these words –

Two nations *are* in your womb,
Two peoples shall be separated from your body;
One people shall be stronger than the other,
And the older shall serve the younger. (23)

These words are fulfilled in the Israelites and the Edomites, but because she pictures the church, I believe they are also fulfilled in the Church. The Roman Catholic Church is what we might consider the "older brother" and the reformation is the younger.

But this is a "type" or picture of the true church and the false one, not specifically Roman Catholics. We need to remember that Jacob was chosen by God and he arrived

at the same time as Esau. He is the true son of blessing and through whom the Messiah came.

The same is true with the church. The older came about at the same time as the younger. One is the bearer of the Messiah – the true people of God, and one gave up its birthright for works and idolatry. It also gave up its spiritual blessing through ritual.

In those Genesis 24 sermons, we spoke of Rebekah's wet nurse and lifelong companion, who was Deborah. She is, as I clearly demonstrated, a picture of the word of God. Genesis 35:8 says that she was with Jacob after returning from his 20 year stay in Haran when he fled from Esau.

Because he stayed there the entire time and she returned with him, then she must have left with him as well. Deborah, a picture of the word of God, went to Haran with Jacob. We know this is so.

In other words, from Rebekah, as a picture of the church, there is a portion of people who have always held to the word of God, having been promised in advance, having been raised with the word, and having carried that same word with them.

And then there is the other offspring which has been married to foreign and pagan wives. This is Esau as we will see in a few verses. Likewise, we saw in the passage from Ezekiel earlier those who had joined themselves to foreign and pagan idols right in the temple, and just as the Catholic church does through idol worship, the veneration of Mary and the saints, etc.

And this older, unspiritual son who failed to receive the birthright or the blessing threatened to kill the younger son. The pattern is true in ancient Israel where the priests killed the prophets and the people who held to the true God and His word.

It has also happened in Christianity as well. How many times throughout church history have we seen it. The Spanish Inquisition, the burning of martyrs like John Hus, the trials of Martin Luther, and on and on and on.

There is an enmity and a hatred within the church which even prompted the Catholic church to actually take a stand completely contrary to the precepts of the Bible. This happened at the Council of Trent in 1546.

At this council, they published a list of canons which at once and completely cut themselves off from the truth of the gospel and the word of God.

However, as we will see in chapter 33, Jacob and Esau eventually met and the hostility was dropped, but then they parted again and went their separate ways. This is the state of the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches today. There is no longer a blood feud, but there is a complete division between the two.

And the pattern continues in the church. Not specifically between Rome and the other churches, but between the true son of promise who holds to the word of God, and the spiritually corrupt, pictured by Esau, who don't.

This isn't a Roman Catholic versus Protestant conflict, but a conflict where the dividing line is a spiritual versus a carnal heritage. The Protestant Reformation merely made the largest distinction between the two in the lives of the church.

Let's reread verse 42 again – “And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, “Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you *by intending* to kill you.”

The children of the church were conceived at the same time, but only one is the true spiritual church and the older shall serve the younger. And yes, the older has intended on killing the younger because of their heritage.

As Matthew Henry says about this verse, “The happiness of saints is the envy of sinners. Whom Heaven blesses, hell curses.”

II. Time for Healing

⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran.

Rebekah seeing that disaster has been pronounced upon her beloved son tells Jacob to flee to Laban in Haran. Interestingly, Haran means "mountainous." In what seems to be a parallel thought from Isaiah chapter 40, those who carry the gospel message are told this –

O Zion, You who bring good tidings, Get up into the high mountain;
O Jerusalem, You who bring good tidings, Lift up your voice with strength,
Lift *it* up, be not afraid; Say to the cities of Judah, “Behold your God!” Isaiah 40:9

The true church has held fast to the Bible and has proclaimed from the high mountain the gospel for 2000 years, exactly as the Lord has directed. The good tidings of the truth of God's word are being shouted out with a loud voice and with strength.

At the same time as Jacob went to the mountains, Esau remained in Canaan and mixed first with pagan, idolatrous wives and later married two more women who were daughters of Ishmael – who pictures the law. He went from the bondage of idolatry and moved to the bondage of legalism and works-based religion.

⁴⁴ And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away,

"A few days" is the term *yammim akhadim* and it turned out to be somewhere around 20 years. However long it was, there is no record in the Bible of Jacob ever seeing his mother again.

It's an argument from silence to say it didn't happen, but no matter what it was at least twenty years and maybe never again did their eyes alight upon each other. It was a high cost for Rebekah, but it was in fulfillment of God's word and His plan.

And the pattern has been repeated many, many times throughout history. Those who are of the true spiritual line bearing the word of God have left home and family to carry the message of Christ around the world. Many have never returned home again.

In past times, missionaries even packed their few belongings into a casket, determining that when they returned it would be they who filled it. When they went, they went with God's blessing and His word, and when they returned it was in a state of victory over the death that consumed them.

⁴⁵ until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there.

What is almost sad is what Rebekah says to Jacob, until Esau "forgets what you have done to him." Deceiving Isaac was her idea in the first place and Jacob questioned the prudence of it from the start, but now she overlooks her own part in the whole thing.

Anyway, as I said earlier, Jacob and Esau eventually met again and the hostility was dropped, but then they divided and went their separate ways. This is how things are between the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches today. There is no longer a blood feud, but there is a complete division between the two.

There is also nothing to preclude anyone who is in a bad church from coming to their senses and there is nothing which would lead us to believe the Esau remained defiant of God until his death. Either way though, the enmity subsided between the two.

⁴⁵ (cont') **Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?"**

What she is saying is that if Esau were to have killed Jacob, he could also have been killed. This custom, which was codified in the Law of Moses, was that a close relative had the right to kill another person who took the life of a family member.

Just because only Jacob and Esau are mentioned as Isaac's sons, there is no reason to believe he didn't have other sons as well. And in fact, the blessing that Isaac gave to Jacob in this same chapter uses the plural term "brothers." Let me read it to you –

²⁹ Let peoples serve you, And nations bow down to you. Be master over your brethren, And let your mother's sons bow down to you. Gen 27:29

Likewise, when talking to Esau afterwards, Isaac says this to him -

³⁷ Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, "Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; with grain and wine I have sustained him. What shall I do now for you, my son?" Gen 27:37

So Rebekah very well may fear that another one of her own sons, if there really are any, could legally take Esau's life for what he planned to do to Jacob. Even if they were Isaac's only two children there was still the law of God given to Noah in Genesis 9 –

⁵ From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man. ⁶ "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed; For in the image of God He made man.

Whether by another of her sons or by someone executing the law in their place, either way in this she would lose two sons "in one day" just as she said.

These words of Rebekah have a parallel in Jesus' words about those who are of the true spiritual line and those who aren't. Listen to His parable and notice the similarities –

²⁴ "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵ but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his

way. ²⁶ But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. ²⁷ So the servants of the owner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?’ ²⁸ He said to them, ‘An enemy has done this.’ The servants said to him, ‘Do you want us then to go and gather them up?’ ²⁹ But he said, ‘No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.”’”

III. Weary of Evildoers

⁴⁶ And Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these *who are* the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?”

In Genesis 26 we saw that Esau had married two women who were Hittites or local women from Canaan. Rebekah will use his marriages to get Jacob a passage out of the area.

Rather than hurting Isaac’s feelings by bringing up Esau’s intentions of killing Jacob, and of which Isaac may have had no idea at all about, Rebekah tells him about her weariness concerning the daughters of Heth that Esau had married.

She tells Isaac that she doesn’t want Jacob to have a wife from the area. Her intent is to send him to her own home, where she came from in Mesopotamia, to get a wife from there, and to allow space and time to heal Esau’s bitterness.

An interesting thing occurs in the Hebrew of this verse which has only happened 3 times so far in the Bible

The Hebrew word for “weary” – “I am weary of my life” is *qaz-ti*. It means to feel a loathing, abhorrence, or sickening dread. This particular word, in the original handwritten Hebrew has an unusually small letter quph or our “q.”

In all, there will be very few times in the entire Bible that such rare letters will be used – only 17 in the five books of Moses and a few others after them. God is giving us clues about Himself and His plan of redemption in these unusual sized letters.

Quph is the 19th letter of the Hebrew aleph-bet and its image, or the picture it makes, is the sun at the horizon. In this context, it can mean condense, circle, or time. The 19th Psalm uses the name of the letter in one of its verses –

In them He has set a tabernacle for the sun, ⁵ Which *is* like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *And* rejoices like a strong man to run its race. ⁶ Its rising *is* from one end of heaven, And its circuit to the other end; And there is nothing hidden from its heat.

The word circuit is the word quph. What I think is being said by Rebekah is that the never-ending cycle of life, its weariness, is brought on by the “daughters of Heth” (their pagan practices.) The same word that she uses for “weary” is used in Leviticus and under the same concept –

"And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them." Leviticus 20:23

The word “abhorred” is the same as Rebekah uses to say “weary.” So once again, I believe this obscure small letter in this one word is telling us that there is a true church and there is a false one.

According to Paul, we’re not to be unevenly yoked with non believers because they will pull us away from following the Lord with all our heart. This is what Rebekah is implying to Jacob and it is the lesson found time and time again in the Bible.

He wants us to not mingle our faith with false practices, such as idol worship, tarot cards, rosary beads, praying to saints or to Mary, horoscopes, or any other false religious practice. And He also asks us to not intermingle with those who follow those practices in marriage.

I don’t think this is stretching this even one bit. This one small letter is there and it is given in the greater context of Jacob needing a wife, and keeping the purity of the line which leads to the Messiah and which springs from the Messiah... the people of God. Esau already has two wives, both of which are pagans.

It’s probably good to note that despite the turmoil between the descendants of Jacob and those of Esau, the line of Esau eventually was assimilated into the Israelite people and they became extinct as an individual group.

However, even until today, the people of Israel survive. In the same way, the people of the false church, the idolaters, the false worshippers, those who reject the word of God – all of them will also become extinct, but the name of Jesus and the people of His church will continue on forever.

We have no need to worry if this is so. God chose us before the foundation of the world and those who reject Him will suffer the consequences of their decision, just as Esau did – losing his birthright and his blessing and eventually disappearing into history.

Closing Verse: *³And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer's inkhorn at his side; ⁴and the LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it." ⁵To the others He said in my hearing, "Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. ⁶Utterly slay old and young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary." Ezekiel 9:3-6*

Next Week: Genesis 28:1-9 (May God Almighty Bless You)

Holding Fast to God's Word

So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing
With which his father had blessed him in his tent
And Esau said in his heart as he was guessing
The time of his father's death and his life would be spent
The days of mourning for my father are at hand
And then I will kill my brother Jacob, won't it be grand!

And the words of Esau her older son were told
To Rebekah, so she sent and called for Jacob her son.
And she said to him, "Surely your brother Esau is quite bold
He comforts himself by killing you my precious one

Now therefore, my son, obey my voice
Arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran
And stay with him a while, there really is no choice
Until your brother's fury turns away and is gone

When he forgets what you to him have done

Then I will send and bring you from there
Why should I be bereaved of you also, my son
Both of you in one day, this I couldn't bear

And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life
Because of the daughters of this land, those of Heth
It would be terrible if from them Jacob got a wife
What good would life be to me... it seems worse than death.

In these verses we have lessons to learn
Concerning our affiliation with right living
It is our duty to all wicked things spurn
And only to the Lord should our allegiance we be giving

When our church departs from His word
It is our duty to remove ourselves hence
And stand fast by following the Lord
We need to always use the best common sense

He is our Lord and to Him alone is our allegiance due
And so let our eyes fix upon Him and our hearts be true

Great is the Lord and surely He is worthy of praise
And so shall we follow Him and glorify Him all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 28:1-9 **(MAY GOD ALMIGHTY BLESS YOU)**

Introduction: Today is the last part of Genesis where Isaac takes a leading role. Once we're through verse 9, it will be Jacob who takes center stage in the biblical narrative. Abraham mostly pictured God the Father throughout his time, although he did take on other roles.

Isaac predominantly was a picture of God the Son. These two great men of faith did their time and they now stand in the background. Rebekah too is done. Last week, her final words were spoken and now she'll only be mentioned in relation to something else.

As always, the Bible directs our attention toward specific key figures only for the purposes of showing us God's plan of redemption and conveying His thoughts and heart to us. However, when they no longer play any pertinent role, they are given the quiet respect of the privacy of life we all desire.

These people lived full lives and many stories could be told of the things they did, but God has just chosen specific details for His purposes alone. Let's pay attention to every word which God has given because those words truly encompass the heart and mind of God for His beloved children.

Text Verse: *Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; ¹⁵ but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 1 Peter 1:13-15*

Peter tells us to be "as obedient children" and to live our lives in holiness, rejecting that which is profane. Today we'll see how obedience ultimately has to be aligned with God's plan or it ends in futility. One son's obedience follows what God intended while the other son, attempting to be obedient, actually misses the mark.

If we don't know God's intent for us, then we're bound to make the same types of error and so I will admonish you, as I do so often – read your Bible, study your Bible, and know your Bible and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. To Find a Wife

Although many Genesis stories can be looked at without much reference to surrounding events, it wouldn't make nearly as much sense to start chapter 28 without remembering what happened just prior to the today's verses. After Jacob deceptively obtained the blessing from Isaac, we came to these verses last week –

⁴¹ So Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father blessed him, and Esau said in his heart, "The days of mourning for my father are at hand; then I will kill my brother Jacob." ⁴² And the words of Esau her older son were told to Rebekah. So she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said to him, "Surely your brother Esau comforts himself concerning you *by intending* to kill you. ⁴³ Now therefore, my son, obey my voice: arise, flee to my brother Laban in Haran. ⁴⁴ And stay with him a few days, until your brother's fury turns away, ⁴⁵ until your brother's anger turns away from you, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send and bring you from there. Why should I be bereaved also of you both in one day?" ⁴⁶ And Rebekah said to Isaac, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife of the daughters of Heth, like these *who are* the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?"

This sets up the thoughts of what is ahead of us.

¹ Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, and said to him: "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.

Based on what Rebekah said before and probably after thinking about it a bit, our first verse today says that Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him. John Wesley had a good thought concerning this –

"Those that have the blessing must keep the charge annexed to it, and not think to separate what God has joined."

In other words, and this is an immediate life application for all of us, we cannot expect the blessings of the Bible without adhering to the things we have been charged to do. I've been on Jewish blogs that faithfully quote these verses from Jeremiah 31 –

Thus says the LORD, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The LORD of hosts *is* His name): ³⁶ "If those ordinances depart From before Me,

says the LORD, *Then* the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever.”

The idea they get from this is that God loves them no matter what they do and that they are special and set apart by Him. It's true, they are His special people and they are set apart by Him, but that's only half of the equation. They fail to take into account about 4 jillion verses of judgment on Israel for disobedience.

We can sum up the blessings and curses of Israel by reading Deuteronomy 28. The Lord gives Israel the charge - obedience. He then tells the blessings they can expect for obedience and then he tells the curses they can expect for disobedience. I've been to the holocaust memorial in Israel with my mother.

It's a very moving place to visit and it stresses the tragedy that Israel has suffered in history, but it fails to note any personal responsibility. I told my mom when we left, that the only thing I thought was missing was a copy of Deuteronomy 28 placed on the wall in every language where they have been dispersed.

In the end, their dispersion and sufferings would not have happened if they were obedient to the Lord. We get the same thing in churches all the time - I'm not just picking on the Jews here.

People claim blessings and prosperity, but they fail to walk in the counsel of the Lord and they don't recognize the sin in their life for what it is. When tragedy comes, they project outward, not inward when in fact whether in Israel, the church, or our nation - we need to look at our own choices which result in judgment.

Here at the beginning of the chapter, Isaac both blesses and charges his son. Let each of us remember the charge when looking for the blessing. In the case of Jacob, the charge is, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan.” We've been given a similar charge in the New Testament –

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?”

-2 Corinthians 6:14

The idea behind Paul's words is that we're to keep our alliances faithful to our faith. We are to marry only believers and we're to engage in business partnerships with Christians.

It's hard enough to make a marriage work with a Christian, but when our goals and priorities don't sync, how much more difficult will it be?

So here we are with Jacob who is now 77 years old. Because of the birthright and now the blessing which he has received, Isaac sees that it is time for him to marry and start a family which will keep the Messianic line going.

Pondering Rebekah's words about the daughters of Heth, he realizes that it is best for Jacob to go to Padan Aram where Rebekah was from in order to find a wife from there. Esau's wives, because they had different values were a source of grief to the family. Isaac wants Jacob to not find himself in the same mess.

² Arise, go to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and take yourself a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.

Isaac is taking the same care of Jacob that Abraham did for him so many years earlier. However, unlike Isaac, who stayed in the land of Canaan while a wife was chosen for him by Abraham's servant, Jacob is going off to Mesopotamia.

The reason for the difference is that God wants to show us different things about His work for us. The story of Abraham's servant finding a bride for Isaac pointed to the Holy Spirit getting a bride for Jesus while He waits in heaven, pictured by the land of Canaan, the Promised Land.

Jacob will leave the Promised Land to find a wife because he is picturing Jesus in a different way. We'll see this as the story continues to unfold in the chapters ahead with amazing and beautiful pictures.

Padan Aram is actually two words forming one name. Aram comes from a word that means to be high or to rise up.

Padan isn't a noun found in Hebrew but the word *padah* means to rescue or ransom. Adding the n at the end of the word is often used to produce a noun for a person or place. So Padan Aram may mean "Elevated Ransom."

This makes the procuring of Rebekah at Isaac's time much easier to understand and it also will shed light on how Jacob obtains his wives as well. There is a price which is paid, a bride price, and thus the name points to the work of Jesus as He obtained His bride.

A ransom is the release of property or a person in return for payment of a demanded price. In biblical lingo it is redemption from sin and its consequences.

The price for our sins was a high price indeed. It was truly an elevated ransom, just at the name Padan Aram implies. For Jesus to procure His bride, it involved leaving heaven (Jacob leaves the Promised Land) and coming to be among us, just as Jacob was told to take a wife from the house of Bethuel.

Bethuel means “daughter of God” and pictures the Jewish people as we noted in a previous sermon. From the house of these people, Jacob is told to take a wife from the daughters of Laban. His name means “white” or “brick.” In the Bible, white is a symbol of purity.

Therefore, procuring a bride from this family is a picture of those who are purified and who will become a part of God's people. Jesus speaks of this in John 4:35

“Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!”

There is a harvest being conducted in the people of the world. Those who call on Jesus are purified and made spotless and white. They are a part of the harvest of good grain which Jesus is speaking about.

II. The Blessing Follows the Charge

The charge was given, to take a wife from the house of Bethuel and not from the daughters of Canaan. Now Isaac bestows his blessing upon Jacob.

The important thing to Jacob is that by receiving this blessing from his father, he knows that he has been forgiven for what he did by obtaining the blessing of the firstborn through deceit. He may have been worried about this, but he can now feel that all is forgiven.

³“May God Almighty bless you,

In Genesis 17:1, these words were spoken to Abraham –

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I *am* Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.”

Isaac invokes the same name, God Almighty or El Shaddai in order to bless Jacob. This revelation of God, El Shaddai, is of existence and performance. It is to Him that Isaac calls for the blessing. He is the eternally lasting, absolute, all powerful God. His nature is unchangeable and yet He causes change in His creation.

^{3 (con't)} **And make you fruitful and multiply you,**

A few verses later in Genesis 17, El Shaddai said this to Abraham – “I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.”

Isaac calls for this same blessing on Jacob now.

^{3 (con't)} **That you may be an assembly of peoples;**

Here is a remarkable phrase, *liq-hal ammim*. The Hebrew word *qahal* will later be applied to the people of God as an assembly. It is where the Greek word *ecclesia* comes from and from which we derive the modern notion of the called out church.

This blessing then is looking forward to all of the assembled people of God throughout the ages and off into eternity.

⁴ **And give you the blessing of Abraham,**

The blessing of Abraham is one which comprises the land, the multitude of descendants, the line of the Messiah, and thus the filling of the world with the knowledge of the gospel. Paul says in Galatians 3 that this promise includes us in the church –

“...just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” ⁷ Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” ⁹ So then those who *are* of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.” (6-9)

This promise then encompasses the major doctrine of justification by faith. This includes redemption, forgiveness, the sealing of the Holy Spirit, and so on. All of this is tied up in what we would consider “the blessing of Abraham.”

It is an exclusive blessing. It was given to Isaac, but not to Ishmael. It is given now to Jacob, but not to Esau. It is a central point of the biblical narrative and it all surrounds around the Person of Jesus.

⁴ (con't) **To you and your descendants with you,**

Unlike his father and his grandfather who are noted for one son in particular, Jacob, or Israel, will be noted for 12 sons. One will lead to the Messiah, but all 12 of his sons will participate in the blessings of the assembled people of God.

From the time of Jacob on, the Bible will speak of Israel as a collective unit of people. Some will fall out of favor, but God will always keep a remnant of each of each tribe as a special people.

⁴ (con't) **That you may inherit the land in which you are a stranger,**

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to a large degree dwelt as pilgrims in the land. The same terminology will be used of others later, but the people of Israel will inherit the land as their own. They will live in it, build in it, and strive with God in it. The land is given to them.

In a fuller sense though, the Land of Canaan is a picture of heaven for the believer. It is the place we will eventually inherit and there we will dwell in the presence of God, just as God dwelt among the Israelites. Our inheritance is an eternal one and our guarantee of entry is the realization of the Messianic blessings found in Jesus.

⁴ (con't) **Which God gave to Abraham.”**

Jacob is being sent away from his home, off to another country where he will work and be cheated. He won't return again for many years and he will have to look back on Isaac's words now and forward in faith to the realization of those promises.

The promises of Abraham are, to him, promises which can only be seen through eyes of faith. The times ahead for Jacob will be difficult and the future will be unsure except as he relies on the surety of God and his word.

The blessing to Jacob is no less sure and truthful to us. Let's read the blessing again as a whole and then determine to hold fast to it, just as God expects us to –

³ “May God Almighty bless you, And make you fruitful and multiply you, That you may be an assembly of peoples; ⁴ And give you the blessing of Abraham, To you and your descendants with you, That you may inherit the land In which you are a stranger, Which God gave to Abraham.”

We are this assembly and we await the land to which our eyes are lifted, the heavenly Mount Zion which is coming soon to His faithful people.

III. Esau... Tries Again

⁵ So Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Padan Aram, to Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.

Rebekah is called “the mother of Jacob and Esau.” The Bible now firmly establishes Jacob first and places him above Esau. The prophecy given to her when the children were still in her womb is fully realized right here. The older shall serve the younger.

From the narrative which is coming, it will seem as if Jacob took a few provisions and left all by himself and this is what the account seems to imply and which most people who have read the Bible have in their mind. But this isn't the case as I showed last week.

We don't know how many people Jacob will travel with, but we do know that Deborah, Rebekah's wet nurse and life long companion, went with him. She was probably the one who delivered Rebekah's children, including Jacob, and now she will be the one who will probably oversee the birth of Jacob's children.

For a woman who is mentioned by name only once in the Bible, she has played an immensely important role in the history leading to Jesus. We know she goes along now because Genesis 35:8 says that she was with Jacob on his return from his journey.

But no mention is made of him ever coming back to see his family during those years and what it later states implies he never did. Therefore, at least one person, Deborah, whose name means “Bee” and is a picture of the word of God, went with him. Even though she is never mentioned, we do know this is so.

⁶ Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, *and that* as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, “You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,”

Unlike Jacob who is setting out in faith and taking with him the word of God, Esau looks in the wrong direction for restoration. He sees that Jacob was blessed by his father even though he acted deceitfully. Then he sees that he’s been sent away to get a wife that isn’t from the daughters of Canaan.

The way Esau perceives the world is sad because he only looks at the surface of things and attempts to have things rectified in ways that only makes everything worse. In him and the things he does, we see a type of person who stumbles over the stumbling block.

What is so simple and which requires no real effort can be the most difficult thing of all. God wants faith, not deeds. Once we exercise faith, He looks to our deeds done in faith, not those with external pretence. Esau keeps missing this as do so many in the world.

They stand at the door of Christianity, but they never enter into it. Instead, they use a hammer and nails to shut it even tighter than it was at the beginning. This is works-based religion, not a faith based relationship. This is Esau.

⁷ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram.

God instructs us to obey our parents for a reason. He wants to be our Father, but it can only happen through obedience. Jesus demonstrated this as is noted in Hebrews –

“...though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. ⁹ And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,...” (5:8, 9)

Philippians tells us that because of His obedience God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name which is above every name.

Esau sees this trait in his brother as well. Jacob went to Paddan Aram as instructed and from there he will obtain a wife. The distance is about 480 miles from where they are in Beersheba.

For Esau to go there would be a long journey. It would mean a long time away from his family and he’d be unable to try to regain Isaac’s favor during the time he was gone. He

is unwilling to pay the elevated ransom - just as Adam failed. But Esau has a problem that needs to be fixed as we see in the next verse...

⁸ Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac.

Esau put two and two together, finally, and came to the realization that his dad wasn't happy with his wives. It took a while for him to clue in. He got married at 40 and he's 77 now, so after a mere 37 years, he figures it out. The local women make Isaac unhappy. As the verse literally says, they were "evil in his eyes."

If you notice, it doesn't mention Rebekah in this verse. This is a clear indication that Esau doesn't care what his mother thinks at all. Instead, he is thinking about his father and how he can regain the favor and the blessing, rather than actually pleasing his parents.

⁹ So Esau went to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

As I said, it's a long way to Padan Aram and so instead of doing what might have been pleasing to his parents, he goes to marry a daughter of Ishmael. The reason he did this is because Ishmael is a son of Abraham and he is thinking that this will make Isaac happy.

There is a problem with this though. Ishmael was removed from the house and it is Isaac who became the son of promise. Ishmael, as was noted in previous sermons, is a son of Hagar who is a picture of the law. Paul very clearly explains this in Galatians 4.

No descendant of Ishmael is found in Jesus' genealogy because the law is of works. It is faith, not works, which please God. If you see, Esau is a picture of fallen man. Instead of exercising faith and traveling to Padan Aram to obtain a wife to make his father happy, he goes to Ishmael, a picture of works, to do so.

This girl he marries is named Mahalath and the name very well describes the situation. Her name basically means "sad song." It would be in Hebrew what we would call "the blues." And Esau's attempt at finding favor will result in exactly that – the blues.

He is doing what religions all around the world do every day, working to please God instead of exercising faith to please Him. This is the stumbling block that Esau trips over once again. He is trusting in his deeds to please his father instead of doing what his father would have him do.

The life and lesson of Esau continues just as it has all along. He keeps looking in the wrong place and expecting the right result.

A good parallel of this attitude is found in the Judges chapter 17. Let me read it to you so that you can see someone who follows the same pattern as Esau. He goes from one bad decision to another and expects a different outcome –

¹ Now there was a man from the mountains of Ephraim, whose name *was* Micah. ² And he said to his mother, “The eleven hundred *shekels* of silver that were taken from you, and on which you put a curse, even saying it in my ears—here *is* the silver with me; I took it.”

And his mother said, “*May you be* blessed by the LORD, my son!” ³ So when he had returned the eleven hundred *shekels* of silver to his mother, his mother said, “I had wholly dedicated the silver from my hand to the LORD for my son, to make a carved image and a molded image; now therefore, I will return it to you.” ⁴ Thus he returned the silver to his mother. Then his mother took two hundred *shekels* of silver and gave them to the silversmith, and he made it into a carved image and a molded image; and they were in the house of Micah.

⁵ The man Micah had a shrine, and made an ephod and household idols; and he consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. ⁶ In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.

⁷ Now there was a young man from Bethlehem in Judah, of the family of Judah; he *was* a Levite, and was staying there. ⁸ The man departed from the city of Bethlehem in Judah to stay wherever he could find *a place*. Then he came to the mountains of Ephraim, to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. ⁹ And Micah said to him, “Where do you come from?”

So he said to him, “I *am* a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah, and I am on my way to find *a place* to stay.”

¹⁰ Micah said to him, “Dwell with me, and be a father and a priest to me, and I will give you ten *shekels* of silver per year, a suit of clothes, and your sustenance.” So the Levite went in. ¹¹ Then the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man became like one of his sons to him. ¹² So Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and lived in the house of Micah. ¹³ Then Micah said, “Now I know that the LORD will be good to me, since I have a Levite as priest!”

Explain what happens to the priest and the idols...

Here we are, all of us are fallen sons of Adam just like Esau. What we need to do is to move from the curse to the promise. We need to transfer our citizenship from the devil to the Lord. We need to move from wrong thinking to right thinking.

We can spend our whole life making the wrong choices and continuing on down the wrong path, or we can determine to do it the Lord's way.

If you're trusting in some *thing* that you do in order to make God happy, then what you're doing is actually trusting in yourself. This is self-idolatry. What we need to do is to put ourselves aside and trust in what God has already done, just as Jacob did.

He was trusting in the promise and he received the blessing. Only after that did he accomplish his deeds. Esau is doing exactly the opposite, trusting in his deeds to secure and obtain the promise and receive a blessing.

Closing Verse: *I have stretched out My hands all day long to a rebellious people, Who walk in a way that is not good, According to their own thoughts; Isaiah 65:2*

Next Week – Genesis 28:10-21 (A Ladder to Heaven)

Two Sons, Different Paths

Then Isaac called Jacob and gave him a blessing and a charge
He said, You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan
Arise, go to Padan Aram, the house of Bethuel, my word discharge
Take a wife from the daughters of your mother's brother Laban

And this is the blessing that he spoke over Jacob his son
He pronounced it fully until he was done

“May God Almighty bless you,
And make you fruitful and multiply you,
That you may be an assembly of peoples;
And give you the blessing of Abraham,
To you and your descendants with you,
That you may inherit the land
In which you are a stranger,
Which God gave to Abraham.”
So Isaac sent Jacob away, off to Padam Aram he went

To Laban the son of Bethuel the Syrian he did go
To the brother of Rebekah he was sent
She, the mother of Jacob and Esau as you know
Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away
To Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there
And that as he blessed him he did say
You shall not take a wife from Canaan's daughters, not from there

And Esau saw that Jacob had obeyed his father
And also his mother and gone to Padan Aram
Also he saw that for the daughters of Canaan Isaac had a bother
They did not please him like those of the family of Abraham
So to Ishmael to take from him a daughter, Esau went
Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael Abraham's son
She, the sister of Nebajoth came to Esau's tent
Along with his other wives, she was an addition

What can we learn from these two men?
What lessons do the stories of their lives tell?
God is showing us once again
The proper path to heaven or the one that leads to hell
God loves His creatures and desires all to come willingly
But He leaves the choices up to each of us
We can by faith live out lives which pleasingly
Are directed to His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus

Our we can turn from Him and follow our own will
But in the end that is a sorrowful, bitter pill
Let each of us come with grateful hearts to our Lord and King
And shower him with songs of thankful praise
With our tongues let us always and forever sing
Of the greatness of our God for blessed eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 28:10-19 (A LADDER TO HEAVEN)

Introduction: There is a pattern in the characters we've seen since Abraham. He was introduced and his life was one of authority, decision, and action. He was like the picture we have of Jesus as our great and conquering King.

Then came Isaac. His life was one of submission and compliance. Instead of going to get a wife, his father sent a servant while he remained in the promised land. He was non-confrontational and played a quieter role. This is a picture of God the Son - the One who lives to do His Father's will.

Jacob now takes the center stage as Isaac retires out of the Bible's focus. Jacob's life is filled with trials and struggles. He suffers loss and heartache, but he is always looking to the future glory. He is not unlike Jesus, our suffering Servant in many ways. Jesus, the One who came to redeem fallen man by his own shed blood.

Text Verse: *“One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. ⁴¹ He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ). ⁴² And he brought him to Jesus.*
-John 1:40-42

If you've been to more than just one or two of our Genesis sermons, you know that God has put many hints of the coming Christ, our Lord Jesus, in this foundational book. Everything in history is looking forward to Him or back on what He did and then in anticipation of more great things to come.

It is all about Jesus and once again we'll see this today. There are beautiful pictures hidden in this ancient story, waiting to be unpacked and presented to our eager hearts and minds and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Christ Our Mediator

¹⁰ Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran.

Jacob now departs on his journey to find a bride. He leaves Beersheba, the Well of the Oath, or the Well of the Seven, and heads towards Haran which is in Padan Aram. This is a picture of Jesus. Coming to earth to redeem His people.

This theme will continue throughout the life of Jacob. Beersheba, as I explained many sermons ago is a picture of the dwelling of the Lord. Beersheba, the Well of the Seven speaks of the seven spirits of the Lord which are mentioned in both Isaiah and Revelation.

Haran means "mountainous" and Padan Aram means "elevated ransom." There is a high cost to redeem fallen man and this verse shows it to us. Jesus left the dwelling of the Lord to come to earth and pay a high price to redeem fallen man.

But this is also a picture of the nation of Israel. Jacob is in a type of exile from the Promised Land resulting from his wrong actions in deceiving Isaac, but he is the one who holds the birthright, the blessing, and the promises of restoration. This picture is seen in Israel as they have twice been sent out of the land for evil-doing.

As a reminder, I mentioned last week that most commentators say that Jacob left alone on his journey to find a wife, but there is no doubt that Deborah, Rebekah's wet nurse, went with him.

Others could have also, but we can't be sure. However, the story of his return to, and his travels in, Canaan indicates that at least she went along with him. As she pictures the word of God, we can see how the story here pictures Jesus, never separated from the word because He is the Word.

A wet nurse brings forth and tends to the children in a family, and the Word of God brings forth and tends to God's children as well. The significance of what this pictures is not to be underestimated because Jacob is going on his travels with her.

¹¹ So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night, because the sun had set.

We'll see in a few verses that this place is Bethel which is about 48 miles north of Beersheba. At Jacob's time it is known as Luz. This is where he stops for his first night, but it's not in the city. The reason isn't given, but it says that the sun had set.

It could be that the city had already closed its gates, which was common for them to do as soon as the sun set. It could also be that he didn't want to go there because the

people were pagans. I would favor this second option because of its name at that time, which I'll explain later. The city's name is Luz.

Whatever the reason, he stayed out in the open at a place he arbitrarily chose. This reminds us of Jesus' words in Luke 9 -

"Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, *that* someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." ⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head."

11 (con't) And he took one of the stones of that place and put it at his head, and he lay down in that place to sleep.

With no place to stay and no suitable place to lay his head, Jacob arbitrarily grabs a stone and places it where he can use it as a pillow - the significance of this act is of immense importance as we'll see in the verses ahead.

However, what the stone pictures is as beautiful as all of the other hidden treasures God has concealed. The location, the stone, the person Jacob, the acts which follow - all point to Jesus and His work. Jesus is present with Jacob though he doesn't yet know it.

Matthew Henry wisely says here, "God's time to visit his people with his comforts, is, when they are most destitute of other comforts, and other comforters." This is proven true in verse 12...

12 Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder *was* set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

Jacob is lying with a stone for a pillow and the heavens above for his blanket when he has a spiritual vision of the physical reality he is experiencing. Like Esau he is a fallen man, but he has already been a picture of the Messiah as we've seen several times.

Now he sees his own picture of this mystery - a ladder which is set up on earth, meaning where it was placed, and yet its top reaches to the heavens. This ladder is explicitly explained by Jesus as a picture of Himself. Like the ladder, His feet stand on the earth and yet He wears the heavenly crown.

He is an earthly Man in His humiliation, but He is the divine God in His exultation. And He is the ladder between two. There is the infinite God who fills the highest heavens and there is fallen man who can never attain to come into His high station, but in His rich goodness to us, He gave us the Mediator between the two - Jesus.

He is the access point for all of heaven's riches and He is the one and only path to reconciliation with God. All communication with God since the fall of man has come through Him and there is no other way for it to occur apart from Him. It is by Him alone that the two meet.

In John 1:47-51 we read this account -

"Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

If you noticed, Jesus is speaking to Nathanael calling him an "Israelite indeed." What he is saying is that the vision given to Jacob, who would later be named Israel, is fulfilled in Him. This Israelite, Nathanael, means "Given of God."

He who was given of God, Jesus, is the ladder of restoration for all people. And as I said, there is only one ladder in the vision. Jesus confirms this in John 14. Listen carefully to this account -

"Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

Did you catch it? Who was it that spoke to Jesus? It was Thomas, the Twin. The twins are Jacob and Esau and they look backward to Adam and forward to Jesus. Thomas the Twin asks the question and Jesus answers... "It's me. I'm the ladder. I'm the way. You can meet with the Father through me, my twin."

What Jacob, the twin, is seeing in his vision is explicitly realized in Jesus who is answering the Thomas, the Twin. How can we not see God's hand at work in what is being revealed to us?

This ladder is a way of describing the union of God and Man in the person of Jesus Christ – two hypostases, or states, in one Person; what we would call the hypostatic union.

“Jesus Christ is fully God (deity) united with full humanity without intermingling or separation of these qualities. In Him there is no change or division of any kind – completely and forever. He is the finite united with the infinite; the point where God fellowships with man.”

Oooh, God's word is far more complex than we can imagine. Let's not close our eyes to what God is saying in this important lesson. The very angels of heaven who minister to God's people do so on this bridge between the infinite realm of heaven's eternity and the finite realm of earth's temporal reality.

You've probably heard Ephesians 4:6, 7 a many times, but maybe now it will make true sense to you -

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

The Geneva Bible states this about the ladder - "Christ is the ladder by which God and man are joined together, and by whom the angels minister to us: all graces are given to us by him, and we ascend to heaven by him."

¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I *am* the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac;

Jesus is the Son of Man, Christ is the ladder, and the Lord Jehovah is the divine Ruler of Heaven. And from heaven He stands as the Sovereign ruler. His voice now speaks through His mediatory role as the Ladder. He first identifies Himself as the Lord God of Abraham your father.

Abraham is actually his grandfather, but he is the covenant father. As the Lord of Abraham and the God of Isaac, he now renews the promise made to and through both of them.

13 (con't) the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants.

The land on which you lie doesn't mean just the spot where he's sleeping, but rather the Land of Canaan, the Promised land. This promise is a land promise. It is given to him and his descendants as a grant of ownership. However, we will see it is conditionally granted to them for use based on obedience.

When they are obedient, the land is theirs and they may use it. When they disobey, the land is theirs and they may not use it. Others may dwell in the land, but the land is God's and He has granted it to Jacob and his descendants.

It's important to understand that the church did not replace Israel. The promises of being a descendant of Abraham by faith are never stated in the same way for us as being Jacob's descendants. Paul clearly contrasts Israel from everyone else.

Anyone from within or without Israel is considered a true descendant of Abraham by faith, but the same is not true with Jacob. Crossing these lines confuses what God is doing in the world. Here is what you need to remember -

- 1) Anyone who is a faithful believer is a spiritual descendant of Abraham.
- 2) Israel comprises those faithful Jews who are obedient sons of Abraham. It is a people physically descended from Jacob.
- 3) The church is anyone who has called on Jesus, whether from within Israel or from outside of Israel.
- 4) The church did not replace Israel, although we are grafted into their spiritual heritage.

14 Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth;

This is a repeat of what the Lord said to Abraham in Genesis 13:16 - "And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth;..."

Though Abraham has been in his grave for 61 years and this was spoken to him about 100 years before that, to the Lord, who is outside of time, the words are as fast and

unchanging as He is. What was spoken to Abraham is confirmed in Jacob and is realized in the Abraham's descendants today.

¹⁴ (con't) **you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south;**

Once again, this looks back to Genesis 13 where the Lord said to Abram - "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; ¹⁵ for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever."

Abraham was told that he would be given the land, Jacob is told they would fill the land. What these men see in the distant future, God sees as immediate and accomplished. When His word goes out to us, it is already accomplished in His mind.

This follows the biblical theme of our salvation. God says in his word in Romans that believers in Jesus are already glorified, and in Ephesians that we are already seated with Christ in the heavenly places. And yet we are still in our fallen bodies and we are still standing on fallen earth.

The Bible, in both testaments, shows God's transcendence over time and confirms the doctrine of eternal salvation for all who have been saved by the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁴ (con't) **and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**

This portion of the blessing is realized in Jesus. All the families of the earth are given the choice as to calling on him or not. The blessing of the Messiah promised through Abraham and Isaac is now confirmed in Jacob.

To Jacob it is spoken and it will occur; to us it is spoken and it has come about. The surety of God's word is the surety of Jesus.

¹⁵ **Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."**

Jacob is setting out on what will be a long and often frustrating journey which will see him grow into a very large family and an entire congregation of people and livestock. Despite the trials and troubles, the Lord is there with him.

When He says, "I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you" it is an assurance that He will *never* leave him. The words the Lord has spoken are still being

confirmed in us today and so Jacob understood that the Lord would always and forever remain with him. What Jacob is told here is repeated to us in the New Testament -

⁵*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."* ⁶So we may boldly say: "The LORD *is* my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"
-Hebrews 13:5,6

This great God has promised each of us that He is with us. The Bible never says we won't suffer or that we won't have hardships or trials. That's a myth of bad theology.

What it does promise is that, just like Jacob with his many years of trials ahead, the Lord was with him and He is with us too. Jacob was cheated, he suffered a great deal of loss including loved ones, but through it all he kept his eyes on the prize and we are asked to do the same. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus.

Before we go to the next verse, I want to read the promises given to Abraham and Jacob again, side by side so that you can see the similarities and differences -

¹⁴ And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: "Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are—northward, southward, eastward, and westward; ¹⁵ for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. ¹⁶ And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, *then* your descendants also could be numbered. ¹⁷ Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you." Gen 13:14-17

¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I *am* the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. ¹⁴ Also your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you." Gen 28:13-15

Both are spoken to in the same area, Bethel. Both received the promises after separating from someone. Abraham from Lot and Jacob from his family. To Abraham he indicates the directions of the earth, then he promises to him and his descendants the land, and then that they will be as the dust of the earth.

To Jacob he first promises the land to him and his descendants, then that they will be as the dust of the earth, and then he indicates the directions of the earth. The order is changed. When he gives the directions to Abraham it is *after he returned to the land from Egypt* and the directions are named north, south, east, and west.

But to Jacob it is *before he leaves the land* and the directions are west, east, north, and south. The orders are changed, but both form a cross as He speaks. After speaking to Abraham, he moved south. After speaking to Jacob, he moved north.

To both of them the Lord closed his words with a promise concerning the land. The land of Israel is the center of the nations and it is extremely important to the Lord. We trifle with His land and His people at our own expense.

I bring this up because as the Lord doesn't change, neither do His intentions for His people and His land. What we are doing to, and forcing on, the people of Israel today can only meet with unhappy consequences.

II. Christ Our Gate

¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."

In Joshua 5, Joshua meets a man with a drawn sword and not knowing who he was, he questioned him. It turned out to be the Commander of the Army of the Lord - Jesus. In 1 Samuel 3 when Samuel was young the Lord called to him in the night and he didn't know it was the Lord.

In Luke 24, two disciples walked about seven miles with the risen Lord and didn't know it was Him until they sat down for a meal.

In John 20 Mary didn't realize she was in the presence of the risen Lord until He spoke directly to her by name.

In Acts 9, a Pharisee named Saul was confronted with the glory of Christ who spoke to him, and yet he didn't know who He was.

In these and many other times, people were unaware of the presence of the Lord in their midst. This verse then is not saying that Jacob didn't already understand that the

Lord is omnipresent. Instead it is saying that the Lord was present in a significant way - a tangible manifestation of the presence of God.

God is everywhere at all times, but His presence can be, and is, more expressed in some places than in others. He dwelt between the cherubim above the ark and His glory was seen by many prophets, both in the land of Israel and elsewhere.

Even today, the glory of the Lord is manifest more greatly in some places than others. Every believer is sealed with the Holy Spirit. The believer has all of the Spirit that he will ever receive at that moment. However, the Spirit can obtain more of the believer.

His presence fills the obedient soul in a passive way which is displayed in an active presentation of His revealed glory. Like Jacob, awaking from his sleep, the people around us should look at each of us and say, "Surely the Lord is in this place."

It's sad that when many see us, like Jacob, they don't know that He is even present. Let's determine to make a change in that.

¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, "How awesome *is* this place!

Jacob's fear isn't the fear of a person who is surrounded by enemies and is about to die. His fear is on a completely different level. It is something experienced by many people in both testaments. In Isaiah 6 we read these words -

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. ² Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³ And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy *is* the LORD of hosts; The whole earth *is* full of His glory!" ⁴ And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. ⁵ So I said: "Woe *is* me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts."

In Mark 4, we read this -

³⁷ And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling. ³⁸ But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" ³⁹ Then He

arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. ⁴⁰ But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How *is it* that you have no faith?" ⁴¹ And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

The fear of Jacob, the fear of Isaiah, and the fear of the disciples can all be understood in the context of fallen man in the presence of absolute holiness. People who treat Jesus flippantly, as if He were some type of cosmic candy man or ATM machine have never understood the splendor of His majesty or the enormity of their sin.

17 (con't) This is none other than the house of God,

This again is a picture and a confirmation of who Jesus is. Jacob exclaims that where he was is the house of God - Bethel. Beit means house and El means God. Wherever the Lord manifests Himself, the house of God is seen. We know that it isn't a single location on earth, but wherever the Lord is revealed.

17 (con't) and this is the gate of heaven!"

John was on the island of Patmos when he had a vision. In Revelation 4, he sees what Jacob saw - "After these things I looked, and behold, a door *standing* open in heaven."

The word used for door in this verse in Revelation is the Greek word *thyra*. The NIV translates this same word "gate" in John 10:9 - "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture."

The gate of heaven which Jacob saw is the ladder, it is the path, it is the entrance and means of access into heaven. It is the Lord above the ladder. Everything we are seeing cries out - "It is Jesus." When we understand who He is and what He means for each of us, we too can - like Jacob - exclaim "This is the gate of heaven."

There is a narrow gate at the end of a narrow path which opens to the wide expanses of heaven's glory. And there is a wide path, with a broad gate, which leads to the narrow confines of hell's prison. The choice is ours whom we will follow. Me... I follow Jesus.

18 Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar,

As soon as he got up, he took his stone pillow and stood it up as a makeshift altar and then poured oil on it as an act of consecration. It doesn't appear that he has any idea that this was the same spot where many years earlier Abraham had also built an altar. There is nothing pagan in what he is doing here. Monuments and altars are noted throughout the early books of the Bible. His anointing this stone is a demonstration of his faith in the vision he had seen and the promises it held.

But the stone he erects and what he is doing to it here... Yes, it all points to Jesus. The ladder had a beginning in heaven with the Lord. The ladder is the Lord. And the ladder has a set point on earth where it rests - on a stone.

The stone is Jesus. And no, I'm not stretching this at all. The words for "the stone that he had put at his head" are *ha'eben asher sam merashotav*. The same words for "stone" and "head" are found in the 118th Psalm and are speaking of Jesus, *eben ma'asu habownim ha'yetah le'rosh pinnah*

The stone *which* the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone.

The stone in the field was never used in the construction of the city - it was rejected. And yet it became the chief cornerstone of Bethel, the House of God.

18 (con't) and poured oil on top of it.

The oil is poured on the stone to consecrate it as the entry point to the House of God. The High Priest of Israel, the prophets, and the King of Israel were anointed with oil on their heads. The king is the ruler, the prophet is the one who speaks the word, and the High Priest is the mediator.

Like them, Jesus is the Ruler at the top of the ladder and Jesus is the Ladder, the Mediator. But Jesus was also the One who came to earth to suffer for us as well. When He did, He was anointed before He was crucified. He has become our access point into the House of God, our Mediator, and our Lord. Hebrews 1 show us this -

⁸ But to the Son *He says*: "Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your kingdom. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

And to confirm all of this, we come to the next verse...

19 And he called the name of that place Bethel; but the name of that city had been Luz previously.

The place is called Bethel - the House of God, a picture of heaven where God resides. But, the former name of the city is given as well - Luz. Most concordances translate Luz as "almond" getting this through a back door translation of Genesis 30:37.

But the word comes from a verb which means "to turn aside" in a negative way - such as turning away from wisdom or being a twisted person.

Abrarim gives us the correct meaning of Luz when they say that it was named after a "crooked and perverse generation" that lived there. This is the reason Jacob didn't enter the city - because of the twisted and crooked nature which the name Luz implies.

And this is exactly a picture of Jesus - 6 times - in Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, and 1 and 2 Peter He is called the Stone the builders rejected. Then in Acts chapter 2, Peter says to the people of Israel, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." (ESV). The symbolism given here is so exact it's amazing.

This Stone was rejected by the crooked city and yet it becomes the cornerstone of Bethel, the House of God, picturing heaven. Instead of entering Luz Jacob slept in the field and he had a vision of the glory of the Lord who would come to the twisted and crooked earth, leaving the glory of the House of God, to redeem his people.

Remember this is symbolized in Jacob's trip from Beersheba to Paddan Aram - the redemption of man. A 19th century Rabbi named Joseph Rozen explains the mystery of Luz which is also a fruit similar to the almond but which matures differently - "Luz starts off sweet and becomes bitter, in contrast to almond which starts bitter and becomes sweet."

Man corrupted the sweet earth created by God and it became bitter - *Luz*. The Lord has come to restore what was made bitter by restoring to us access to the House of God - *Bethel*.

Next Week: Genesis 28:20-22 (Our Christian Offering)

Closing Verse: *Mercy and truth have met together; Righteousness and peace have kissed. ¹¹ Truth shall spring out of the earth, And righteousness shall look down from heaven. Psalm 85:10, 11*

Jesus - Our Ladder to Heaven

Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran
So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night
Because the sun had set and he just couldn't go on
And he took one of the stones of the place that felt just right
And put it as his head using it as a pillow
And he lay down in that place to sleep
Then he dreamed, and behold... saw this fellow
A ladder was set up on the earth and to heaven it did sweep

And there the angels of God were ascending
And there the angels of God were descending
And behold the Lord stood above it and said
"I am the Lord God of Abraham your father
And the God of Isaac, whom you misled
And yet he blessed you, you and not another

The land on which you lie I will give to you
And after you your descendants are granted it too

Also your descendants shall be
As the dust of the earth is the promise from my mouth
You shall spread abroad to the four corners, you see
To the west and the east, to the north and the south

And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed
Behold I am with you and will keep you wherever you go
And I will bring you back to this land, be not depressed
For I will not leave you until I have done this, it is so

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said
"Surely the Lord is in this place
And yet I did not know it but instead
Now I have the assurance of His great grace

And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place
This is none other than the house of God
It is the gate of heaven where it and earth interlace
It is the place where angels do trod
Then Jacob rose in the morning, early
And took the stone that he had put at his head
He set it up as a pillar, where the gates are pearly
And poured oil on top of it, as its name he said

And he called the name of that place Bethel
But the name of that city was Luz previously
And the names in themselves have a story to tell
Because we have in them a picture, you see
These things are given to show us God's story
Which is revealed in our beautiful Lord Jesus
Heaven, the ladder, the stone - all tell of His glory
And the mission on which He came to redeem us

Let us cherish these precious stories
And in them search out Jesus' glories

And as we ponder them in our heart
May we remember to give God our praise
And commit our lives to make a fresh start
Determined to walk with the Lord all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 28:20-22

(OUR CHRISTIAN OFFERING - HAVE YOU BEEN LIED TO ABOUT TITHING?)

Introduction: Today I am going to speak about a subject which is one of the most abused and misapplied topics in all of Christianity. Church people are filled with a misunderstanding of it because leaders either willingly or negligently pass on error.

Personally, it is the one issue that makes me more upset than any other and it is one that has led me to stop listening to some of what I used to consider are the best preachers around, because if they can't handle this issue properly, then they cannot - in my opinion - be trusted to handle the rest properly either.

The subject is tithing and today you will hear directly from the Bible what tithing is and how *it was* to be applied. I hope, I trust, and I pray that you will listen carefully and then act properly and without coercion in your Christian giving in the future.

Text Verse: *I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain. Galatians 2:21*

Tithing is a concept mandated in the law. If we believe that we can somehow attain righteousness by adhering to this percept, found under the law, then we have a fundamentally flawed view of our relationship with God.

Paul says that if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain. What would be the point of Jesus coming if we could merit God's favor apart from Him. It is wrong thinking, but this is what churches are full of, especially when it comes to this precept which is found only under the law and which is known as tithing.

Let us stand on the righteousness that comes not from our deeds, but the righteousness which comes from God through His Son, our Lord and Savior. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Christ Our Provision

Last week we saw Jacob had a dream in the area of Bethel where the Lord stood above a ladder and spoke to him. When He did, He said this to Jacob - "Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you."

Now that he's awake and ready to continue his journey, Jacob utters a vow of promise to the Lord -

²⁰ Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on,

The statement "If God will be with me" would rightly be stated "Since God will be with me." Jacob isn't doubting what the Lord said. Instead he has every reason to believe that He would be with Him, just as the vision indicated. In essence...

Since I know that this is so,
And he will keep me in the way I go
And will meet all my needs
Thus will follow my righteous deeds

This is Jacob's thought to us.

²¹ so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God.

In the previous verse Jacob said "If God will be with me..." Now he says, "then the Lord shall be my God." We have to look all the way back to the beginning of the vision when Jacob lay down to sleep to understand this -

"Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder *was* set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said: "I *am* the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants."

The Lord identified himself to Jacob in the vision. But Jacob already knew about the Lord from his past, including the blessing he received from his father. So we know that Jacob isn't saying here that if God will do these things, he *will* accept the Lord as his God - that is already the case.

What he is saying is that he will be all the more eager and willing to serve the Lord. As I said, the previous verse gives us the idea of "Since God will be with me..." Because God will be with him he says, "The Lord will be my God."

To help you understand, we can use two friends as an example. One is going on an adventure trip and the other has a lot of money and resources that he promises to help him out with during the trip. The one heading out says, "Since you will be with me and have ensured that I'll be taken care of, you will certainly be my friend."

They are already friends, but he is saying it in a manner which indicates not just friendly friendship, but helping friendship as well. Jacob is now saying this about the Lord. "Since you will be with me, you will be the Lord to me."

And now we can see our relationship to Jesus in this as well. The book of Hebrews, quoting the Lord, has said to us, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." And our reply of confirmation would be "Since you will never leave me nor forsake me, you will be the Lord to me indeed."

We're not saying something that isn't *already true*, we are saying something that is true in an absolutely certain way. It is an act of gratitude from our lips and it is the same from Jacob's lips to the Lord. And how grateful we should be...

Since you will never leave me
Nor will I be left as forsaken
To you all glory and honor and praises be
And in you my peace and rest is taken

II. Christ Our Reward

²² And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house,

If you missed the symbolism of the ladder, the stone, and everything else in Jacob's vision in last week's sermon, it would be good for you go back and watch that. The stone is a picture of Christ. He is the pillar of God's house.

Jacob will be back someday to fulfill his vow. We will see his words realized in Genesis 35 -

So Jacob came to Luz (that *is*, Bethel), which *is* in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who *were* with him. ⁷ And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel, because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother.

Just as he spoke the vow, he fulfilled it. A vow is a solemn oath made by an individual and the Lord looks at these things as binding. When we make a promise, we are to keep our promise. When we make an oath, we are to live by that oath. When we sign a contract, we need to fulfill the requirements it contains.

Making a vow and performing it is something humans have had a tough time with throughout history, but it is something the Lord asks us to do. In the 50th Psalm, David tell us to...

Offer to God thanksgiving,
And pay your vows to the Most High. Psalm 50:14

In the 76th Psalm, Asaph tells us the same...

Make vows to the LORD your God, and pay *them*; Psalm 76:11

And the writer of the 66th Psalm almost mirrors the concept of Jacob's life now when he wrote these words -

¹³ I will go into Your house with burnt offerings;
I will pay You my vows,
¹⁴ Which my lips have uttered
And my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble. Psalm 66:13, 14

A vow is something offered by our free will and therefore it is something that was not required. By making a vow, we are giving our word. If our vows mean nothing, then our words cannot be trusted. And there is nothing less exciting than being around someone who can't be trusted.

Each one of us has made vows and we have all failed in them, certainly. But past failure is no indication of future results, so let us do our utmost to determine before others, and especially before God, that we will stand by our words and be counted as trustworthy people.

²² (con't) **and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."**

Jacob now vows a tenth of what the Lord gives him back to the Lord. Notice that it doesn't say how the tenth will be given and the Lord doesn't use money. Therefore the

discretion for *the giving* is left up to Jacob. Will he give a tenth for taking care of the poor?

Will he give a tenth for building and maintaining an altar? Will he throw a party for his family and rejoice in the Lord through songs and praise? It doesn't say and there is no indication later as to what he did. The promise is made and nothing else is stated.

This is important and we can't skip over this fact. Also, what is equally important is that these verses are descriptive, not prescriptive. They describe to us what happened, but they in no way prescribe to us something we are required to do.

The first time giving a tenth is mentioned in any real way was back in Genesis 14 after Abraham defeated the 4 kings of the east. At that time it said this -

¹⁸ "Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High. ¹⁹ And he blessed him and said:
"Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;
²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,
Who has delivered your enemies into your hand."
And he gave him a tithe of all." (18-20)

This account of Abraham is, like the account with Jacob, descriptive, not prescriptive. It describes to us what happened, but it in no way prescribes to us that we must do the same.

This is the first time I've ever brought up Christian giving in any real sense in any sermon that I know of. I've spoken about it in Bible studies many times and I have a page dedicated to it on my website, but now I will preach on it and I'd really like you to pay close attention.

My first point for you is something every person here either already knows or they haven't been paying attention. We are not under the Law of Moses. In fact, the New Testament says often and explicitly that the law is set aside in Christ; it is obsolete, it is done, it is finished...

We cannot insert the Old Testament law into New Testament Christian living without inserting heresy. It is that simple. We are, as the Bible tells us, living in the dispensation of grace. I'm going to cite several verses here so that you can get a small taste of this -

For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:17

Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,.. Romans 5:20

For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. Romans 6:14

I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain. Galatians 2:21

You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. Galatians 5:4

¹⁸ For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, ¹⁹ for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God. Hebrews 7:18, 19

We could cite many more verses, but the Bible is clear - in Jesus, the law is set aside. If we attempt to be justified by that law, meaning living deeds of the law to please God, then we have fallen from the very grace that was bestowed on us in Christ.

Just as it should be, we are to hold to salvation by the grace of Jesus and His mercy through faith, not deeds of the law. This is what brings us salvation. This is what preachers around America will tell you again and again... week after week.

And yet when it comes to money, all of this grace is thrown to the wind and the law almost inevitably gets reintroduced. One of the most common Bible quotes that you will hear on the subject of giving is from Malachi 3:8 -

Will a man rob God?
Yet you have robbed Me!
But you say,
'In what way have we robbed You?'
In tithes and offerings.

After hearing this, you'll be given an hour sermon on how you're stealing from God if you don't give ten percent just as the Bible says - and make it pre-tax because of course taxes don't count.

You're made to feel guilty about it and shamed if you don't follow through with what they tell you. Never mind that Malachi was written when? ...under the law.

The concept of tithing is mentioned in only two contexts in the New Testament. The first was Jesus speaking, *under the law*, about the wrong intent of the scribes and Pharisees in the giving of their tithes. These can be found in Matthew 23, Luke 11, and Luke 18.

The second is found in Hebrews 7, which I just cited about the law being annulled, and is merely using the giving of tithes under the Old Testament to demonstrate the greatness of Melchizedek, not as any sort of requirement.

Having said this, tithing is not - in any way, a New Testament concept. It was a practice given to the people of Israel and to them alone. It is, like the rest of the law, set aside in Christ. Does everybody follow so far?

But I want you to understand exactly what tithing meant even in the Old Testament so that you are never duped again by preachers who would so mishandle the Bible. I'm going to read you the pertinent tithing verses, directly from the Bible, and I want you to listen very carefully as I do.

I'll stop from time to time to explain what's being said, but I want you to remember, I didn't write these, they're right in your Bible -

³⁰And all the tithe of the land, *whether* of the seed of the land *or* of the fruit of the tree, *is* the LORD's. It *is* holy to the LORD. ³¹If a man wants at all to redeem *any* of his tithes, he shall add one-fifth to it. ³²And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the LORD. Leviticus 27:30-32

This tells us that the tithe is holy to the Lord, but it doesn't tell what to do with it. In Numbers 18 it begins to explain what was to be done with the tithes. It says there that the Levites are given the tithes in Israel for the work they perform. In that explanation it says,

²⁴ "For the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer up *as* a heave offering to the LORD, I have given to the Levites as an inheritance; therefore I have said to them, 'Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.'"

After this, the Levites, were to offer up their own heave offering to the priests - "Thus you shall also offer a heave offering to the LORD from all your tithes which you receive from the children of Israel, and you shall give the LORD's heave offering from it to Aaron the priest."

This is clear and I'm sure any preacher would use it to justify his stand to tell you that you should be giving a tenth to them out of what you make. But the silence becomes deafening when we get to Deuteronomy. There we will see the entire picture of what the tithe meant within the nation of Israel.

But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, 11 then there will be the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the Lord. 12 And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you. Deuteronomy 12:10-12

Only the holy things which you have, and your vowed offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the LORD chooses. And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the meat and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God, and you shall eat the meat. Deuteronomy 12:26, 27

"You shall truly tithe all the increase of your grain that the field produces year by year. And you shall eat before the LORD your God, in the place where He chooses to make His name abide, the tithe of your grain and your new wine and your oil, of the firstborn of your herds and your flocks, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. But if the journey is too long for you, so that you are not able to carry the tithe, or if the place where the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, when the LORD your God has blessed you, then you shall exchange it for money, take the money in your hand, and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. And you shall spend that money for whatever your

heart desires: for oxen or sheep, for wine or similar drink, for whatever your heart desires (whatsoever thy soul lusteth after (KJV)) ; you shall eat there before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your household. You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you. "At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do."
Deuteronomy 14:22-29

"When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year—the year of tithing—and have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled, then you shall say before the LORD your God: 'I have removed the holy tithe from my house, and also have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed Your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.'" Deuteronomy 26:12, 13

"Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years." Amos 4:4 (KJV)

In Deuteronomy, and for the rest of the Old Testament, tithing is mandatory, but we learn that for the first two years it is to be spent by the one tithing and his family in the presence of the LORD – for food, for drink, for rejoicing. Only in the third year is the tithe to be entirely given away.

The only additional requirement besides spending the entire tithe on a party in the presence of the LORD for the first two years is the sentence, "You shall not forsake the Levite who is within your gates, for he has no part nor inheritance with you." This explains the verses back in Numbers 18.

This became a means of stimulating economic growth and yet tending to the needy without any undue burden on the people of the land. It was to remind them of the provision of the Lord and the blessings He had given.

Three times the Bible clearly shows us that the third year is the year of giving away the tithe. Despite this, it is almost never mentioned by anyone. Instead, preachers shame

their congregation into giving - and that... from an Old Testament principle which doesn't even apply anymore.

But what is even more despicable is that there are preachers who actually say that the words we've read about the third year is an *extra tithe* on top of a regular tithe. This is flat out lying. One who would do this is the prime example of someone who should never be allowed to preach again. It is greed over grace.

Imagine the nerve of standing in the pulpit and saying this, knowing that not a person in their church would question his authority or even bother to go check. And you wonder why I tell you week after week to check things for yourself.

I saw a highly respected, supposedly, preacher say exactly this on TV one day and to me it was the single most shameful display of lying I've ever witnessed on the subject of giving in my life.

Another ploy by preachers is to say that with the tithing, plus all the other required sacrifices, almost thirty percent of what an Israelite made would have been required.

Again, this is simply not correct. That's why I showed you those verses too. Many of the required sacrifices, as we noted, were eaten by the one who brought them after the removal of the sacred portion by the priests. These arguments simply have no basis in the truth.

The passages I've cited clearly show that the third year tithe alone was given away in its entirety and the other two years' tithes were enjoyed by the giver in the presence of the Lord at Jerusalem with some being given to take care of the Levites.

None of this really matters though because all of this comes from the law – the Old Testament - and it is over, done with, obsolete, and gone. Please don't ever forget this lesson today and get drawn back into the bondage of pressure and legalism.

Having shown you what ***the law*** states and that it doesn't even apply anymore, what are we to do about giving? Is there a rule or a guideline for us in the New Testament? The answer is, "Yes" and it's found in 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2 -

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: ² On the first *day* of the week let each

one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

There you have the only real direction given to any New Testament saint – lay something aside weekly, storing up as you may prosper. What is prospering? It doesn't say. It is different for each individual. Have you been freed from an addiction like gambling, alcohol, or smoking?

The money you used to spend on that could be given away. Aren't you prospering because of the change? If you didn't need it for something else then, why do you need it now? Or, if you can give 10 percent, then the Lord has prospered you to give 10 percent.

I heard one about a guy who started by giving 10 percent of what he made and the Lord blessed him to where he finally gave 90 percent of what he made. That is a true and heartfelt acknowledgement of the Lord having prospered him.

As John Wesley states "The tenth is a very fit proportion to be devoted to God, and employed for him; though as circumstances vary, it may be more or less, as God prospers us."

In 2 Corinthians 9, Paul tells us about the spirit of giving and the reaping which results from it -

⁶ But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.

We don't want to misapply these verses like so many preachers do. When it says that those who sow bountifully also reap bountifully, it does not mean that God is an ATM machine. We cannot expect to put in and get more out.

Our reaping may be in money, or it may simply be in joy from having given. It is shameful how many preachers misuse these verses to get people to give them money. And the people that believe what they hear and expect a windfall are giving with the wrong heart in the first place.

I will be as honest as I can with you, if you don't give to this ministry now that we have a building, this ministry won't last. We can't survive in a building with expenses such as

insurance, property taxes, maintenance, and a pastor's salary to support his wife and home, unless attendees give. This is reality.

In support of this, we come to Galatians 6:6 - "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches."

But when you give, may it be with a grateful heart for what you've been given and expecting nothing more in return except the satisfaction that you are furthering the ministry of God and the Gospel of Jesus.

So for today's lesson, the next time someone tells you that you're stealing from God if you don't tithe, ask him to show you the standard for tithing in the Bible. If he can find it at all, then ask him if you're under law or grace.

Finally, if he still insists on an Old Testament tithe, ask why he's not instructing you to give in the biblical fashion – every third year. In any case, he is trying to have his cake and eat it too.

If a pastor or teacher reads these passages in the Bible, understands them, and continues to instruct incorrectly, they have put their personal desire for financial gain above what the Bible instructs. Error in doctrine is sin – how much worse if it is intentional!

If you are willing to give out of a grateful heart and not a sense of obligation or expectancy of a profit from God, then may the Lord bless you in your giving and may those who receive your gifts be appreciative of what has been given.

Personally, I'd say 10% is a good starting point, but that we should give based on how we are reflecting appreciation to God for the immeasurable gift He gave us in the person of Jesus Christ. This attitude is clearly proclaimed in Scripture as well.

Closing Verse: *Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. ²⁰ Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

-Philippians 4:18-20

Next Week: Genesis 29:1-14 (Exile From The Land)

A Portion Returned

Then Jacob made a vow saying
If God will be with me and keep me in this way
That I am going and for which I have been praying
And give me my bread and clothing from day to day

So that I come back to my father's house in peace
Then the Lord shall be my God, my devotion will never cease
And this stone which I have set
As a pillar shall be God's house - Bethel
And of all that You give me I won't forget
I will surely give a tenth to you, this I tell
A lesson for us from the Bible's pages
Is that we are to fulfill the vows that we speak
We need to be faithful throughout the ages
Performing our vows even when we feel weak

And also we need to remember how we've been blessed
God has given us so much, let us return some back
He has filled us with food and in good clothes we are dressed
With a willing heart let us give and not be slack
Lord, help us to live rightly in your eyes
And help us to give in a way which will honor you
When You look upon our gifts may You not despise
But rather may our accounts much credit accrue
May our gifts and offerings be abundantly pleasing in your sight
May also our actions be wholesome, holy, and right
O God be with us throughout all of our days
Guiding us with your word, a light for our feet
And may You be glorified through our resounding praise
Here on this earth or when finally in heaven we meet

Glorious, wonderful God above
Thank You for your unending love

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 29:1-14 **(EXILE FROM THE LAND)**

Introduction: The stories about Jacob contain pictures within pictures. As always, Bible stories are meant to show us what really happened, but also what will happen. Eventually, everything points to Jesus and our relationship with Him.

The life and record of Jacob and those he interacts with is no different. Let us keep our minds alert and our eyes open to the wonders ahead. Today we leave the Land of Promise and head to the land of the people of the east.

Text Verse: *"I will betroth you to Me forever;
Yes, I will betroth you to Me
In righteousness and justice,
In lovingkindness and mercy;
²⁰ I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness,
And you shall know the LORD. Hosea 2:19, 20*

God promised to betroth a people to Himself forever. As believers in Jesus Christ, we become a part of that relationship. It is a relationship pictured in a meeting at a well in an open field many thousands of years ago, and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Flocks By a Well

¹ So Jacob went on his journey and came to the land of the people of the East.

In this first verse of Chapter 29, there is a happiness in the Hebrew which is seen in almost none of our translations. The verse literally says, "Lifted Jacob his feet and came to the sons of the East."

It is as if he were skipping in joy at the prospects of his journey after receiving the assurances of God at Bethel. Within this one verse, is a journey of 400 miles of which nothing is mentioned. However, beginning with this verse is also a picture of the people of Israel during their exile from the land.

In the story of his time away, there will be other pictures too, but Jacob's entire time out of Canaan paints a broad tapestry of Israel's times of exile - once to Babylon for 70 years, and once in the Diaspora for 2000 years. Here is the picture for us to see -

First, he is outside of the land of blessing. In Genesis 26, God told Isaac to dwell in the land and He would bless him. In Deuteronomy 28:64, God promised disobedient Israel that they would be scattered among the nations - away from their homeland.

Next, he is without an altar. At no time during his exile is there recorded that he built an altar. This is true with Israel during her dispersion. Hosea 3:4, 5 tells us this -

For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or *sacred* pillar, without ephod or teraphim. ⁵Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days.

During the entire time of their exile, there have been no proper sacrifices to God. Despite being protected and kept as a people, the spiritual connection of temple worship has been lacking, just as no altar is recorded as being built by Jacob during his time away.

Not only would he be out of the promised land and with no altar, but he would dwell in a land of foreign gods. This will be seen when he resides with Laban who is a man with homemade gods in his house. This is Israel to a T as they have dwelt in pagan lands.

Along with that, he will gain an evil reputation during his time away. We'll see this in Genesis 31:1 -

"Now *Jacob* heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, 'Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has acquired all this wealth.'"

Likewise, Israel during both of her dispersions received evil reputations such as in the book of Esther during the first exile, and in the nation of Germany leading to the holocaust in the second exile. We even see this continuing in America today.

However, despite the evil name, Jacob has been promised to be kept under covenant care by God. Likewise, Israel has been saved and protected by God just as He promised

in both dispersions. Jacob was finally brought back to the land, and unfaithful Israel has also been brought back home after both dispersions.

God is ever-faithful to his unfaithful people. They reap the shame and the punishment from the seeds of disobedience that they sow, but God never has nor will He ever forsake them. These are just some of the patterns between Jacob and Israel when they are outside of the covenant land given to them by God.

² And he looked, and saw a well in the field; and behold, there *were* three flocks of sheep lying by it; for out of that well they watered the flocks. A large stone *was* on the well's mouth.

This is not the same well where Abraham's servant met Rebekah, Jacob's mother, many years before. That well was close enough to the house to carry a jar for use by the family and the description of the two is different in how the water is obtained from them.

This is a well in the open fields which is used by the shepherds specifically for their flocks. When he came to it, there are three flocks already at the well, but there was a large stone covering it and so they're just sitting there with their own flocks waiting.

This then is a spring well which flows underground and bubbles up to the surface. Because of shifting sands or evaporation, the well would have been covered with a giant flat stone that had a hole cut in the middle. This would form the cistern's mouth.

On top of that hole would be a big heavy stone. By placing a stone over the mouth, the pressure of the stone would keep the water from coming up and evaporating on the open land. The water then is precious and the well is considered common property for all of the shepherds as we'll see next -

³ Now all the flocks would be gathered there; and they would roll the stone from the well's mouth, water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the well's mouth.

The term that was used in the previous verse indicates a very large stone, but there is no definite article in front of the word. This means that it wouldn't take every shepherd to move it, but rather that not all shepherds who used it could move it.

This shows that there was probably some type of agreement between all of the people

that no one would water their flock until everyone came together. Until then, everyone else would sit around and wait for the others.

Once everyone showed up, the top would be popped and the water would bubble out so the flocks would come and lap it up. Is anyone seeing a picture of anything yet?

**⁴ And Jacob said to them, “My brethren, where *are* you from?”
And they said, “We *are* from Haran.”**

Here we have a friendly greeting from Jacob. He's in a foreign land and certainly doesn't want to appear like a stranger and so he calls the shepherds his brothers and asks where they're from.

Their language would be different than what the people of Canaan spoke, but because his mother is from here, he would certainly understand them, having learned it from her. Any difficulty between the two would be no problem, because Deborah came along with him from Canaan too and she was from there.

Their answer to him must have been a welcome one. "We are from Haran." It is the land he was sent to and the land that they were from. He still could be a long distance from Haran because the shepherds would travel these long distances with their flocks, but he was now among people who probably knew his family.

**⁵ Then he said to them, “Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?”
And they said, “We know him.”**

Laban is actually the grandson of Nahor. Laban's father is Bethuel, but Nahor was certainly well known and Bethuel may not have been or he might have died. For whatever reason, he asks about Laban in connection with Nahor. And they answer knowingly.

II. Introducing Rachel

⁶ So he said to them, “Is he well?” And they said, “*He is well. And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep.*”

Jacob's question about Laban is an eastern way of inquiry - *ha'shalom lo?* "Is there peace to him?" The word peace, or *shalom*, is more than just a state of calm, but an

entire concept of the wellness and prosperity of the person. It is contentment and blessing. Their answer confirms he has this - "*shalom*"... he is well.

And as what seems to happen time and time again, God intervenes immediately with something new and which proves that things occur by more than happenstance. No sooner did Jacob ask about Laban than the people say they know him and "Yes, he's doing fine. And by the way, here comes his daughter Rachel."

Were we to not have ever read the rest of the story before, we could safely guess that this will be Jacob's wife someday. He was sent out of the land to find a wife from the family of his mother, he arrives at a well with people that know the family he's looking for, and then a daughter of that family comes up at that moment.

God's hand and His timing are all over the story and it shows He is in complete control over what's happening. Rachel, the daughter of Laban, comes with her sheep. As we will see, this shepherdess will become one of the four mothers of the children of Israel.

Eventually she will bear two children to Jacob - Benjamin and Joseph. Both of them will come to prefigure Jesus. Joseph will receive the birthright of his father and one of his sons, Ephraim will inherit the preeminent blessing.

From her son Benjamin will come Saul the first king of Israel and also Paul, the author of much of the New Testament. Her name means "Ewe" as in a female lamb. This young shepherdess is obviously a most important figure in the pages of the Bible.

⁷Then he said, "Look, *it is still high day; it is not time for the cattle to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go and feed them.*"

Jacob is a shepherd himself and so he knows what is right and normal for tending the sheep, but he doesn't know the customs of the well and so he gives them this friendly advice without understanding why they're hanging around doing nothing.

Normally in the middle of the day when it's the hottest, the shepherds would take a break and relax in the shade and let the animals gather by the waters. The picture of the 23rd Psalm comes to mind here - "He leads me by still waters."

But, once the hottest part of the day was behind, the animals would be taken back out into the fields to eat more. This is now that time of day and he's not understanding why

they're just sitting around. And so he tells them that the sun is still high in the sky and they should water them and get them back out in the fields.

They're not going to get big and fat and yummy standing around looking at each other. But without taking any offense at his sheep tending instructions, they explain why they're sitting around...

⁸ But they said, “We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and they have rolled the stone from the well’s mouth; then we water the sheep.”

The local agreement is that only when all the flocks are gathered together will they roll the stone from the mouth of the well. If they had already watered their sheep and left, then whenever Rachel or some other young, small, or weak shepherd came, they wouldn't be able to uncover the well. Only when they were all there would they water the sheep. In other words - Today we're waiting on Rachel...

⁹ Now while he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father’s sheep, for she was a shepherdess.

There is all kinds of speculation as to why Rachel is the shepherdess of the family. Laban has sons as well, and so it's possible that they were too young at this time to tend the sheep.

His oldest daughter, Leah, isn't taking care of them. The Bible says though that she had weak eyes and so the speculation is that either the sun is too strong for her eyes or that she couldn't see well enough to keep track of them. Whatever the reason, God ensured that Rachel, the Ewe lamb, would come first to meet Jacob.

¹⁰ And it came to pass, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother’s brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother’s brother, that Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the well’s mouth, and watered the flock of Laban his mother’s brother.

There was probably a lot of emotion in Jacob at this moment. He had left his home and land at a great age - 77, probably never having been away from them for more than a short time when he was out shepherding his own flocks. Then he arrives at a well where his cousin is coming in to water the sheep.

And she is, as we will learn, very beautiful. All of this and more surely had him overwhelmed and so in a display of his care for the family and in order to impress

Rachel, he moves this great stone off the well by himself and waters the flock for her. He is a man looking for a wife and she is a beauty that will suit his needs.

¹¹ Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept.

This is the second time a person is kissed in the Bible. The first is when Jacob kissed Isaac before being blessed and now Jacob, the one who is blessed, kisses his cousin and future wife. Then he lifted up his voice - maybe in praise of God, maybe in a triumph over the long journey, or maybe in elation over meeting Rachel.

For whatever reason, the emotions that went along with the voice resulted in weeping.

¹² And Jacob told Rachel that he *was* her father's relative and that he *was* Rebekah's son. So she ran and told her father.

Depending on what translation you use, it will say Jacob told her that he was her father's relative, kinsman, brother, etc. The Hebrew says that he was her father's brother. This might seem confusing, but it's not meant in a literal sense.

Brother, in this sense is extended to remote degrees of family relationships such as a nephew, a cousin, an uncle, etc. I bring this up as I do from time to time, to show you that different translations will attempt to explain things differently and can lead to wrong interpretations about things.

This is why it's best to read different translations in order to get a fuller understanding of what is being said and why. Anyway, as soon as she hears who he is, she took off to tell dad, certainly leaving the flocks in his care while she was gone.

III. Welcome in a Foreign Land

¹³ Then it came to pass, when Laban heard the report about Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. So he told Laban all these things.

Laban certainly remembers the 10 camels full of goods bearing the servant of Abraham who came to find a wife for his son. He probably knows through communicating with Rebekah that Isaac has prospered greatly and has become great and that this blessing will flow down to his own son as well.

Laban is a worldly guy as we saw before and yet he is a family man. He will attempt to get the two concepts merged so that he will be blessed as well as take care of his sister's son. And so, just as he did almost 100 years earlier, he runs out to meet the visitor.

Genesis 24:29 says, "Now Rebekah had a brother whose name *was* Laban, and Laban ran out to the man by the well."

Once again, Laban runs out to a man by a well to become a part of God's word and the story of mankind moving from the fall to his restoration in Christ. There at the well, Laban embraces Jacob, and for the third time in the Bible it notes a kiss.

He kisses him and then brings him to his house where Jacob tells him all about his journey and maybe why he left in the first place.

¹⁴ And Laban said to him, "Surely you *are* my bone and my flesh." And he stayed with him for a month.

While in the house, Laban has had a chance to discern the truth of what Jacob was saying. In finding this out, he acknowledges that Jacob is his bone and his flesh. This means that they are of the same stock and group of people; they are family.

Because of this, Jacob is now allowed to stay and participate in the family life. The ending verse today tells us that He stayed there for a month which is literally a month of days or the time from one moon cycle to another. This is where we'll end today in order to pick up with a new portion of Jacob's adventure next week.

However, I said earlier that Jacob's time out of the land of Canaan is a picture of Israel's time out of their land during times of exile. While they were out, and for those who are still out, they are often greeted as family and are welcome in the lands they stay.

But, through diligence, God's blessing, and being a tight knit family of people, they eventually become alienated from the people they live with and this has caused them to be moved out time and again - a people ever in search of their own place.

This will happen to Jacob, and it has happened to Israel, but God has kept them as a family throughout the ages and He always keeps their land open and waiting for them. Jacob will spend many long years away from home, but he will return as God promised.

And though Israel was dispersed for 2000 years, God has favored them once again with their own land. The book of Amos tells us that they will never be uprooted from their home again.

The times are coming to their fulfillment and God's blessing is upon His people. It is the wise and prudent soul who prays for these people and whose heart blesses them. God has His eyes and His heart upon them and we should as well.

Now that we've looked at the historical and cultural details of today's story, what we need to do is attempt to figure out why these verses are here. Why are the details included at all? Does anybody here have a clue? I had none until I did this sermon and God opened it up to me.

Jacob is a picture of Christ. In verse 1 he travels out of the Promised Land to the land of the people of the east. This is a picture of Jesus leaving heaven (the last place Jacob was noted at was Bethel, the House of God, a picture of heaven.) He travels to the east - a picture of the world of fallen man in the Bible.

In verse 2, he comes to a field, a picture of the world from which man derives his sustenance. This is seen in Genesis 3:17 - "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life." There in the field are three flocks waiting to be watered, a picture of the three groups of people mentioned in the book of Acts.

The Jews in chapter 2, the Samaritans, or the mixed Jew/Gentile people in chapter 8, and the gentiles in chapter 10. All are needing the water of life, just as the flocks need the water from the well.

The number three in the Bible stands for that which is solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire. Things that are especially complete are stamped with the number three. *God's attributes are three: omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. His essence is revealed in three - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

*There are three great divisions completing time--past, present, and future. *Three persons in grammar express and include all the relationships of mankind - me, you, and us. *Thought, word, and deed complete the sum of human capability.

We could go on and on with examples from the Bible and from creation, but the three flocks are the complete sum of humanity - Jew, Jew/Gentile mix, and Gentile.

In verse 3 we see that the water can't be accessed until all the shepherds and their flocks are at the field together. The water is a picture of the Holy Spirit and the stone needs to be rolled out of the way before it can be received. Do you see where this is going?

In verse 4, Jacob asks the shepherds where they are from. Their answer is that they're from Haran, which means "mountainous." Shepherd's are those who lead flocks, and the message of Jesus is one which according to Isaiah is proclaimed from the mountains.

The mountains are the place where people often seek God either rightly or wrongly. So here we have a picture of the people of the world, seeking after religion and being led by shepherds.

In verse 5, Jacob asks for Laban the son of Nahor and wants to know his condition, and if he is well. Laban, as explained eons ago, means brick or white. Bricks when fired will turn white, so there is that connection. Jacob is asking about Laban. As a brick he is hardened clay - picturing fallen man.

Nahor is a picture of man thirsting for the water of life. A root of his name is used in Psalm 69:3 in this way -

I am weary with my crying; My throat is dry; My eyes fail while I wait for my God.

The word "dry" or "parched" is the same basic word as his name. Laban the dried brick and the son of the parched man is someone who needs the Water of Life to be quenched - he is fallen man.

In verse 6, Rachel, meaning Ewe shows up. Rachel is the same word used to describe Jesus in Isaiah 53:7 -

He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.

And Rachel is leading her flocks to the water. Are you seeing it? This makes a fourth flock at the well. The number four is the number of things that have a beginning, of things that are made, of material things, and matter itself.

It is the number of material completeness. *The fourth day saw the material creation finished and so it represents the earth. *Four is the number of the great elements - earth, air, fire, and water.

There are four directions earth north, south, east, and west. *There are four divisions of the day - morning, noon, evening, and midnight. *There are four seasons - spring, summer, autumn, and winter. We could go on, but you get the picture.

Here is the Lamb leading the flocks to the water. These are those who already know the Lord, but there are those from the other three flocks - Jew, Jew/Gentile mix, and Gentiles that are waiting to receive Him too. They are all at the well to receive the water.

In verse 7, Jacob tells the other shepherds that they need to get busy, water their flocks and get back in the fields, it's still high day. The work ends at nighttime, not in the day. This is seen in John 9, where Jesus says, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; *the* night is coming when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

But there's a problem. They tell Jacob, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and they have rolled the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep." Are you seeing it? In verse 9, Rachel, brings her father's sheep - the believing Jews who have waited on their Messiah.

In verse 10, Jacob sees her - and then it specifically mentions twice "the daughter of Laban his mother's brother" and then it mentions "the sheep of Laban, his mother's brother." They are fallen sons of Adam, but they are His kin - the leaders and the people who have waited so long for Jesus.

When Jacob sees them, he rolled the great stone from the well's mouth to water the flock. This is a picture of the great stone which Jesus rolled away from the mouth of the tomb, thus allowing for the Holy Spirit, the Water of Life to come. It is the restoration of the life lost back at the fall of man. As Jesus said in John 7 -

³⁸ "'He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified."

You can see the symbolism going right through the story, right up until verse 14 where Laban says, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh." This takes us right back to the idea that Jesus came from man, but didn't inherit man's sin. He was born of a woman, but not of a man. In Genesis 2:23, we read this -

And Adam said:

"This *is* now bone of my bones
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man."

Adam received a wife, taken from man - just as Christ's bride will receive a husband born of a woman. Jesus Christ really came in the form of a man to redeem fallen man. For those who call on Jesus, from any group of people on earth, they will receive the promised Holy Spirit and they will be led to the living waters.

The stone is Christ; the water is Holy Spirit which issues from Christ, the well is where the Spirit of Christ dwells; Jacob pictures Christ; the Rachel - the Lamb pictures Christ. Everything here points to fallen man and his encounter with Christ. And you too can encounter Him.

Closing Verse: *They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; ¹⁷for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."* Revelation 7:16, 17

Next Week: Genesis 29:15-30 (Seven Years and Seven Days From the Law to Grace)

Water from the Well

So Jacob went on his journey away from his home
And came to the people of the East and to their land
And he looked and saw a well in a field where he did roam
And behold, three flocks of sheep guarded by the shepherds' hand

A large stone was on the mouth of the well
Now all the flocks would be gathered there
And they would roll the stone away after a spell
And water the sheep and put the stone back with care

And Jacob said to them, My brethren where are you from?
And in response they said, from Haran we do come

Then he said to them, "Do you know Laban son of Nahor?"
And they said we know him, "Indeed we do."
So he said to them, "Is he well can you tell me more?"
And they said "He is well, yes it is true."

"And look, his daughter Rachel is coming with the sheep."
Then he said, "Look, it's still high day
It's not time for the cattle to be gathered for them to sleep
Water the sheep and go feed them, okay?"

But they said, We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together
And they have rolled the stone from the well's mouth
Then we water the sheep, not just whenever
You must not be from around here. Are you from the south?

Now while he was still speaking with them in his address
Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess

And it came to pass when Jacob saw Rachel
The daughter of his mother's brother
And the sheep of Laban his uncle as well
That he rolled the stone from the well without another
And he watered Laban's flock which Rachel kept
Then Jacob kissed Rachel and lifted up his voice and wept

And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kin
And that he was Rebekah's son
So she ran and told her father about him
Certainly all the things he'd done

Then it came to pass, when Laban heard
The report about Jacob his sister's son
That he ran to meet him his curiosity stirred
And embraced him and kissed him there under the sun

And he brought him to his house, yes into his home

So he told Laban all these things which did arise
And Laban said to him "Surely you are my flesh and my bone
And he stayed with him for a month under the Eastern skies

As with Jacob, so did Israel leave the land
Twice in their history this came to pass for them
Having been under the Judge's divine hand
But in faithfulness He returned them home again

Yes, God is faithful to His covenant and to His word
And in faithfulness He keeps His people near
In truth and surety He deals, He is the faithful Lord
And so be not downcast; instead be of good cheer

He will guide His people home, none will He lose
In His mighty grasp are we, when His Son Jesus we choose

Stand on His promises and given him glory and praise
And rest in His goodness for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 29:15-30

(SEVEN YEARS AND SEVEN DAYS FROM THE LAW TO GRACE)

Introduction: We're in our 68th Genesis sermon and each one has reminded us that every single word in the Bible finds its fulfillment in Jesus. We could ask ourselves today, why is this story included. In all honesty, unless it's showing us a picture of something else, it doesn't really give us anything for guidance in our own life.

Jacob married two wives. That's all that we need to know. Esau married two wives too and it didn't include all the details. But here we're told about Leah and it focuses on one of her defects, her eyes; they're weak. Then it stresses the beauty of Rachel. Why?

Of what importance is it that Jacob spent seven years working for one wife only to find that he was given the other? It's a fun read, but why do we need to know? And then Rachel is given right afterwards and the work for her *follows* the marriage instead of preceding it. Why?

I assure you, the pictures these things make show us of God's great love for us by sending Jesus to do what we could not have done. And then just before finishing His work, He went through seven days of trial and sadness before the morning of joy came. Let's look together at what God wants us to learn...

Text Verse: *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered. ² Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no deceit. Psalm 32:1, 2*

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus... it's all about Jesus. When we strut around, glorying in our selection of getting to go to heaven and enjoy eternal splendor, we often forget that this blessing involved someone else's work, trial, and death. May we never forget this and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Seven Years for a Beauty

The last verse we saw in our last Genesis sermon said, "'And Laban said to him, 'Surely you *are* my bone and my flesh.' And he stayed with him for a month." Laban, knowing that Jacob is his kin acknowledged that he was his bone and his flesh.

Because they are of the same stock and group of people; they are family and so he allowed Jacob to stay as a guest for an entire month. Jesus came to His own stock and people as well.

In John 1 we read this -

¹¹He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. ¹²But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Jesus dwelt among us for a time just as Jacob dwelt with the house of Laban. This is where we start up today...

¹⁵ Then Laban said to Jacob, “Because you *are* my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what *should* your wages be?”

We can't make the error here that most commentators do which is that Jacob showed up at Laban's door with nothing to pay for his time or nothing with which to obtain a bride. There is no doubt that he went along with others on his journey.

He also would have brought enough to pay a bride price, just as Abraham's servant did. Isaac and Rebekah went through this same thing about 100 years earlier and they knew what was required in order to make this type of agreement.

However, Laban in an attempt to look like a helpful chap offers him a job, but may have hoped for Jacob to decline and offer a bride price to obtain the wife. Even if not, Jacob has now spent a month with Laban and it's probably apparent that he is a hard working person or he wouldn't have said anything to him.

But at the same time, we see the same Laban that we saw many years earlier when Abraham's servant came to get Isaac's bride.

He is a man of the world and he has his eyes set on profit, not the well being of Jacob. His selfish attitude is seen in this verse.

It is disguised behind a veil of acting kindly toward Jacob, but what he is doing is turning any possible gratitude that Jacob would feel for being taken in and instead making the proposition that he be hired like any other servant.

Whatever Laban is thinking, we have to consider Esau's threats to kill Jacob. Jacob is probably just taking everything one day at a time and is in no hurry to do anything that would necessitate him going back to Canaan. Now Laban forces his hand.

Jacob, becoming a servant of Laban is picturing Jesus coming as a servant. Jacob will suffer through hardships, Jesus suffered through hardship. Jacob worked for a wife whom he received after his work and then received a wife for whom he would later work. This looks to Jesus' work fulfilling the law and then bestowing grace.

All that we see is given to show us these things. The next words start us on the path...

¹⁶ Now Laban had two daughters:

Once again we see the number two being important in the account. The Bible time and time again uses the number two to signify a difference – usually of things at enmity or contrasting with each other. This time it's no different.

At the same time that two shows a contrast, it will normally also show that the two contrasting things confirm each other. The two testaments of the Bible contrast - the Law verses Grace, but they confirm the word of God. Daytime contrasts with nighttime and yet they confirm the duration of a day, and so on.

Laban has two daughters who will contrast, and yet they will confirm each other as we will see.

^{16 (con't)} the name of the elder *was* Leah, and the name of the younger *was* Rachel.

Leah means "wearied" or "labored" and Rachel means "ewe lamb." Laban may have had other daughters, but these are of marrying age and are as yet unmarried. The others, if any, would be either married or too young to marry. The two that the Bible focuses on are these - Leah and Rachel.

Their names and how they become Jacob's wives are important to help us understand the work Jesus did for each of us.

¹⁷ Leah's eyes *were* delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance.

Here we see the contrast between the two and yet here we will see the confirmation which results. It's an astonishing thing to think of what Jesus did for us, but it's pictured

in these two girls. Leah pictures the law. Her name means "wearied" and it is the rote following of the law which actually wearies the Lord.

Isaiah tells us this and uses the root of Leah's name to show us -

"Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing *them*." Isaiah 1:14

The word for weary here in Isaiah is the word *nileti* which is derived from *laah* - it is tied to the name Leah.

Secondly, the word for her eyes which is translated "delicate" here is *rakhot*. It literally means "weak." The NKJV is being polite.

In the book of Hebrews chapter 7, the law, like Leah's eyes, is described as weak -

¹⁸ "The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless ¹⁹ (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God." (NIV)

Rachel on the other hand is called *yephat toar v'phat mareh* - "was beautiful of form and was beautiful of face."

Rachel then pictures the gospel, the New Covenant of Christ. Paul describes it to us in Romans 10 -

And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" (v15)

If the feet are beautiful, then how much more the gospel. None of this is stretching what we are to learn. We are shown the contrast and yet the confirmation of the work of Jesus in these two women as it will become apparent in the verses ahead.

¹⁸ Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter."

The question that could arise is, if Rachel is a picture of the gospel, then why would works be included. It's a good, but misdirected question. The gospel is good news which

tells us we're saved by grace through faith and that works are not involved in that process.

But it is also the case that the gospel resulted from work, just not ours. Jacob here pictures Jesus. The gospel is our faith in His work. Jacob is willing to work for Rachel, Jesus was willing to work for the gospel. Jacob's love for Rachel is realized in Jesus' love for us -

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, ²⁶that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

-Ephesians 5:25-27

While we're looking at this verse, I want to read you one of the many commentaries which incorrectly interprets what is going on here. This is from the great Bible scholar Albert Barnes -

"...in his destitute state he could produce no dowry, and it was the custom of those times for the father to receive a portion for his daughter, and not to give one with her."

Jacob is not in any way in a "destitute state." He is 77 years old, the son of promise, the inheritor of Isaac's estate, and he traveled with others to Padan Aram. The seven years of work which he agrees to as a dowry is not meant to show that he is destitute.

It is meant to keep him away from Esau. It is Esau's threats which precipitated his move in the first place. Jacob is looking for a wife and obtaining her in a way which will keep him safe, employed, and on Laban's good side during the process. When the 7 years are over, he will be 84 years old.

As incredible as it may seem, this verse then is a picture of a woman who is found in Luke chapter 2 -

³⁶ Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; ³⁷ and this woman *was* a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day.

Anna, means "Grace" is the daughter of Phaniel, meaning "Face of God". She was 84 years old after having been married for 7 years. She was from the tribe of Asher, which means "Happy." The work of Jesus Christ is available to us by grace. It restores to us the face of God and which brings us our blessed state, our happiness; the veil is lifted. All of these names, ages, places, and families are given to show us what God is doing and what the result of His Son's work is.

¹⁹ And Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me."

Laban is probably very happy about the arrangement. He's getting seven years of work out of Jacob and his daughter will marry someone trustworthy and of close kinship. He is probably thinking he may benefit from this in other ways as well.

Jacob never asks for anything else, such as lodging or food and so this tells us that he didn't come in a destitute state. Rather, the only thing he is receiving for his work is Laban's daughter. In an attempt to seem gracious, Laban agrees and says "Stay with me."

Knowing the type of person Laban is, as we saw in earlier chapters, it's probable that he already has in mind what he is going to do, but he keeps his intent secret for now.

²⁰ So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed *only* a few days to him because of the love he had for her.

Seven is the number of spiritual perfection. If you ever want to see an astonishing breakdown of it or any other number in the Bible, you can read [Numbers in Scripture](#) by EW Bullinger. There he details so much information, it's almost impossible to grasp.

Jacob's seven years of working for Rachel picture Jesus' spiritually perfect work on our behalf. Just as Jacob's time was served for a wife he loved, Jesus served for the wife He loved too.

II. Deceiving the Deceiver

²¹ Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give *me* my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her."

Jacob's time, when it was past, seemed like a few days, but his time is past and now the agreement must be settled. The time of servitude is accomplished and now the reward and payment is to be made.

²² And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast.

This is the fourth feast or *mishteh* noted in the Bible. As at other times, it is looking forward to something else. This one is being given as a picture of Palm Sunday, AD32 when Jesus rode into Jerusalem and was hailed as the Messiah.

This will become clearer in a few verses. The men of the place have gathered for the wedding ceremony and a feast, just as those in Israel gathered together at Palm Sunday. At that time, the people called out, "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!" John 12:13

²³ Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her.

Here we see Jacob the deceiver of His father being deceived by Laban. Instead of receiving Rachel, Leah is brought to him. These accounts are not a 1 for 1 comparison. No shadow or picture ever is, but they are given to show us what will happen and why.

This time is no different. Jesus wasn't a deceiver, but the pattern of what happened when Jacob deceived Isaac was to show us Jesus, pictured by Jacob replacing Adam, pictured by Jesus.

Israel had already called Jesus their King and yet there was still more needed before we could go from the law to grace. He had to fulfill the law in its entirety first. This included being betrayed, just as Jacob was betrayed by Laban.

²⁴ And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid.

The usual custom was to give handmaids to a daughter at her marriage. Rebekah, Laban's sister, was given many, but Laban being a cheap guy only gave one to Leah.

The name Zilpah comes from the Hebrew word *zalaph* which isn't found in the Bible, but it means to trickle or to sprinkle. And this looks to what Jesus did as Peter tells us in his first letter -

To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: 1 Peter 1:1, 2

Zilpah, the Sprinkling, came along with Leah, the law. And for Jesus, along with fulfilling the law came dying on the cross and the sprinkling of His blood.... beautiful pictures here!

²⁵ So it came to pass in the morning, that behold, it *was* Leah. And he said to Laban, “What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?”

It was the custom of the people at the time, as it still is in many places, for the bride to be veiled. Jacob never saw the face of the wife he worked for and was instead deceived by Laban. Although this is a sad thing, it is recorded for us to see the work of Jesus.

There were still seven days from Palm Sunday until His work was finished. Jacob served seven years for Rachel and Jesus served His time in fulfillment of the Law, pictured by Leah.

²⁶ And Laban said, “It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn.

Laban makes up a horribly lame excuse. If this was the custom of the people, then he would have told it to Jacob seven years earlier. The fact is that he was blessed because of Jacob. We'll see this in a few sermons. Laban wanted it to continue.

However, the picture is again fulfilled in Christ. We cannot receive the grace of God in Christ without there first being met the demands of His perfect law. Apart from that, we stand condemned. This is why we're being shown this.

There is an order to everything, including how we relate to God. We must first meet the demands of the law and then receive the grace of God.

²⁷ Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years.”

Laban will profit from Jacob's love for Rachel. He knows 100% that he will be willing to work another seven years without payment to have her hand. And to ensure that he accepts, he asks for him to only finish the bridal week of Leah. In seven more days, he may have his prize.

Jesus has seven more days left too. From Palm Sunday through Saturday will be His passion week, crucifixion, burial, and time in the tomb. When the week is over, he will have prevailed over the law. This is the picture we have in front of us.

Jesus said in Matthew 5, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled."

He fulfilled the law for us, just as Jacob fulfilled the seven years of work and the seven days of the bridal week for Leah who pictures the law. And as Leah's weak eyes weren't sufficient to draw Jacob's love, the law was weak as well.

The torturous week of waiting for Rachel is mirrored by the torturous week of Jesus' Passion. But both were fulfilled and the time of trouble passed. Sadness is for a moment, but joy lasts forever. Imagine it... the granting of the new bride; the resurrection of the Lord!

A thought we need to look at though and which will come up again is that Jesus comes through Leah, not through Rachel. It is through Leah's fourth son Judah. Like I said earlier, God's righteousness demands that the law must be fulfilled.

And so Jesus came through the law and fulfilled it on our behalf. Rachel will be the mother of Joseph and Benjamin both of whom will also picture Jesus in Genesis. Also, the blessing will go through Joseph and on to his son Ephraim.

Later in the Bible, Ephraim becomes synonymous with the northern tribes of Israel who are dispersed and become a multitude of nations - the fullness of the gentiles, according to Genesis 48. So even in the sons of these two women, the picture remains clear.

It all points to Jesus who was born under the law, fulfilled the law, and is therefore qualified to bestow grace on all people.

III. Seven More Years

²⁸ Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also.

Jacob, instead of fighting at the prospects of having two wives, agrees to the terms. As unfair as it was for him, he was willing to complete the bridal week of Leah. And as unfair as it was for Jesus to complete the Passion week and die for sins He didn't commit, He was willing to do so. As John 1 says,

¹⁶ "And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses, *but* grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

In fulfillment of the bridal week, Rachel is given to Jacob. And in fulfillment of the law the Lord's grace is bestowed upon us.

²⁹ And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid.

Again, only one maid is given away by Laban. He receives 14 years of work, marries off two daughters, and only provides two maids for his two daughters.

Bilhah means either foolish or timid. The only New Testament connection with Bilhah is in 2 Corinthians 6, where it says -

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

The name Belial is connected to the name Bilhah. It means "beyond purpose;" something that is useless. Bilhah bore two sons to Jacob, one being Dan who followed a path of idolatry and is overlooked in the sealing of the tribes in Revelation 7.

She also slept with Jacob's oldest son who was born of Leah which caused him to lose the birthright. Her being introduced here is probably then a picture of what not to do as a Christian. Don't be sexually immoral or be unequally yoked with non-believers.

And don't mix in the law, pictured by Leah, with grace, pictured by Rachel. In other words, for the good thing which came in Rachel came something bad. Just as in the church there are those that rely on grace and those who are foolish and abuse it.

³⁰ Then *Jacob* also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah. And he served with Laban still another seven years.

Jacob finally receives his reward and he went into his little ewe lamb. Likewise, Jesus has received His flock whom He loves. The seven years of serving for Rachel are certainly symbolic of the spiritual completion of the time between the foundation of the church and the rapture of the church.

At some point, the work will be finished and the saints of the ages will be brought out of this land and into the promised inheritance. The time is coming and here we are patiently waiting. It is certain that Jacob lifted the veil of Rachel before he went into her.

And it has been the custom of Jewish people ever since to lift the veil of the woman they are to marry. This is called the *bedekin* or "veiling of the bride" and it is done in remembrance of this account. However, what it actually pictures in the Bible is recorded in 2 Corinthians 3 -

¹² Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— ¹³ unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴ But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. ¹⁵ But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. ¹⁶ Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Moses went in to the presence of God and God's glory shone so brightly on him that when he came out, he had to veil his face. Natural man cannot look at the purity of God's holiness which is reflected in His law. We can never meet its requirements.

But Jesus did this for us. Now, the veil is lifted in Christ and we can look directly at His work which was done for us. As Paul says, "when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away." Phaniel - the Face of God...

Leah was veiled just as the law carries a veil. Rachel was unveiled and likewise, we receive the fullness of the splendor of Christ through the grace He alone bestows on us.

About this account today, Adam Clarke says this, "What a man soweth, that shall he reap. Jacob had before practiced deceit, and is now deceived..."

We have seeds of our own to sow. We can sow the seeds of the law and be overcome by the law, or we can put our trust in Jesus who fulfilled the law and thus we can overcome the law through Him.

Closing Verse: *"I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." Romans 9:25*

Next Week: Genesis 29:31-35 (Four Sons for Leah) (69th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

From the Law to Grace

Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative
Should you therefore serve me for nothing? I think not
Tell me, what should your wages be, just a hint please give
Pick your wages,,, go ahead and give it a shot

Now Laban had two daughters, Leah was the elder's name
The younger was Rachel and the two girls didn't look the same

Leah's eyes were delicate, some would say quite weak
But Rachel was a beauty in appearance, as the Bible does speak

Now Jacob loved Rachel and so he gave a clue
"I will serve you seven years for Rachel your youngest you see
And Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you
Than that I should give her to another. Stay here with me

So for Rachel Jacob seven years did he serve
And they seemed to him only a few days
Because of the great love that he had for her
Yes Jacob was smitten by Rachel in all ways

Then Jacob said to Laban, "To me my wife give
For my days are fulfilled that I may go in to her
And Laban gathered together all the men where they did live
And he made a feast, it was a big one for sure

Now it came to pass in the evening time
That he took Leah his daughter instead
And brought her near to Jacob, such a crime
And he went into her and her wedding bed

And Laban gave Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid
But this didn't resolve the problem of how Jacob was betrayed
So it came to pass in the morning, that behold
It was Leah in his bed, not Rachel like he was told

And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me?
Was it not for Rachel that I served you?
This isn't Rachel, as anyone can clearly see
Why then have you deceived like this and been untrue?"

And Laban said, "It must not be done so
In our country to give the younger before the firstborn
Fulfill her week and we will give you the other also
You will serve another seven years like the first that you had sworn

Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week as was bade
So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also
And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to Rachel as a maid
Then Jacob went into Rachel so happily you know

And he loved Rachel more than Leah as the time he did fill
And he served with Laban faithfully another seven years still

This story of great love is realized in Christ Jesus
Who came as a Man and fulfilled the law for us
Then He received His bride, the fulfillment of the law
And then another to Him did come
His grace descends upon us as we look back in awe
All because of Jesus and the work that He has done
What a marvelous story of the love of God
May we carefully read it and cherish it all of our days
And may we proclaim the gospel while on this earth we tread
Until we meet in heaven for the resounding choir of praise

There we shall sing eternally "Glory to our King"
And there with the angels shall to Him we sing

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 29:31-35 (FOUR SONS FOR LEAH)

Introduction: Israel as a people has existed for close to 4000 years. They stem from one man who set out on a journey from his home in order to find a wife. While looking for one, he got two. They are sisters and rivals for his affections. And in the process, he unwittingly gained two concubines as well.

In their struggles to have children and gain his favor, he became the father of 12 sons, but unlike his father and grandfather who were known through one son of promise, these 12 sons of Jacob will become an assembly of people, united in a unique way.

This family journey begins in today's passages with the birth of four sons to the first wife, Leah. How the children are born and the order in which they come can teach us lessons about our own lives, as well as how God's plans are being worked out for us.

Text Verse: *Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.*

-Psalm 42:11

Leah was the lesser loved wife of Jacob and her heart probably never stopped feeling the sadness of being rejected for her younger, more attractive sister, but in today's verses we will see her go from desire of attention to praise of God.

As we grow stronger in our faith and in our understanding of God's care, we can and should follow the same path. We should learn to leave our desires behind and look to God in praise of what He has done for us and in anticipation of what lies ahead too. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. See, A Son

In Genesis 32:10, it says this - "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies."

Jacob left his home and traveled north with no real possessions except the staff in his hand. He didn't travel alone, but he didn't take along a caravan full of worldly stuff

either. Saying he crossed over with his staff is comparable to us saying that we left with the shirt on our back.

In other words, he left with little, but not necessarily alone. It's been over 7 years since then and he has no more than when he started, with the exception of two wives and their possessions.

As of today's verses, he will begin to increase his family even if he isn't increasing his wealth. He still has a 7-year period of working off the debt of Rachel, but as he does, he starts having children. This is where we begin today.

³¹ When the LORD saw that Leah *was* unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel *was* barren.

Here we have Jacob with his two wives which he earned for 14 years of work. Depending on the translation you use here, it may say that Leah is either "hated" or "unloved." The translations are technically correct, but our understanding is probably wrong.

The last verse we saw from last week said that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. This is the state of the relationship. The very fact that Jacob is about to have four children in a row from Leah shows us that she is loved, but it is less love than what he has for Rachel.

I get bothered by commentators that find fault in Jacob for this. We love everyone around us differently and in different degrees. We also love the same person more or less depending on the time of day, the color of their hair, or how our mood is at the moment.

Jacob has done nothing wrong by loving Rachel more than Leah. This is the girl he wanted to marry and it's not his fault that Leah came into the picture. It's merely a fact of what happened and he is living with it as any of us would.

Despite this, the Lord looks with mercy upon the one who suffers and He is attentive to their hearts. Just because Jacob loves Leah less in no way implies the Lord feels the same. And so it says He, the Lord Jehovah, opened her womb. In the same verse it says that Rachel was barren. This implies that the also Lord directed this.

As the Lord is introduced, it is showing us that the covenant He made with Abraham is being attended to by these actions. Leah's ability to bear and Rachel's inability to do so are both designed by the Lord to continue His plan in a direct and purposeful way.

Whether Leah is loved or whether she isn't, she bears the Lord's favor in many ways. As the Geneva Bible says - "They who are despised by men are favored by God."

We can't assume that when someone is out of favor with somebody - no matter how important they are, that they are likewise out of favor with God. Leah isn't and so good things are coming her way.

We can go home and think about the people who look down on us. Here we are, seeking out God at church and trying to learn about Him and how our lives are, or should be directed to Him. A lot of people, even the important people of the world, would look at us as wasting our time.

And yet I assure you that the time you spend here, or at another church, or Bible study will never be wasted and the Lord will look upon you in the same way as Leah. You may be unloved by your boss, or the people you work with, or the politicians, but the Lord isn't going to forget you or your efforts.

I absolutely assure you of this. Leah was unloved, but God tended to her in an exceptional way. You may feel unloved, but you aren't. You are truly the pride and joy of God's heart. Your time spent for Him is time well spent and what you may lose now will be rewarded beyond your wildest dreams in the days ahead.

³² So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, "The LORD has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me."

Jacob's first child is born to Leah. As with all of the 12 sons and 1 daughter who are mentioned, their names reflect what is happening in the story. Leah names the child and the name she gives reflects the condition of her heart. His name is Reuben, a name which comes from two words *ra'ah* meaning to see and *ben* meaning son.

Reuben then means, See a son. And she explains the name's choice - *ki ra-ah Yehovah beyani*. "The Lord has surely looked on my affliction." In other words, my sad state didn't go unnoticed by Jehovah and because of it, He has granted me a child.

Something to note though, which we've seen several times in the past, is that Leah may be thinking of the coming Messiah in this name. Jacob is the son of promise from Abraham and Isaac, and Leah probably knows this.

She may be thinking that because this is the firstborn, he may be the next son of promise. If so, "See a son" may be her way of saying to Jacob, her friends, and her family "Come and see the son. Behold, God's plan is being worked out in this child."

In what is a sad follow up, she says in either victory or desperation - we know not which, "Now therefore, my husband will love me." She is probably thinking "I am the mother of the firstborn and this will certainly change his heart toward me."

And quite often we will have the same attitude. When we accomplish something, it is often less for one reason than another. Maybe we have a hidden, alternative reason. Leah is looking for love in her husband and hoping it will come because of her son.

We may be doing something to draw others' attention as well. We go to parties and get drunk in order to be accepted. We may sleep with someone in hopes of them loving us. Maybe we wear clothes a certain way to draw attention to ourselves.

I look back on my old photos and I see that I've worn headbands all my life. They used to be rolled up and worn like an Indian, but then I got bald and so I wear them open like a pirate. But I've always worn them and have them in every color you can imagine.

I must have been looking for attention and to stand out, but now I feel dorky without one. These things might be necessary to us in hopes of pleasing others, but they're not necessary in order to please God. He looks internally not externally, when evaluating us.

One of the most important things He looks for is a reverence of His word. In Isaiah, we read this amazing thought -

Thus says the LORD: "Heaven *is* My throne, And earth *is* My footstool. Where *is* the house that you will build Me? And where *is* the place of My rest? ² For all those *things* My hand has made, And all those *things* exist,"

Says the LORD. "But on this *one* will I look: On *him who is* poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word. Isaiah 66;1, 2

II. He Who Hears

³³ Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I *am* unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also." And she called his name Simeon.

Leah is again the one to bear a son for Jacob, but by this time she sees that being granted the honor of bearing the firstborn didn't change Jacob's heart toward her. Again she chooses a name showing the condition of her heart - Simeon.

The name comes from the Hebrew *shama* which means "to hear." Again she explains the choice, *ki shama Yehovah ki senuah*. "Because the Lord has heard that I am unloved." What was missing in the birth of Reuben will be partially fulfilled in another way in the birth of a second son.

What she craves is love of husband, but in her craving, the Lord grants her a child to love. Again, we have a divine lesson from the Creator of our hearts and the One who understands our desires. We may not always get what we want, but we will always be given what we need.

There is no thing lacking in the life of God's people, even if it means starving in a foreign land as a missionary. What we lack in a friendly location and food is temporary, but what we gain in glory for our patience is an eternal home and everlasting abundance.

If you want promises of health, wealth, and earthly prosperity, I can direct you to a lot of churches right here in Sarasota or to some flashy TV evangelists - maybe they can help you.

But if you want true contentment in a world which isn't always fair or kind, stick it out with God's word and He will reveal to you blessings that you could never have imagined. I know the struggles and trials of many of you, but I also know that what you face now is temporary and already defeated because of the Lord.

He knows that you might be unloved, poor, facing trials of whatever kind, but He does hear, just as Leah knew and showed us by naming her son Simeon. Yes God does hear, so let your voice be made known to Him. He who hears is faithful and will respond in due time.

III. Attached to Each Other

³⁴ She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore his name was called Levi.

Now, for the third time in a row, Leah conceives a child. Even if she isn't emotionally loved, she is receiving physical love. Jacob is being a good and faithful husband to her, regardless of his greater love for Rachel.

In another heartfelt and open plea to her sad state, she names this third child Levi and states, *ha'paam yelahve ishi eley*. "Now this time my husband will become attached to me." Levi means "attached."

With three sons comes hope for a stronger bond than before. Three in the Bible stands for that which is solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire. In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon uses the number three to show us its strength -

"Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken." (4:12)

Leah sees this one as the son who will bring her what she has desired - a strong bond with Jacob. Interestingly though, in the five verses we're looking at today, this is the only one in which the name of the Lord isn't mentioned.

She never invokes His name. Her expected attachment to Jacob has caused her to leave the Lord out of the picture. If I can find an equivalent in us, it would be "getting what we want and forgetting who gave it."

This is the unappreciative side of us. Always, always when I type a new sermon, I first pray and ask the Lord for His guidance. The day before I started this one, I thanked the Lord for getting me through another sermon and I asked Him to be with me the next day as I started this one.

On that Monday, I got up and started typing and was going along until noon when I got hungry. I got some food, sat down, and started eating and typing when I realized that I'd never prayed about the sermon that morning, nor thanked the Lord for the food.

I was so busy with my personal efforts that I forgot to include Him. We ask for health, we get it, and then we forget to thank Him. We pray for a promotion, it comes, and we

don't bother to return to Him any gratitude. Leah has been given a third son while Rachel has none and yet she takes the blessing without giving the thanks.

Maybe in the future when we hear the name Levi we'll remember to give the Lord thanks for all the things He's given us each and every day. There may be bad, there may be trials and frustrations, but certainly the blessings are there and are deserving of thanks.

IV. Now I Will Praise the Lord

³⁵ And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now I will praise the LORD." Therefore she called his name Judah.

For a fourth time Leah receives the Lord's favor and conceives. This time, in a truly resounding note of victory, she calls out *ha'paam odeh eth Yehovah*. "Now I will praise the Lord." And therefore his name is Judah, meaning "praised," or even "Let Him be praised" which would then be referring to The Lord.

It is from the tribe of this fourth son of Jacob and Leah that the Messiah, Jesus, will come. Interestingly, and as an ancient clue to this, the divine name Jehovah is spelled Yud Hey Vav He. The name of this fourth son Judah is adds in one letter, Dalet. YHVDH

This fourth letter, Dalet, means "door." And so the name Leah gives her son is a veiled reference to where the Messiah would come from. Judah being the "door to Jehovah," the physical manifestation of God on earth.

This is seen in Jesus' words in John 10 -

⁷"Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. ⁸All who *ever* came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. ⁹I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture."

He is the Door by which we are saved and which restores us to our covenant keeping Lord. This is symbolized by the name Judah, where the Door to Jehovah is revealed.

It may be, and we can only speculate on this, that she somehow realized that this son would be the one leading to the Messiah. At first she thinks it is Reuben, but somewhere along the line she realizes it isn't so.

With each new child she looks in hope of this promise that Jacob has spoken about. Instead of looking to her husband as in the last three boys, she goes to the Lord in praise for this one.

Just as Rebekah the mother of Jacob and Esau, knew the outcome of their lives before they were born, it seems that somehow Leah knows the outcome of Judah - that this one would lead to the Messiah.

Later in the history of Israel, after receiving the law at Mount Sinai, the 12 tribes will encamp around the tabernacle and move when directed by God. Whenever the camp sets out, the first to do so will be Judah. And there is a reason for this.

In the same way, when the armies of Israel had gathered together to go to battle in Judges chapter 20, they inquired of the Lord which tribe should go first. The divine response came back in verse 18 which reads -

"Then the children of Israel arose and went up to the house of God to inquire of God. They said, "Which of us shall go up first to battle against the children of Benjamin?" The LORD said, "Judah first!"

In these instances, the tribe of Judah set out first as a lesson to Israel and a lesson to us - when we proceed, let praise go first. God is giving us real life instructions in real life examples. It doesn't matter what the issue, what the challenge, or what the prayer, in all things let the praise of the Lord go first.

The term "Jew" as we use it today comes from this son as well. Israel, after the time of Solomon, divides into two separate nations - the northern tribes become known as Israel and those in the south will be called Judah. After the Babylonian exile, the returnees were often collectively known as Israel and individually as Jews.

But being a Jew isn't based as much on a physical trait as it is on a spiritual one. Paul explains this in Romans 2 -

"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God."

Paul's use of a pun in these verses is meant to highlight the nature of the Jew. The same is found in the book of John. In the sad commentary of chapter 12, we read these words-

³⁷ But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, ³⁸ that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke:

“Lord, who has believed our report?

And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”

³⁹ Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

⁴⁰ “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts,

Lest they should see with *their* eyes,

Lest they should understand with *their* hearts and turn,

So that I should heal them.”

⁴¹ These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.

⁴² Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *Him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue;

⁴³ for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

The name Judah has a special significance and it asks us to think on what is praiseworthy. Leah, after three previous attempts to get her thoughts straight, finally comes to the realization that it is the Lord and not men to whom praise is due.

She was looking for praise from her husband but it is only to be found in the Lord. The failure of Israel as well as the church is that time and again, we love the praise of men more than the praise of God. When we give, we hope the one we give to will notice. When we help, we hope for a note of thanks.

When we put forth effort and nobody notices, we let our feelings get hurt. But there is a better reward when we do things in secret that we will never receive when we do them in the open - for the praise of men. Jesus said in Matthew 6 -

“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. ² Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ³ But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly

Another thing we do too often is to make showy prayers in front of others. Some people love to have everyone around them hear their prayers and they make a point of making them long and complicated.

But God would rather hear the short and simple prayer of a person from a valley than a loud and showy one from the mountaintops. Jesus continues in Matthew 6 -

⁵ “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

Leah was rewarded with a fourth child and you too will receive your reward for the things you do in Jesus' name. Don't worry if no one else notices. Someone far greater and with a much better reward does.

This reminds me of a guy I've hear of who was a rabbi in Israel. He knows 17 languages and is obviously a very intelligent man. Eventually he came to know Jesus. He is now a Greek Orthodox pastor in Jerusalem. My friend Sergio told me about him.

He has a teeny church and he goes and does his services faithfully even if nobody comes. His heart is set on the Lord and although it probably breaks to walk into an empty church, he continues on with his chants and devotions because the ears that do hear are pleased with his service.

³⁵ (con't) **Then she stopped bearing.**

The term here is *taamod milledeth* and means that she stood still from bearing. This doesn't mean that she has now become barren or unable to have children, but rather that for a time she stopped. No explanation is given, but it could be because of Rachel's jealousy and what comes about in the next chapter.

What is more probable is that, even if it was directly because of Rachel, it was indirectly because God had other plans for the coming sons of Jacob. He will become an assembly of people as Isaac prophesied, but it will come about from several mothers.

Leah has now stopped bearing in order to grow Jacob's name in a new way. For whatever reason, Leah will now have a period of rest from her labors (pun intended). Of these four children who have been born, the first will eventually lose his birthright due to what we would consider as an inexcusable action.

The second two will lose their chance at the birthright because of their fierce and uncontrolled anger - together they will kill an entire town of people because of the action of only one person in the town.

The preeminence will move to Judah, and so the line of the Messiah will continue through him. Despite this, there will be some notoriety in both Simeon and Levi. Simeon will disperse into the tribe of Judah and will become absorbed by them. And from Levi will come the priestly class of people, known as the Levites.

They will continue to minister to the people of Israel throughout the time of Jesus. The Gospel of Matthew comes from the hand of a Levite - his full name being Matthew Levi. Today in Israel it is claimed that the gene identifying them has been isolated and in particular the gene of the Kohanim, or the high priestly class.

If you've ever known a Jewish person with the name Cohen, this is the group who can most readily trace their DNA all the way back to the line of Aaron, the son of Levi.

It seems God has ensured that this tribe of people will be ready for the final portion of a prophecy given by Daniel about 2700 hundred years ago and which encompasses the 7 years of tribulation. It is a time when a temple will again stand in Israel and the Levites will minister there.

Four sons for the unloved wife and the honor of one of them leading to the Messiah of the world. It is a high honor for a woman who was overlooked as a suitable wife. I have to tell you that Leah is simply a picture of a lot of us. We get passed by in life for whatever reason, but there with us is the Lord.

He open her womb and showed her favor while the younger, prettier wife remained barren. Don't waste your time trying to compete with beauty or money or status. All of these may be nice, but they can flee away in a moment.

However, the favor of the Lord lasts forever. There will never be a time that Leah isn't the ancestor of the Lord, but it wasn't long before Rachel's beauty disappeared. Keep your eyes on the Lord and fix your thoughts on that which is noble and good.

Don't worry about the things you can't control. The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and where He can best use you. Nothing is left to chance with this wonderful Creator.

Closing Verse: *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. 1 Peter 2:9, 10*

Next Week: Genesis 30:1-13 (Two More Wives and Four More Sons) (70th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Four Sons for Jacob

When the Lord saw that Leah was the unloved one
He opened her womb but Rachel was barren
So Leah conceived and bore a son
And she called his name, this firstborn, Reuben

For she said, "The Lord has surely looked on my affliction
Now therefore, my husband will love me like and addiction

Then she conceived again and bore a son and said,
Because the Lord has heard that I am the unloved one
He therefore has given me this son for which I pled
And she called his name Simeon

She conceived again and bore a son
And said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me
Because I have born three sons, not just one
Therefore His name was called Levi, you see

And she conceived again and bore a son
And said "Now I will praise the Lord
Therefore Judah is what she called this one
Then she stopped bearing, so says the word

Four sons for Jacob from his lesser-loved wife
And from her will come the Giver of life

It is from her fourth son Judah that the King would come
The one to rule over all of the nations
It is from the tribe of praise that Jesus would become
The Savior of the world, the hope of all generations

O God your plan is perfect and your word is sure
Your splendor is marvelous and your holiness pure

And so to You we will shout out our resounding praise
Giving You alone glory and honor for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 30:1-13

(TWO MORE WIVES AND FOUR MORE SONS)

Introduction: Leah, the older and less-loved wife of Jacob had four sons in a row and Rachel had none. When we want and we don't get, we can often act in a way which is contrary to what the Bible would have for us.

Envy and jealousy are torches which set our lives on fire and which quench any joy we might otherwise have. They are often the source of even greater troubles which lead us down all kinds of wrong avenues.

James 4 says, "Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? 2 You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures."

Coveting and envy aren't exactly the same thing, but they spring from the same place where discontent lies. When we envy what other people have, it becomes coveting. Although it's the tenth commandment, and so it may seem less important than some of the bigger ones, like murder, coveting actually breaks the greatest commandment.

When we covet, we fail to love God with all of our heart and we fail to trust that what He has given us is proper. When we do this, we place something above Him as our God. Coveting, as James notes, also leads to other sins, such as murder.

Today, we'll see how envy affects the lives of Jacob's wives in some of these ways. But we will also see, as we've seen so many times in the past, how God is able to take our wrongs and bring good out of them. Through a war of envy between sisters, comes another four of the twelve sons of Israel.

Text Verse: *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Galatians 5:25, 26*

Living in the Spirit is synonymous with having been saved by the blood of Christ. When you put your faith in Him, you are sealed with the Spirit; you live in the Spirit. But this doesn't mean you walk in the Spirit. Paul tells us to also walk in the Spirit.

When we do, we will keep our eyes on the right things, have our lives directed toward proper goals, and we will have the Lord placed as the highest prize. Walking in the Spirit isn't just a thing we do on Sunday morning, but it's an attitude of our hearts and lives that can be found at any moment and in any situation.

Walking in the Spirit is being attuned to the things of God and trusting in Him each step of the way. Let's determine to do this. One way is to learn and apply His word to our lives and so...

May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Green Eyed Monster

"How all the other passions fleet to air,
as doubtful thoughts and rash embraced despair
and shuddering fear and green-eyed jealousy!"
The Merchant of Venice, Shakespeare

¹ Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die!"

Rachel, Jacob's beloved, has seen her older sister bear four children. It's been at least five and probably more years since they were married and yet she's still not had a child. In the culture of the Bible, bearing children was the highest honor of a woman and having none is a point of shame.

This sentiment is found in both testaments and numerous times. It's not something inserted by reading it into the text, but rather it's open and plainly evident.

Bearing and raising children may not be seen as a great and noble role today, but the Bible teaches us otherwise. After these many years without bearing, it says that she envied her sister.

This didn't suddenly crop up after the fourth child, but it had festered, probably since the first. Hence, her statement to Jacob "Give me children, or else I die!" She is a lady at her wits end and has fallen to the point of blaming her husband for somehow withholding children from her.

But even she would know the problem lies with her and not with him. Leah has been having one child after another, so there's nothing wrong with Jacob. And he certainly spent time with her or she would have said what she said differently. In the end, God has withheld her from bearing.

The envy she has is a poison within her which will lead in various directions, but God will use it to establish His people who come from Jacob. As we see time and time again, God brings good out of our evil.

The Bible has a lot to say about envy and jealousy and it's something that we need to watch in our lives constantly. Proverbs 14:30 says -

A sound heart *is* life to the body,
But envy *is* rottenness to the bones. Proverbs 14:30

In the Song of Solomon words are written that might almost seem to point back to the life of Rachel who will eventually die while giving birth -

For love *is as* strong as death,
Jealousy *as* cruel as the grave;
Its flames *are* flames of fire,
A most vehement flame. Song of Solomon 8:6

Three other barren women in the Bible are directly tied to Rachel. The first is Sarah who was related to her through the family of Terah, her great-great grandfather. Sarah didn't bear a child after probably 70 or so years of marriage. By the time she did, she was a woman of 90 years.

The second is Rebekah who was her aunt. When she couldn't bear children, Isaac prayed to the Lord for her and she conceived. Although it took 19 years, the waiting ended.

Another barren woman who contrasts Rachel is Hannah, the mother of Samuel the prophet. Her story is given in 1 Samuel. Rachel is barren and envies; Hannah is barren and quietly weeps. Rachel says that she must have children or she'll die, and in fact she ends up dying when she has children.

Hannah on the other hand prays to the Lord for a child, receives him, and then has three more boys and two daughters. Rachel is aggressive in her speech and conduct toward Jacob, but Hannah remains devout and submissive to her husband and to the Lord.

And interestingly Hannah is from the tribe of Rachel's grandson Ephraim who was born to her son Joseph. It is as if the lesson was learned in Rachel, and Hannah wanted to be remembered differently.

²And Jacob's anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

As should be apparent to anyone who has been married awhile, we fall in and out of emotional love all the time. As our mood changes, we can get pretty upset at the very object of our affection. Jacob loved Rachel, but her accusations really upset him and so he cried out *hatakhath elohim anokhi* - "Do I stand in God's place?"

Speaking on this verse, the Targum of Jerusalem says that this is one of the four keys that God delivers not to an angel or a seraph -the key of barrenness. The others are the clouds, the heart, and the grave. These four things belong to sovereign hand of God alone.

Children are the gift of God, and His only, and therefore God, not man is to be reached out to for them. But unlike Sarah, Rebekah, and Hannah, Rachel blames Jacob and he in turn elevates the matter to where it belongs, which is in the providence of God.

Having said that, there is no birth which is a surprise to Him and He has, in His wisdom allowed them all - including those for which we try to find reason to abort. But the lesson of the Bible is that both barrenness and conception occur by His hand.

Therefore, we need to address the barrenness to God in petition and the conception to God in thanks, not murder. The Bible never makes a distinction between the validity of the life of a child in the womb and one which is already born. Maybe somebody can tell that to our president and those congressmen on the left.

There are other means of both having children and raising children, even in biblical times. Rachel turns to one of those means now and the Bible makes no comment on the matter in the negative. In other words, what we are now going to see is considered acceptable and normal, just as it was in Abraham's time...

³So she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear *a child* on my knees, that I also may have children by her."

Just as Sarah did for Abraham with Hagar, Rachel now suggests the same to Jacob. This takes us all the way back to a sermon I did long ago. I mentioned that despite most commentaries stating Abraham lacked faith and was wrong for sleeping with Hagar, this is a wrong conclusion.

There was nothing wrong with it then and the verses of Jacob and his concubines verify this. If it were wrong, Jacob would have known this from the lessons of the past and not followed suit, but this is an acceptable and normal custom of the times. There is nothing in this which violates nature or the tenor of Scripture.

Rachel offers her maid, who is her property, to Jacob. Her name is Bilhah and it means either foolish or timid. Rachel says is that "she will bear *a child* on my knees." There are two thoughts in this one concept.

The first is that Bilhah would literally sit in Rachel's lap as the child was being born, thus symbolizing that the baby belonged to Rachel. Secondly, that because the child then belonged to her it would be dandled on her knees as her own. This sentiment is seen concerning Israel in Isaiah 66 -

Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river,
And the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream.
Then you shall feed;
On *her* sides shall you be carried,
And be dandled on *her* knees. Isaiah 66:12

When Rachel says, "that I may have children by her" she uses the word *v'ibaneh* which means that she would be "built up by her." It comes from the word *banah* which means "to build" and from which comes the word *ben*, or son. In other words, just as a house is built with wood or stones a family is built through children.

These words, *banah* and *ben* are spelled with the letters Beth and Nun. Beth means a house and nun reflects an "heir" or the continuance of a generation. This might seem like an unimportant lesson in Hebrew, but the mind of the people is reflected in the words they use.

Ultimately, these are the details that God has included in His word for us to understand what has happened and why. Although the New Testament is written in Greek, the same Hebrew mind is transferred over through the apostles so we can more readily understand Jesus' work when looked at from this perspective.

The New Testament building of God's house is seen more clearly when we understand that we are living stones, as Peter calls us, being built into a spiritual house. It's not good to separate the Old and New Testaments in such a way that we no longer understand this pictorial mindset.

We are sons (ben) of God being built into His house (beth). And we are heirs (nun) of God's promises along with Jesus. This is reflected in Rachel's words to Jacob so that by it we get a much better picture of what Jesus is doing and how it relates to us.

He is building a house, a spiritual house, out of sons not only from the Jewish people, but the Gentile people as well, all pictured by Jacob with four wives.

⁴Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her.

The sons of concubines were normally not given an inheritance with the sons of the wives. However, when a son is born under the name of the wife, then it will be a son of that wife.

Ishmael was an exception because God told Abraham to excuse him from the house, but all of Jacob's sons will participate in his inheritance. The house of Israel includes all 12 sons.

Later in Jacob's life, Bilhah is going to bring some trouble to the family. Reuben, Jacob's oldest son, is going to go in and sleep with her. It doesn't say what, if anything, Jacob did to her, but because of what he did, Reuben will lose his birthright.

⁵And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.

As sure as children are the gift of God, Bilhah has a son. Rachel's words to Jacob were misplaced and unwarranted. Jacob is capable of having children and both Leah and Bilhah testify to that. Rachel's barrenness is from the Lord, not from Jacob.

⁶Then Rachel said, "God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son." Therefore she called his name Dan.

The name Dan means Judge. Later we'll see a book in the Bible called Daniel - God is my Judge. Rachel names the child based on an appeal to God and indicating that God ruled in her favor. And so she uses His name in the exclamation - *danani elohim* - God has judged my case.

But unlike Leah who invoked the name of the Lord, Rachel uses the general term of God - elohim. The Lord, Jehovah, directs the plan of salvation and monitors the covenant and so it seems curious that He isn't mentioned now by Rachel.

But it seems understood that it will be through Leah that the Messiah will come, not through Rachel. At least the Bible record gives us this hint.

⁷ And Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.

This is the sixth son of Jacob and the second born for Rachel by Bilhah. One half of the sons of Israel are found in the house now.

⁸ Then Rachel said, "With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, *and* indeed I have prevailed." So she called his name Naphtali.

This name is a bit more difficult to determine than some of the others. Naphtali mean either "my wrestling" or "my twisting." If it is wrestling, then it is referring to the struggle she feels she's in with Leah - a struggle for being the preeminent wife of Jacob.

If so, her exclamation at his birth is, "With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed." They were in a battle and she is now on top.

But the name Naphtali comes from the word *patal* which means to "twist." And so one translator says, "By the twistings of God, I am entwisted with my sister."

The difference in the translation is important because in the first, it is her struggle against her sister and she has prevailed. But in the second it is God's designs that have allowed her to participate in building the family which previously was only by her sister.

If it is the first translation, she is showing an arrogance in condemning her sister even after God has been gracious to her through children. If it is the second, then she is showing gratitude to God for allowing her to be included in His plans as He builds up Jacob's home.

As you can see, differences in translation really do matter.

II. Another Wife, More Children

⁹ When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife.

It matters less what Rachel did, seeing as how she was barren, but what Leah does shows her own streak of jealousy. Leah stopped bearing for a time and Bilhah has had two children for Rachel. And so Leah decides that she can do the same.

I'm sure Jacob didn't mind any of this a bit, or he would have told Leah "No." Instead, he becomes the man with four wives. This one is Leah's maidservant who was given to her on the night of her wedding, Zilpah.

The name Zilpah comes from the Hebrew word *zalaph* which isn't found in the Bible, but it means to trickle or to sprinkle. She now takes the stage for a time...

¹⁰ And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son.

Like I said, Jacob is probably not at all unhappy about the arrangement. If he were, he would have told Leah to be content with her four sons. But he took Zilpah with no record of complaint. He has a fourth wife and now another son is born.

We should note that there could have been daughters born during this period. Only one daughter of Jacob is noted in the Bible directly, but on several occasions in Genesis it speaks of his daughters in the plural.

They aren't mentioned because the family line travels through the father, not the mother. Today in Israel it's exactly the opposite. A person's Jewish-ness is determined through the mother, not the father interestingly enough.

¹¹ Then Leah said, "A troop comes!" So she called his name Gad.

The name Gad is another interesting study and is difficult to pin down the exact meaning or what she was thinking. It could be, as some speculate, that Leah stopped bearing because Jacob stopped going in to her. If this is the case, then her giving Zilpah to Jacob was to her as much of a necessity as what Rachel did earlier.

She may have been desperate to find the love that had eluded her. Gad could mean either troop, meaning a large group, or fortune. If it's a troop, then she is excited about the large family which has come from her - a whole troop. Or if fortune, her exclamation would be that she has had good luck in her struggle.

It seems that either way the name Gad is a reflection of her sad state and unlike her other children, she never invokes the name of the Lord. He is completely left out of this struggle in either thanks or praise.

¹² And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.

This is Zilpah's second and last son, just like Bilhah. Between the two of them are four sons of Israel and any unnamed daughters.

¹³ Then Leah said, "I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed." So she called his name Asher.

There is no dispute on the meaning of Asher - it means happy. It comes from a verb which means "to go straight." For most of us, we tend to like the straight and quick path to where we are going, whether literally or in a project.

Leah is happy at the birth of this son and gives the reason by saying, "the daughters will call me blessed." Again, she doesn't mention her husband, nor does she include the Lord. This is a lady who has turned to the wrong place for notoriety.

Unlike her, Mary was given the news of a Son and her words were directed to the Lord and to the future hope of blessing. In Luke 1, her words which contrast Leah's are given -

⁴⁶ "My soul magnifies the Lord,

⁴⁷ And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.

⁴⁸ For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.

III. A Lesson For Us

If we can simply be content with the life we've been given it will save us from all kinds of other troubles. I'm not saying that we shouldn't look for more of something or have desires for things. It's natural for humans to want to learn more, make things better, tinker with things, set and achieve new goals, etc.

The world has moved forward in great ways because people have not been content to sit and do the same things day after day, but instead have looked for new and inventive ways of doing stuff. Projects keep us busy and they keep us from being idle.

But these things usually happen in the life of a person who is already content with their life. A person who isn't content, will take shortcuts to get what they want. A person who is content will work for what they want. And even better than the content person is the content person who adds in prayer for the things he's lacking.

It's one thing to work for something you want and not get it and it's a different thing to work for something after you've prayed about it and still not get it. When God is in the equation, we tend to accept not getting it with an understanding that He is still in control.

Leah started out well, but when things turned for her, she began to get envious and took actions which didn't include God. After Asher was born, she said, "I'm happy" but it doesn't mean she was. There is no note of gratitude or thanks to the Lord.

Rachel on the other hand let herself get more and more envious of Leah until she made an unjust claim towards Jacob. There is no record that she ever prayed about anything, and there's no hint of including God in thanks or appreciation when her plan to have children through her maid worked out.

The fact that it's not mentioned is a good indication that she didn't. The Bible tends to record those things when they do happen. Eventually she will get what she wanted and have children of her own, but it will cost her life, dying while giving birth.

King Hezekiah was told by Isaiah that he would die from an affliction he had. When he heard this, he cried out to the Lord to live and the Lord gave him another 15 years of life. But during that time, he had a son who would be the downfall of Israel - a guy named Manasseh, a very wicked king.

Also during this 15-year period, he made a mistake by showing the Babylonians the wealth of His house and of the land, something which the Lord disapproved of and which resulted in Babylon coming back for it in war. If he had died as the Lord originally said, neither of these would have happened.

The thing we need to do is to accept what the Lord has for us as His will, whether we like it or not. But the good thing for us is that even when we don't do this, it may cost us, but in the end He will work it out for good.

We may suffer because of it, others may suffer because of it, but He has already figured it all into His overall plan. In the end, we're going to look back on our lives and see how masterfully He has woven them together.

He's going to take everything we've done - good and bad, and the things we will do in the future - right and wrong, and they will be so beautifully woven together that we will only see the marvel of the finished tapestry. There will be no sadness or tears. Just everlasting joy.

Life is a learning experience, but it's also something that we need to handle. There are choices to make, there are paths that we need to decide on. God has included these stories for many reasons. One story can have many applications. But certainly each story gives us insights into right and wrong.

We can take them and use them to make our own choices based on what we've learned. This is the beauty and marvel of knowing your Bible. It is a doorway into understanding yourself and what you can do better because it was written by the One who fashioned you in the first place.

If He knows you, then He knows what is best for you. And because He loves You, He will also reveal it to you if you will just take the time to check. As I say again and again, if you want to know God, you must know Jesus; and if you want to know Jesus, you need to know your Bible.

This book, this beautiful book with these fascinating and often intriguing stories is given so that you can know what's right and then you can act on that knowledge. Keep reading your Bible and keep speaking to the Lord in prayer. Keep envy far from your eyes and be content in the life the Lord has given you.

You are here for a reason and you have a purpose. Walk in the Spirit, hold hands with the Lord, and keep your Bible close at all times.

Next Week: Genesis 30:14-24 (God Has Taken Away My Reproach)

Closing Verse: *¹And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. ²I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; ³for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? 1 Corinthians 3:1-3*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Two More Wives and Four More Children

Rachel saw that she bore no children though she did try
Rachel envied her sister and to Jacob she said
Words of distress, "Give me children or else I die!"
Would you rather have me living or find me dead?
And Jacob's anger was aroused and he did fume
And he said, "Am I in the place of God
Who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb
Be careful, your words on dangerous paths do trod

So she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her
And she will bear a child on my knees
That I may also have children by her for sure
Do this for me Jacob, won't you please?
Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife
And we learn that Jacob went in to her
And Bilhah conceived and brought forth new life
A son, and Rachel thought it was a good thing for sure

Then Rachel said, "God has judged my case
And He has also hear my voice and given me a son
Therefore she called his name Dan in that place
And she knew then that Leah's battle wasn't won
And Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again
And we see that she bore Jacob a second son
Then Rachel said "With great wrestlings then
I have wrestled with my sister and indeed I have won
So she called his name Naphtali
His name means, My Wrestling, you see
When Leah saw that her bearing seemed done
She took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife
And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son
And in her was a newly gained vigor for life

And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son
Then Leah said, "I am happy, the daughters will call me blessed
So she called his name Asher, naming this one
Because of the straightforward accomplishment of her quest
Such is the continuing story of Jacob's life
And the sons born to him from the wives that he had
He went to Paddan Aram to gain a wife
And ended with four... Hey! That's not too bad

The sons of Jacob became the tribes of Israel
And in this group of people there is an amazing story
Their struggles with God the Bible does tell
And through them came our King of glory
These people brought in the Messiah for all
And to them He will return some day
Remember to pray for them that on Him they will call
These are His people as the Bible does say

But we too are His people because of His shed blood
And we are grafted into the holy olive tree
We share in the sap and the glorious flood
Of the Holy Spirit - given to us so abundantly
Thank you God, for You love all the people
Jew and Gentile alike, we are the children of God
Help us to shout out the word from every church steeple
Yes, may we do so wherever our feet do trod

Great and glorious God above
Thank You for Your wonderful love
Thank You for our Savior Jesus
Through whom You have given eternal life to us

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 30:14-24 **(GOD HAS TAKEN AWAY MY REPROACH)**

Introduction: The word "reproach" can be used in a few ways. It can be something active, such as when someone reproaches another person or God. The king of Assyria sent messengers to reproach the name of the Living God and God turned around and destroyed 185,000 of them in a single night. Lesson there...don't reproach God!

The word can also mean that someone feels blameworthy about something or ashamed because they have done something wrong or because they are somehow deficient. I know that the Japanese people feel reproach over having entered into and then lost the second world war.

They carry the reproach of what happened, of the allegiance they put in a person they thought was a god, of the unconditional surrender and the subsequent occupation. Many still feel the reproach as they have to rely on the US as their defender. They are a nation with a complex, but they're not alone.

Rachel felt her own reproach. She was barren and felt the shame of her barrenness. It was a stigma which she longed to end. This is true with other women of the Bible as they perceived in themselves a lack of carrying out the command of God to multiply the race.

To some degree, many of us feel our own reproach. Maybe we have a physical or mental deficiency - real or perceived - that we feel ashamed of. I know a lady who is in her 40s that lives in a culture where being married is of paramount importance and yet she's never been married. She feels the reproach of this.

I know others who have never been married as well as some who have served time in prison, who have failed their spouse, who have failed their children, who have lost their job, their home, their wealth. All of them have indicated they feel reproach.

In fact, I'd guess that the larger part of all of us have something we feel ashamed about. The good news is that where we are deficient or where we fail, God can shine through all the more brightly in our lives, if we will only allow Him to. In Him there is a release from the values of the world.

In Him there is no wealthy or poor, there is no intellectually smart or incredibly stupid.

To Him we are all His handiwork and each one of us serves a good purpose in His plans. To the unmarried - there's a much better hope than a husband. Isaiah says to the widow, "Your Maker is your husband."

How much better is that than a man who will let you down, give you grief, and eventually wear out and die from years of life. The Lord is from ever-lasting to ever-lasting. He is a Father to the orphan, a Husband to the widow, the Caretaker of the downtrodden, and the Comforter of the sick and feeble.

He is the covenant keeping Lord who has His eyes upon His people at all times.

Text Verse: *"But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, The descendants of Abraham My friend. ⁹ You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, And called from its farthest regions, And said to you, 'You are My servant, I have chosen you and have not cast you away: ¹⁰ Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.' Isaiah 41:8-10*

Israel has borne their own reproach - both actively as the Lord has chastised them, and passively in the acknowledgement of their sins. The latter is far less than it should be, but one thing I know, when a Jewish person comes to the Lord, there is little else that is as incredible to see.

They understand the reproach they bore in an entirely new context and yet they can identify with His workings in their lives in a completely new way. It is a fantastic thing to see. The story of Jacob having children isn't yet through and today we will continue to see the formation of a people who will be set apart by God.

Understanding the past, how it came about and how it relates to the present, will also give us a better understanding of the future when Christ returns to dwell among His people once again.

Today's story includes more children and the taking away of the reproach of one of the four mothers of the children of Israel, Jacob's beloved Rachel. May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Mandrakes for Mom

¹⁴ Now Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah.

Reuben is a little boy at this time, maybe around five or six years old. It says that "in the days of the wheat harvest" he went out. This is the May time frame and is around the time of the Feast of Shavuot or Pentecost recorded in both Testaments of the Bible.

The wheat harvest is a picture of the gathering of the people in the church age. Pentecost is the time of the giving of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter 2. While he is out in the fields, Reuben found some mandrakes and brought them to his mom.

A nice little boy with a special treat for his beloved. There is an enormous amount of speculation as to what mandrakes are. Some people claim to definitively identify them as this or that while others deny those claims.

The word here is only used in two other sections of the Bible. Once in the Song of Solomon and once under a different context in the book of Jeremiah. In the Song of Solomon, it says that the mandrakes give off a pleasant fragrance.

In May the fields are full of flowers and so this could fit one of a plethora of plants. Whatever a mandrake is, from the context of the passage, it's clear that they were thought to promote fertility.

There are several plants in the mid-east which are used in this way, so that doesn't help all too much, but one good candidate is the alraun or in its Latin form *Mandragora vernalis*.

These are common and are about the size of a nutmeg and they have a strong but pleasant smell. Apparently, the people of the area are known to still use these to promote child-bearing to this day.

If you ever want to get off on a completely useless tangent, you can read commentaries by people who claim the mandrakes were used by Jesus in order to make Lazarus appear dead and so He faked bringing him back to life. And, because it worked so well He.... did it to Himself too.

This is the kind of stupidity I recommend you don't bother with. Whatever mandrakes are, they were well known enough as edible fruit for a little boy to pick some and take

them to mom. He was doing what beautiful little children do around the world by bringing her home a special present.

14 (con't) Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me *some* of your son's mandrakes."

Rachel knew the supposed purpose of the mandrakes and asked Leah for some. The exchange they're going to have tells us that either mandrakes are very rare, or that the season for mandrakes wasn't a good one. If not, then what comes about between the two probably wouldn't have happened.

15 But she said to her, "*Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?*"

In Genesis 29:35, after having had her fourth son, it says that Leah stopped bearing. What may have happened is that Jacob simply stopped going in to her. Both Rachel and Leah gave their maidservants to Jacob and they both had two children each.

What is possible is that Jacob is now spending most of his nights with Rachel simply out of love and maybe because she wanted him to keep trying to give her children. This seems to be what's happened because Leah says that Rachel took away her husband. He isn't spending any time at all with her now.

The nightly argument could have been, "Well Leah has four children and I still don't have any." So when Rachel asks for some of the mandrakes, Leah knows that she's going to eat them in hopes of getting pregnant and that means that Jacob is going to still be spending all his nights with her. Leah will be left out in the cold.

Like I said, if mandrakes were in abundance, Rachel would have just gone out and gotten her own, but the fact that she's asking for them from Leah shows how rare they probably are.

Another thing to think about is that when Leah says, "*Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?*" She isn't comparing the value of her husband to mandrakes. She's saying that the mandrakes are all she has left since she doesn't even have him anymore.

A gift from Reuben has all the more meaning when she's not receiving the affection of her own husband. If she gives the mandrakes away, then she has nothing to comfort her

unhappiness. Leah has forgotten the Lord who had so abundantly blessed her in the past and she is discontent with life as it is.

¹⁵ (con't) And Rachel said, "Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son's mandrakes."

Once Rachel sees how unhappy Leah is about her own situation, she comes up with a plan to make them both happy. Leah gets a night with Jacob without any interference and Rachel gets some mandrakes that she thinks will help her get pregnant. And Jacob... Jacob is on the receiving end of the deal.

¹⁶ When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes." And he lay with her that night.

The Bible says that the worker is worthy of his wages. Jacob got hired for a job and he is going to earn his pay I guess.

With the bargain settled, Leah lets Jacob know what is what. There will be no argument from Rachel about the situation. More to the point, because mandrakes are involved, Jacob would understand the reason for the exchange and why Rachel would allow this.

A night off from trying to have children would be worth it if she had mandrakes to help with her conception. Whether Jacob believed any of this is irrelevant. It would keep harmony in the house and was probably even amusing to him.

He had enough decisions to make with wives and children and work. There would be no reason to interfere in this and all the reason to go along with it for the sake of peace and harmony. Jacob is a man with a duty and he is going to get it done.

II. Two More Sons and a Daughter for Leah

¹⁷ And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.

Once again, God shows that He is transcendent over His creation. Leah gave away her mandrakes which are supposed to help women get pregnant and yet she ends by having another child. Again, as we've seen before, God is in control of the details.

Children are a grace which He directs and apart from Him they don't come. And so now,

after a time away from bearing, Leah has a fifth son and bears Jacob's ninth child. Leah obviously prayed for this to happen because it says that God "listened to Leah."

The cry of the afflicted is tender music to God's ear. He is patient and will wait as we ignore Him. He has all the time in the world to let us leave Him out of the picture, but when we call on Him, He is there - right then - working on a response.

The answer may not come as quickly as we'd wish, but no prayer from His people goes unheard. The nice thing about fulfilled prayers is that when they come, we can turn around and see that it was at the perfect moment.

Any earlier and maybe we wouldn't have been really ready. And any later and the purpose of the prayer might have passed away.

His timing is always perfect and each time we think the delay was unwarranted, we can see that in fact it made us more ready to handle the blessing when it did arrive.

Don't let delays in your prayers get you frustrated. Instead, keep talking to the Lord and waiting on His perfect will to be realized. In the end, we will all understand the wisdom which surrounds us and is working towards the fulfillment of a perfect plan.

¹⁸ Leah said, "God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to my husband." So she called his name Issachar.

As continues to happen, the child is named by the circumstances surrounding the birth. Issachar means "He is wages." Leah openly speaks about the situation - *natan elohim sekhari* - "God has given me my wages."

Unlike the birth of her first four children, Leah only mentions the God of creation - elohim and not the God of the Covenant, Jehovah. But in the name of the child, Issachar - He is wages, she is saying that the child is the reward from the Creator God because she gave her maid to her husband.

It's funny that instead of tying the giving of the mandrakes to Rachel, which is the reason she got to sleep with Jacob, she ties it to the giving of her maid in order for Jacob to have two sons through her as well. She has an insight for us here to remember.

What Jacob has done by having four wives is not unbiblical. I heard a preacher speaking about this exact passage about a month ago and he felt that what Jacob did was wrong.

This is at a time before the giving of the law. But even under the law, and in the New Testament as well, there is no prohibition about this.

In fact, the law makes provisions for multiple wives. And based on Leah's comment about being rewarded for what she did, it is both illogical and nearsighted to come to the conclusion that Jacob was in the wrong. The Bible makes no such charge.

¹⁹ Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son.

Apparently, the mandrakes didn't work for Rachel because another year later, she still hasn't had any children, but Leah bears a sixth time and now Jacob has 10 sons.

²⁰ And Leah said, "God has endowed me *with* a good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." So she called his name Zebulun.

With the bearing of her final son, Leah exclaims, *zabadani elohim oti zebed tov*, "God has endowed me with a good endowment." And so she calls him Zebulun which means Glorious Dwelling Place. Because of six sons, she is certain that Jacob will now love her and live with her.

She is the mother of six boys which in the context of the times and of the Bible was a great blessing. Psalm 127 says it this way -

Behold, children *are* a heritage from the LORD, The fruit of the womb *is* a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So *are* the children of one's youth. Happy *is* the man who has his quiver full of them; They shall not be ashamed, But shall speak with their enemies in the gate. Psalm 127:3-5

Jacob's quiver was growing all the time and the majority of his strength was through Leah.

²¹ Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

We saw in a previous sermon that Jacob will have other daughters that aren't even recorded. The Bible isn't attempting to diminish women in the Bible as feminists try to claim, but there are reasons why the males are highlighted.

The reckoning of a person's family is through the male, not the female. The male is the leader of the family and in the workings of God, the patriarchal family is the one which is properly aligned with His intentions. Societies which cast off this guideline invariably devolve into chaos, strife, and destruction.

God provides structure and order for us because He loves us and knows what is best. The matriarchal societies of the world are poorer, less educated, filled with far more crime, and are a sad example of disobeying what God has intended.

The move away from the traditional, biblical family in America has led to higher crime rates, lowering of expectations in education and in the workforce, and increased immorality.

The female's role is different than for that of the male. The male is highlighted in order to show what God ordained and intended for us, not to in any way diminish women or their value as people.

Although the majority of the important roles in the Bible are men, there are a large number of women who fill them as well. And even more are the many women who are seen behind the scenes, working their lives in harmony with God's intent and bringing glory to Him and stability or validity to the biblical narrative.

Of the daughters of Jacob, only Dinah is mentioned. And this is because she is relevant to the Bible's record. She is mentioned only 8 times, but 6 of them are in connection with an event found in chapter 34 which eventually cost Simeon and Levi, Jacob's 2nd and 3rd sons, the blessing of being the bearer of the Messiah.

This honor instead was passed down to the fourth son, Judah. As I said, by introducing her and by highlighting her, we can see God's hand at work as the line leads from Adam to Noah to Abraham and eventually through Judah and David and finally to Jesus.

For this and another important reason, Dinah is mentioned when her other sisters aren't. Dinah means "vindicated" and it seems that Leah named her in response to the name Rachel gave to her son born through her maidservant - Dan.

The struggle between the women for the affections of their husband has been contentious. It has gone back and forth through the workings of God, both in Creation and in the keeping of the covenant made to Abraham and which is carried through Jacob.

III. Rachel's Joy

²² Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.

What is probably after somewhere around 13 years of marriage the Bible says that elohim, the God of creation, remembered Rachel and that elohim listened to her and opened her womb.

Rachel had trusted in having children through a maidservant and then later in trying her hand at looking to the creation for children by eating mandrakes.

Eventually though, she found that neither of these satisfied and the second option certainly didn't work. Mandrakes might be yummy, but they don't bring about babies. So she finally did what she should have done many years earlier - she prayed.

She prayed just as Isaac and Rebekah did and as Leah appears to have done too. God responded to their prayers and He responded to hers also after about 13 years of being barren. Once again, prayer isn't a tool to get God to do stuff for us.

It is a way for us to communicate our heart and our desires to Him and then to wait on His response. The response may be "yes," it may be "no," or it may be that we just have to keep waiting. The waiting may be the response all by itself.

God may be molding us and refining us through the wait. At the end of the waiting, we might find that the very thing we had been praying for isn't necessary because the wait changed us in a way which took away our need.

In the book of Lamentations, Jeremiah tell us this -

²²Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. ²³They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. ²⁴"The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, To the soul who seeks Him. ²⁶It is good that one should hope and wait quietly For the salvation of the LORD. (3:22-26)

These words were written at the most difficult time in Israel's history up to that point. The people were suffering through the affliction brought about because of their disobedience. There was hunger, there was disease, and there was death all around.

If ever there was a man who should be able to claim his way out of the trials, you'd think it would be Jeremiah. But instead, he waited patiently on the Lord. He offered prayers and he waited. Rachel offered prayers and she waited; her prayers were finally answered.

²³ And she conceived and bore a son, and said, "God has taken away my reproach."

As the Geneva Bible says about this verse - "Because fruitfulness came as God's blessing, who said Increase and multiply, barrenness was counted as a curse." They are right. Going back to the very beginning of man's time on earth, bearing children was considered a blessing.

To the women of the Bible, the reciprocal must have then seemed to be true - "If I am not a blessing then I bear reproach." Finally, after these many long years, God took this reproach away from her and gave her a son as a blessing.

²⁴ So she called his name Joseph, and said, "The LORD shall add to me another son."

There is a duality in the name of Joseph which not only looks backward, but also forward. The word for "has taken" used by Rachel in the previous verse is *asaph*. The word for "add" which she now exclaims in this verse is *yosef*. Both point to his name.

In taking away the reproach, Rachel now looks for the Lord to give her another son and so she names this one Yosef. He shall add, increase, repeat, or double. The name he receives is literally fulfilled in two ways. First, he will have a brother, Benjamin.

But Joseph himself will also have two children - Ephraim and Manasseh. In taking away her reproach, God has showered Rachel with His grace and now, for the first time in the biblical narrative, she invokes the covenant name of the Lord, Jehovah.

She acknowledges that He is the one who will accomplish these things. She has left the world of fighting, derision, superstition, and envy, and she has truly entered into the covenant care of the Lord who directs all things for the fulfillment of His plans and purposes.

Now that we've looked at the surface of the story, the historical and cultural aspects of what happened, we need to ask ourselves, "Why is this story here? What is it that God wants us to see? The answer is, as always - Jesus." Here is the Light -

Reuben, a son born to Leah who pictures the law, gives mandrakes to his mom. His name means, See a son. He now pictures fallen man attempting to regain spiritual life by works. The mandrakes are something we use to try to receive eternal life - false religion. The mandrakes pass from Leah to Rachel and yet Leah has the child, not Rachel. Leah names him Issachar, "He is wages." This is a picture of the hope of new life; the renewal of spiritual life to man lost at the fall. This is Jesus, fulfilling the law on our behalf.

Reuben gave the mandrakes to Leah, but Rachel, a picture of those outside of the law ask for them - they are searching for God in the wrong way. But, Leah bears the child, a child born under the law. This is Jesus born under the law as Paul writes in Galatians 4 -

⁴"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

Leah names him, "He is wages." The Bible says that "the wages of sin is death, but the Gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jesus is the wages we need to move from death to life. After paying our debt, comes Zebulun the next to be born, again to Leah.

His name means "Glorious Dwelling Place." It is the place that Jesus went to present His blood after the crucifixion and the paying of the wages - the debt. Hebrews 9 tells us this—

²⁴"For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;"

And once He appeared to His Father in the glorious dwelling place, we see the final part of this picture from Leah. It records, "Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah." The final child of Leah, who pictures the law, is the final point to show us the fulfillment of the law - Dinah means "vindicated."

Paul tells us the fulfillment in 1 Timothy 3:16 - " Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory."

He was "vindicated" by the Spirit - the proof is the resurrection. Jesus Christ prevailed over the law, He is our wages (Issachar) unto eternal life, He entered the glorious

dwelling place (Zebulun) with His own blood, and He was vindicated (Dinah) by the Spirit.

All of this is pictured in the birth of these three by Leah, the law. But this leaves the last birth to be considered. Rachel's first child, Joseph. Why were children born to Leah, but not Rachel. What was it that kept her from bearing?

The answer is found in who she represents - people dependent on the grace of God. The law brought forth her Son to redeem those under the law. Only then could we too be children of God. Notice that the mandrakes did absolutely nothing for her, just as false religion does nothing.

Only when she called on the Creator was she able to bear. And indeed she did, Joseph. In one fell swoop God took away our reproach (*asaph*) and He added us to His fold (*yosef*). This is why she used both terms when she gave the reason for the child's name.

The Increaser, the Repeater, the Doubler - Jesus! He has brought forth sons from those under the law and those apart from the law; from Jew and gentile; from male and female. In Him is the embodiment of the law and in Him is the Grace of God.

If you remember way back at the beginning, this story occurred in the May timeframe, at the time of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was given at that time and that is the time of the birth of the church - the grace of God poured out upon the sons of men - and the wheat harvest pictures that spiritual harvest.

This is why these children are mentioned, this is why they are mentioned in this order, and this is why God has given us this story. Once again, as it always is, it is all about Jesus. God is telling us, time and time again about His work in the stream of time and humanity, to restore us to Him.

This is where we end today, with the joy of a child for Rachel after many long years of waiting. For you, it may be the end of a time of waiting too. You may have been fighting the call in your own life - the call to come to Jesus. He is there and He truly wants you to share in the blessings which can only come through Him.

Closing Verse: *“Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; Neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; For you will forget the shame of your youth, And will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore. 5 For your Maker is your husband,*

The Lord of hosts is His name; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. Isaiah 54:4, 5

Next Week: Genesis 30:25-36 (To Build a Flock) (72nd Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Then God Remembered Rachel

Now Reuben went in the days of the harvest of wheat
And found mandrakes in the field
And brought them to his mother Leah, he was so sweet
Maybe with a special kiss the gift was sealed

Then Rachel said to Leah, for goodness' sakes
Please give me some of your son's mandrakes

But she said to her, Is it a small matter to you
That you have taken my husband away
Would you take away my son's mandrakes too
Would you do this to me in my sorrow today?

And Rachel said, "Therefore he will lie with you tonight
For your son's mandrakes I'll make this deal, alright?"

When Jacob came out of the field, ready for bed
It was in the evening time
Leah went out to meet him and said
You must come in to me. Yes tonight you are mine
For I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes
And he lay with Leah that night, yes for goodness sakes

And God listened to Leah and she conceived
And she bore to Jacob a fifth son
Leah said "God has given me my wages as I believed
I gave my maid to my husband not to be outdone

So she called his name Issachar

These kind of wages aren't kept in a jar

Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son
"God has endowed me with a good endowment. I am number one

Now my husband will dwell with me
Because I have born him six sons, you see

So she called him Zebulun, this she did proclaim
Afterward she bore a daughter and Dinah was her name

Then God remembered Rach...el
And God listened to her and opened her womb
And she conceived and bore a son, how swell
And said "God has taken away my reproach none too soon

So she called his name Joseph and said
The Lord shall add to me another son in the days ahead

Jacob's family is almost complete as the story does unfold
And through these pages we see the genesis of Israel
Every word is given and every word is told
To teach us of the things that to us God does tell

Through this group of people will come the Savior
And to them He will return again someday
To Him we should direct our daily behavior
And to Him may we be pleased to say

O, Great and awesome Lord
Majestic in all Your ways
Thank You for Your precious word
May we search its pages all our days

And in You alone may we delight
Until at last You take us home
Some glorious day or maybe some night
We know for us someday you will come

Until then we shall walk in Your light for all our days
And to You alone we shall utter all our resounding praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 30:25-36 (TO BUILD A FLOCK)

Introduction: In fourteen years, Jacob had gone from a man with no wife to a man with four wives and 12 children. But the wages of his work went to pay for the wives. He had nothing left over to provide for his family.

In today's story, it's not yet time for him to return home, or God would have made sure that is what would have happened. But if he is going to stay, he will need to build up his flocks in order to care for his family. Because he is staying God must intend for Jacob's life to continue to be used as a picture of something else.

Time and time again, God is directing these things and using what happens to show us larger pictures of wondrous things that He will do later. In the book of Acts, at the establishment of the church, things started out small. There were a few followers who stood out from the rest and were separated by God to begin the work.

It looked as if the odds were against it, but in Jacob's story today we will see hidden pictures of how what seemed improbable was actually the genesis for something great, just as it was at the founding of the church.

Text Verse: *And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." 2 Corinthians 6:16*

There are two overall groups of people mentioned in the Bible, Jew and gentile, but there is only one true group of God's people, those who live by faith in God and His word. They come from both Jew and gentile and they are being built into a flock by the Great Shepherd. We will see this pictured in today's passage and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A New Agreement

²⁵ And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country.

It is now the end of the fourteen years of labor for which Jacob was indebted to serve for his family. To understand the timing, we have to go forward to the next chapter and see Jacob's words to Laban -

Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock... (31:41)

At the time of this verse then, Jacob is 91 years old and it is the year 2259AM. This means that in just seven years, Jacob has had at least 12 children born to him, 11 sons and a daughter. Because he worked the first seven years before getting married to his first wife, all of this family has come in the second 7-year period.

Joseph is the last son to be born out of the land of Israel and the full term for the bride price, 14 years of labor, is complete. Jacob wants to return home and start his life in the land of promise. He has every right to leave without permission, but as a courtesy he goes to Laban and asks for his leave.

²⁶ Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service which I have done for you."

Again for the second time, Jacob is being gracious to Laban. Instead of saying that he is taking his wives for which he worked, plus his children who are his alone, he makes the petition as if everything belonged to Laban and that his service should be sufficient to get them release.

In fact, it was the terms agreed on that he had met and so permission isn't needed at all. Instead, the debt is paid and he could simply pick up and leave. It may be that Jacob is actually looking to stay and work, but doing it in a way that will make it look like it is Laban's idea.

²⁷ And Laban said to him, "Please stay, if I have found favor in your eyes, for I have learned by experience that the LORD has blessed me for your sake."

In this verse, we have what is known as an aposiopesis. He says, "Please stay, if I have found favor in your eyes..." What he is actually saying is, "Then stay." An aposiopesis is a figure of speech which is deliberately left unfinished.

By doing this, the ending is supplied by the imagination and it gives the impression of either unwillingness or inability to continue. A common example that we use all the time is, "Stop it, or else..." Or else what?

Laban's response is like, "Ok, ummm... If it's not too much trouble then..." And then he explains himself, " *for* I have learned by experience that the LORD has blessed me for your sake." The NIV and other versions translate it differently, "I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you."

The word Laban uses is *nikhashti*. It means either to observe closely or to practice divination. It's the same word that Joseph will use when he tells his brothers that the cup they stole is the one that he used for divination when he is the vice reagent of Egypt.

It's hard to tell if Laban is claiming that he actually used divination or that he merely observed Jacob's hard work and understood what an asset he was. This second option is probably correct because he says that the Lord, Jehovah had blessed him because of Jacob.

One truth which can be found here is that worldly men, like Laban, are often the recipients of blessings because of the hard working people around them. One thing they often lack though, but which Laban figured out, is actually discerning where the blessings came from and admitting it.

In other words, the people of America have been abundantly blessed by the presence of Christians and Jews who are generally honest, hard working, and the ones who keep society working properly. But as the years have gone by, the non-Christians and non-Jews have increasingly forgotten this.

The same is true with Israel. It was a wasteland and a garbage heap until the Jews moved back and reclaimed the land, restoring it to usefulness. However, now that this has been done, those who live there want nothing more than to have them out. After the rapture, the world will be left to turn into a state of chaos and hopelessness. And for each area of land that the Jews return to the Palestinians, that land will cease to be productive and beneficial to those who receive it.

When this happens, they will only direct their greedy eyes to take the rest of Israel as well. If nothing else, Laban has seen the source of his blessing in the hard work of Jacob and has noted it to him.

²⁸ Then he said, "Name me your wages, and I will give it."

Laban certainly knows the value of Jacob and he also knows the piety of him. When he says, "Name your wages and I will give it" he knows in advance that it will be less than Jacob is worth. He believes he will come out on top by making this offer.

II. My Righteousness Will Answer For Me

²⁹ So Jacob said to him, "You know how I have served you and how your livestock has been with me.

In response to Laban's offer, Jacob stands first on his integrity. He will use it as the benchmark of his offer and request from Laban. He's asking Laban to reflect on the state of his wealth from the time he arrived until now which is a result of his work.

"This is the standard of my work for your daughters and this is what you can expect when I work for something of less value." He is basically saying that the amount he could set as his wages could be huge and it wouldn't harm Laban at all. He is resetting the tone to show he has the upper hand and he continues to show it...

³⁰ For what you had before I came was little, and it has increased to a great amount; the LORD has blessed you since my coming.

Jacob's words stand as testimony of the truth they convey. If what he said wasn't true, he couldn't make the claim. If I were to say to the church here, "You know how hard I worked at the sermons on the book of Exodus" the words would testify against me.

We aren't in Exodus yet. It would be crazy to say something to that was blatantly false to someone who knew better. If I said, "You know how many months it's taken to get to Genesis chapter 30" then my words actually testify to the truth of the matter. You have been here week after week to validate the statement.

Jacob uses two terms which verify his part in Laban's amassed wealth. The first is *yiprots*. It means broken forth. The flocks of Laban have increased so much that it is as if they've broken out like a dam of water being released.

He then says, "since my coming." This is the word *l'ragli* and it means "at my foot." "Since my foot came to your door, you have prospered, even to the point of breaking forth." If this wasn't true, he'd be refuted as a liar. He won't be.

When Jacob met Rachel at the well 14 years before, she tended a single flock. This was probably all the flocks he possessed and being a young girl, it probably wasn't a very big flock. It calls to mind the words of Jesus when speaking to the people of Israel who were faithful believers in Luke 12 -

³² "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Jacob is using his words prior to making his offer to show that it will be both fair and trustworthy. It is a claim of future results based on the truth of past performance.

³⁰ (con't) **And now, when shall I also provide for my own house?"**

Ok Laban, you've allowed me to set the wages and I have shown you my value. What I set will be exactly appropriate to the state I am in. I have four wives (oh my... four wives!) and 12 children to take care of. When I give my price, it will have that in mind...

³¹ **So he said, "What shall I give you?"**

Laban has heard Jacob's appeal and his answer here proves everything Jacob just said. There was no note of denial. What Jacob stated was true and accurate. Laban's wealth had increased because of Jacob. He restates his offer, "What shall I give you?"

³¹ (con't) **And Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything.**

Jacob's answer is definite. He doesn't want anything *new* or anything *from* Laban. Instead what he will propose will be something that is exceptional rather than expected. It will be hoped for as well as hard-worked for. It will be uncertain and yet it will be unconditional.

³¹ (con't) **If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks:**

Although there is nothing you can *give me*, there is something you can *do for me* that will keep me around. Albert Barnes notes that there is an elegance in the original Hebrew - *asubah ereh sonekha eshmar* - "I will return, I will feed, I will keep thy flock."

Jacob had already made up his mind to leave and the permission he had asked for was his notice of resignation. To him and thus to Laban, it was already done and so from that point on you can see how the conversation has been a reinstatement, not a renewal.

³² Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and *these* shall be my wages.

Jacob makes what would otherwise be an incredible offer. He is proposing that all of the sheep that are speckled or spotted of the flock, and all of the brown among the lambs, and all of the spotted and speckled of the goats be taken out.

These were the unusual, not the norm; they are the rare occurrences. The usual colors would be white among the sheep, and the goats black or dark brown. Moreover, by taking out the unusual ones, the ones left would be more likely to breed and have offspring which resembled them.

So the norm would be to have more normal colors, not more unusual colors. Anything that was hereafter born, from this point on that was out of the norm, would be his. Because the rare ones are taken out now, there would be none at all in the flock.

It seems to be an odd proposal and of little benefit to Jacob, but he knew what he was doing, either understanding it because God told him, or something that he knew from caring for flocks in the past, that it would be the right course and it would succeed.

Only if something abnormally colored was born in the future would it belong to Jacob. Everything else would be considered as Laban's. It is a deal which seems beyond imagination and Laban will be overjoyed at the prospect...

³³ So my righteousness will answer for me in time to come, when the subject of my wages comes before you: every one that *is* not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the lambs, will be considered stolen, if *it is* with me."

By taking out the abnormally colored animals now, anything which was born abnormally colored in the future would testify to his righteousness; it has been acquired by the hand of Providence. Whatever God gives which is out of the normal will belong to him.

If nothing has the special mark, then God withheld the blessing from Jacob, and if all of them are born with it, then God had blessed him. And every one of them which is born

normal would be, as he terms it "considered stolen." In other words, Laban could walk up at any moment and say, I am taking this; it is mine."

To ensure that it was a deal beyond reproach, Jacob uses a phrase which means that the terms would be immediate. He says "in time to come" using the Hebrew *b'yom* - tomorrow. Any animal that is normally colored, starting tomorrow, is to be claimed as Laban's.

The deal weighs so heavily in favor of Laban that he responds immediately and with the joy Jacob knew would come...

III. Come Out From Among Them And Be Separate

³⁴ And Laban said, "Oh, that it were according to your word!"

The deal is the most unbelievable stroke of luck that Laban ever heard. So much so that he exclaims "Oh that it were according to your word!" He can't believe Jacob will live by what he has said.

To him, it was getting Jacob for next to nothing. All of the odd colors are being taken out and so none are left. All the normal colors are his and will be tended by Jacob for nothing. And when mating season comes, they will all breed with other pure colors.

None, or very few of the offspring should come out odd colored and so every new one will belong to him too. They will all be tended by Jacob for nothing. He is being handed a bar of gold on a golden platter and he gets to keep the platter too.

³⁵ So he removed that day the male goats that were speckled and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had *some* white in it, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and gave *them* into the hand of his sons.

It is Laban who removes the goats and gives them to his sons, not Jacob. Jacob's oldest son is Reuben and he's only 7. In other words, Jacob has deferred the separation to Laban. Not only was he fair in his offer, but he is making sure that Laban alone is in charge of the selection of the offer.

This is basically the mother's wisdom who allows one child to cut the cake in two and then the other child chooses which piece he wants. By doing this, the cutter will use a

magnifying glass to make sure the cut is perfect. Laban couldn't cheat himself and so Jacob's flock will be perfectly fair.

After separating the odd colored ones, Laban gives them to his own sons to tend and keep. There are now several shepherd's of Laban's flocks, but God previously promised to bless the work and the increase of Jacob.

Therefore, the offspring of Jacob's flocks which God chooses and which involve Jacob's efforts, will become Jacob's.

³⁶ Then he put three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

After taking out the flocks which would otherwise benefit Jacob, Laban then puts a 3-day journey between them and Jacob's flocks. By putting such a distance between the two of them, there would be no chance of them meeting up and mixing.

If they did, then the offspring of Jacob's flocks would more likely bear odd-colored ones. Laban made sure this won't happen. There is a separation between them and so Jacob is now at the providence of God and his own resourcefulness to build up his house.

Now that we've looked at the surface of the story, the historical and cultural aspects of what happened, we need to ask ourselves, "Why is this story here? What is it that God wants us to see?" The answer is Jesus and His work. Here is the Light -

This is, to me, a hard analysis to give. I have a great love for the Jewish people and Israel and an understanding of their importance in the future. However, there is something that I cannot deny. If they were obedient to God, they would not have been exiled nor would they have been separated from Him as a people.

This is the blessing and the curse of the people of Israel. What today's story is telling us is a picture of this and a picture of the growth of the church during their exile. Jacob wanted to go back home, but it isn't time for that yet. His time of exile isn't complete.

It's evident though that the people of the world, pictured by Laban, has been blessed by them. The presence of the people of God brings a blessing and so he asks them to stay. Jacob has been in charge of Laban's flocks and they have grown.

In order to stay, he sets his terms. All of the curiously marked animals will be his pay. All of the others will belong to Laban. In the world of the Bible, there are two distinctions - Jew and gentile. The Jews have a special mark or distinction which separates them from the others - circumcision.

Jacob however doesn't ask for them. In fact, he asks for them to be taken out of the flocks he tends. They cannot be a part of what he is proposing and so they are separated by a distance of 3 days. However, their *offspring* who bear the mark will be his wages.

The physical mark isn't the only thing that makes them Jacob's or all with the mark would be his. Rather it is the ones which come by God's providence that are his. In this then, we see the true people of God who bear His mark - the Holy Spirit.

Remember who originally showed up with Laban's flocks at the well when Jacob arrived, it was Rachel. She pictures God's grace, not the law.

Those who belonged to God before Jacob arrived were there by grace, just as those Jews who believed before Jesus' arrival stood by God's grace through faith, not by observance of the law. Leah who pictures the law didn't tend the flock due to her weak eyes, just as the New Testament explains in the weakness of the law.

The true mark belongs to Jew or gentile and it is what allows one to become a part of the flock of God. The others who came before are separated from the flock. These are those Jews who have the external mark of circumcision, but who rejected Jesus.

Remember, Jacob was going to leave. His staying is under a new contract. His work for his wives was done. Likewise, Jesus' work was done, and so a new contract, not a continuation of the old, came about - a New Covenant.

This will be proven true when we see that Laban will later change Jacob's wages. By doing so, it will prove that the outward mark is not what makes one a part of God's elect. As denominations add in some type of work for salvation or some precept from the law, pictured by Laban changing the wages, it doesn't change the promise or the providence of God.

God is looking at our hearts and our spiritual condition, not external works. Like the Jews who rejected Jesus, those who have the external mark, but not the true mark are separated. They are left to the world. This is exactly what Paul speaks about in Romans 2-

²⁶ Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? ²⁷ And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, *even with your written code and circumcision, are* a transgressor of the law? ⁸ For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.

After saying this, towards the end of Romans 3 he says this -

²⁷ Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. ²⁹ Or *is He* the God of the Jews only? *Is He* not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, ³⁰ since *there is* one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

All of this is being pictured by the separation of these animals. The specially marked flocks come about by God's grace, the others which are marked, but only outwardly have been removed from the grace of the true flock. This is seen in Romans 9 -

²² *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, ²³ and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? ²⁵ As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." ²⁶ "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You *are* not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God."

This short story today actually takes an understanding of the entire New Testament, not just Romans to fully grasp. God is building a church of specially marked people - those marked with the Holy Spirit. They are the spiritual descendants of the people God, the people Israel.

A three day journey was placed between the two though to keep them separate while the flock of Jacob was being built? This is a separation of those who have the mark but are not God's and those who will have the mark and who are.

What is that three day journey. Why did God include that? The answer is found in Hosea chapter 6 and Luke chapter 2. But before we read that, we need to see Paul's words in Romans 11 -

²⁵ For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; ²⁷ For this *is* My covenant with them, When I take away their sins."

There is a time when the people of Israel will again be brought into the fold. We are now there in history. Let's go to Hosea 6 -

Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. ² After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, That we may live in His sight. ³ Let us know, Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter *and* former rain to the earth. Hosea 6:1-3

The Bible says a day to the Lord is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day. Hosea is saying that the people who were removed from favor for disobedience will return to the Lord and that it would be after two days and on the third day. Guess what, that is now - symbolized by the separation of the flocks.

They are back in the land after "two days" or two thousand years. It is the dawning of the third day. The story in Luke of Jesus when He was 12 tells us this. Listen and see -

⁴¹ His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. ⁴² And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. ⁴³ When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know *it*; ⁴⁴ but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day's journey, and sought Him among *their* relatives and acquaintances. ⁴⁵ So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. ⁴⁶ Now so it was *that* after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. ⁴⁸ So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You done this to us?"

Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.”⁴⁹ And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?”⁵⁰ But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them.

Jesus never left the true Jerusalem. His people, His family did. They will return to Him, not the other way around and it will be on the third day. When they return to Him, He will appear to them.

Israel will be brought back into the graces of God and they will find Him in the temple where He will reign for a thousand years.

A final point about Israel, although the flocks picture the people of God, there are still Jacob's children who are living with him. They picture Israel in the family of God and the focus on them as the people will be seen in future sermons once again.

This is the continuing story of the work of Jesus through various groups of people at various times in history. These stories are given to show us small snippets of the broader panorama of God's work in the world.

I hope you'll take time to read the entire books of Romans and compare it to the story we looked at today and that we'll complete next week. There you will see wonderful patterns which are so intricately woven into God's word.

If you want to be a part of this great unfolding story as well, it can be yours. You can come to be one of God's chosen flock and it is by a mere act of faith in Him and what He has done.

Closing Verse: *“Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.”¹⁸ “I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.” 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18*

Next Week: Genesis 30:37-43 (Peeled Rods in the Watering Trough) (73rd Genesis sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

To Build a Flock

It came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, you see
That Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away,
That I may go to my own place and to my country
It is time for me to go, yes this very day

Give me my wives and my children too
For whom I have served you, and let me go
For you know my service, my work for you
Which I have accomplished, yes you know

And Laban said to him, "Please stay
If I have found favor in your eyes spare me this ache
For I have learned by experience until this day
That the Lord has blessed me for your sake

And now when shall I also provide for my own house?
So he said, "What shall I give you? Not another spouse?

And Jacob said, "Nothing to me shall you give
If you will do this thing for me
I will again feed and keep your flocks as they live
Let me pass through all your flock today, as you watch closely

We will remove from there all the speckled
And the spotted sheep, this we will do
And all the brown ones among the lambs
And the spotted and speckled among the goats too
These shall be my wages
So my righteousness will answer for me
In time to come and in the Bible's pages
The subject of my wages will be plain to see

Every one that is not speckled or spotted
Among the goats, and brown among the lambs
Will be considered stolen, yes ill-gotted
If it is with me, under the care of my hands

And Laban said, "Oh, that it were according to your word!
I simply cannot believe the thing that I've just heard

He removed that day the male goats that were speckled and spotted
All the female goats that were this way he took also
Every one that had some white in it from the flock he gotted
And all the brown ones among the lambs, they all had to go

And he gave them into the hand of his sons
Then he put between himself and Jacob three days journey
And Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks, the remaining ones
It was a fairly rendered deal, as you can plainly see

This story shows us of God's true elect
Those who are separated and sealed with the Spirit
It was by God's grace that He did select
And by faith in Him we receive this gift, by Christ's merit

And so we cannot boast in our state before God
But only be thankful, and in uprightness should we trod

We to our God alone shall give all our praise
And on streets of gold we shall honor Him for eternal days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 30:37-43

(PEELED RODS IN THE WATERING TROUGH)

Introduction: Last week we saw the separation of the specially marked flocks from the other solid colored animals of Laban. We saw then, that it was a picture of the Jewish people, who bore the outward mark of circumcision, but who had not been sealed by the Holy Spirit.

They are still a specially marked group of people, but they are not a part of what God will do for a portion of time in human history. This then is the dispensation of grace, the church age, which will be pictured. Remember, the church started with Jewish people.

They are those who had both the external and the internal mark; circumcision of the body and the heart. The others with the external mark only were separated by a three day journey. This was explained as the time from the dispersion of Israel to it's reestablishment; a period of 2000 years.

A three day journey implies that you start on one day, travel the next, and arrive on the third. During this 2000 year period, God is building a special flock of people, known as the church. He has taken His flock from the people of the world, represented by Laban's flocks.

However, they are specially raised up by Him and have been tended and cared for by Him as He has strengthened His church. In the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as the Chief Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, and the Good Shepherd - all implying One who tends to His flocks.

This is the imagery we're given in Jacob's tending to his own flocks. At times, Jesus removes those who fail to meet His standards, returning them to the other flock so that they don't spoil the sheep of His fold.

Remember, during this time, the original specially marked flock is separated and kept by Laban's sons. They remain a flock and God will someday return them to His fold, but for now, His eyes and His attention are on this called out and tenderly cared for group.

This is the Lord's beloved church for whom He gave His life and which even now He is building up. Someday they will be taken with Him to His eternal promised land. This marvelous working of His is pictured in the seven verses from Genesis we'll look at

today.

Text Verse: *As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people." ¹⁷ Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you." ¹⁸ "I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.*

-2 Corinthians 6:16-18

Jacob walked among His flock and tended to them. He kept them separated, the strong from the weak. He was a shepherd and a caretaker of them. The book of Revelation says Jesus does the same thing for us right now during the church age.

It says there that He walks among the lampstands, representing His churches, and removes any which fail to meet His standards. There is nothing unfair or arbitrary about how God deals with His people. He keeps the good ones and rejects the bad.

It is His church and He is building it to be the best it can be, just as Jacob built the best flock possible for himself. Let's work to be the best of the best of His flock. And... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

Before we get into today's verses, we should to go back and read the agreement made between Jacob and Laban in the previous verses. This will show us why Jacob is going to do the things he is about to do in today's verses -

So he said, "What shall I give you?" And Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything. If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks: ³² Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and *these* shall be my wages. ³³ So my righteousness will answer for me in time to come, when the subject of my wages comes before you: every one that *is* not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the lambs, will be considered stolen, if *it is* with me." ³⁴ And Laban said, "Oh, that it were according to your word!" ³⁵ So he removed that day the male goats that were speckled and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted, every one that had *some* white in it, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and gave *them* into the hand of his sons. ³⁶ Then he put three days' journey between himself and Jacob, and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

I. A Special Flock

³⁷ Now Jacob took for himself rods of green poplar and of the almond and chestnut trees, peeled white strips in them, and exposed the white which was in the rods.

The set of verses today is curious. There is a lot of speculation as to the ability of Jacob's efforts to actually produce the results the story claims. There is also the claim that if what he does actually works, then he is being deceitful in what he is doing.

Whether he was being deceitful or not, what he did was ultimately sanctioned by God as we'll see in the next chapter. God purposed to bless him and indeed he will be blessed. This account is occurring 14 years after his arrival in Mesopotamia, just after he had his vision of the ladder which reached to heaven.

The term for "green poplar" is *livneh lach*. *Livneh* is the white poplar and *lach* implies that it is fresh. "Green" then means the state of the poplar, not its type or color. He's using fresh poplar because if it wasn't fresh, the bark wouldn't peel off.

The next tree is translated as almond. It comes from the word *luz*. Some believe it's a filbert tree. Nobody is completely sure which it is and people argue over it. The third tree is called the chestnut, but it is probably as other translations state - the plane tree.

The word is *armon* which means stripped bare, as in a naked person. The plane tree gets its name because the outer bark peels off by itself and leaves the tree bare and smooth in places. This happens year by year. Jacob takes these fresh branches and cuts strips in them to show contrasting colors.

Some people think he may have even made a spiral line on the branches so that they would be partly colored and partly white, thus resembling the mottled colors of the animals he wanted to breed. One commentator says the Hebrew indicates that he didn't cut stripes or spirals, but instead patches.

This would have the same visual effect as the spirals and show mottled colors. What is being pictured here is most interesting. What we need to do is look at the actual roots of the words used to describe the trees. The first is the poplar tree.

The Hebrew word is *livneh*, but it is derived directly from the word Laban. This word means white or brick - a brick turning white when it's fired is the idea one gets. Laban is a picture of the people of the world.

The next tree, which is translated here as "almond" is the word "luz." This word actually means crooked or twisted. It comes from the verb which means to "turn aside" in a negative way, such as turning aside from wisdom. A couple examples from Proverbs shows us this -

For the **perverse** *person* is an abomination to the LORD,
But His secret counsel *is* with the upright. Proverbs 3:32

²⁰ My son, give attention to my words;
Incline your ear to my sayings.

²¹ Do not let them **depart** from your eyes;
Keep them in the midst of your heart; Proverbs 4:20,21

The third tree is the chestnut, which I said comes from *armon*; to be naked, but it's root is the word *aram*, which is to be crafty or prudent. The word is used this way in Proverbs 15:5 –

A fool despises his father's instruction,
But he who receives correction is **prudent**.

Finally, as an interesting tidbit, the word "white" in this verse when he exposed the white in the rods is also *lavan*. It is the same as the name Laban, his father in law, but it's being used as an adjective. The idea is that the branches are being stripped bare, as if naked to effect their purposes.

So why are these types of branches mentioned and what is their significance. I have to tell you, I didn't plan this and I was completely surprised when the same pattern kept coming up time and again. And as a confirmation of it, the same book in the New Testament kept coming up too. It is far more than coincidence.

The flock that is being built is a picture of the church being built by Jesus - we saw that last week. The branches are all picturing, believe it or not, the writings of Paul who is the apostle to the gentiles. This is, after researching these words and then looking to the New Testament for a fulfillment, completely sure.

The first verse which marks out a parallel is what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12 about himself -

¹ It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: ² I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. ³ And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— ⁴ how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

This picture of Jacob's work here occurred 14 years after his vision of heaven and Paul's letter to the Corinthians follows this same pattern - 14 years. The Bible is very specific about this.

The first of the branches, the poplar, is translated from a word which indicates fired clay. Paul uses the terminology of fired clay or earthen vessels to indicate believers, including himself, when they are filled with the Holy Spirit in 2 Corinthians 4 -

⁶For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels (jars of clay), that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

The second of the branches is the almond, translated from a word whose verb indicates being crooked. Paul, before his conversion was included in Peter's word of Acts chapter 2 -

And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." Acts 2:40

However, after his conversion, Paul uses the same terminology to describe the people he had left and whom he now warned against -

Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. 2 Corinthians 5:14-16

The third of the branches is the chestnut, translated from a word whose root indicates being crafty or prudent. Paul explains how he wooed the Corinthians to himself and the gospel message -

But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit. 2 Corinthians 12:16

Not only does he say he was "crafty" but he says he took them by deceit, making a pun on the name of Jacob which means deceiver! Paul's message - his epistles, are what is being pictured in these rods which are building up Jacob's flock. It is his letters which establish church doctrine because he is the apostle to the gentiles.

All of these comparisons came out of the book of 2 Corinthians. It wasn't planned by me, it just came up that way. God is tying this account of Jacob's rods directly to Paul, the author of the doctrine for the church, and directly to the book of 2 Corinthians.

These branches, despite their surface appearance, had to be stripped, they had to be made bare, as if naked in order to have their intended effect. Again to confirm this is speaking of Paul and the book of 2 Corinthians, Paul says this concerning his work -

²⁴ From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; ²⁷ *in* weariness and toil, *in* sleeplessness often, *in* hunger and thirst, *in* fastings often, *in* cold and nakedness— ²⁸ besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn *with indignation*?

-2 Corinthians 11:22-29

Paul was beaten with rods, the same word used, *rhabdos*, to describe the branches used by Jacob in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and in the Greek New Testament. He was also left in cold and nakedness. It was as if he were stripped bare for the sake of the flock.

So here we have a picture of Paul's testimony being used by Jesus, pictured by Jacob using rods, to bring out a special flock from the world, pictured by Laban's flocks. This is exactly what we see.

Even Jacob's words coming up in the next chapter parallel Paul's trials that we just read. Listen to how Jacob describes his time of working for the flock and see how it resembles what Paul said -

³⁸ These twenty years I *have been* with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock.

³⁹ That which was torn *by beasts* I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, *whether* stolen by day or stolen by night. ⁴⁰ *There* I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes. (Jacob's concern for the flock; Paul's concern for the flock) Genesis 31:38-40

³⁸ And the rods which he had peeled, he set before the flocks in the gutters, in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink, so that they should conceive when they came to drink.

After peeling the rods, he placed them in the gutters or watering troughs. There water would be channeled out of a spring into gutter-shaped troughs or carried from a well and dumped into long hollowed out stone blocks so that several could drink at once.

The colors of the branches would vary from white to red depending on the type. The general idea is that when the flocks were in heat, whatever impression was on their mind would be transferred to the body of the fetus when she bred.

A couple of options come to mind. Either that's nuts and what he was doing had no bearing on the color of the offspring, but rather, God intervened and blessed him with the various colored offspring apart from what he did.

Or second, this method somehow began to affect the genetic make-up of the babies. Or third and more probably, the mottling of the animals is found in a recessive gene. This recessive gene makes it possible for goats to have spots which can be transmitted even though they don't appear to our eyes, but the genes are still there.

So what is happening is that even though we don't know which goats have this gene, the goats do and when prompted to mate in front of the cut branches, their inclination is to mate with the goats that have this gene. This seems like a plausible answer and it also fits with the mating habits found elsewhere in nature.

Animals make their selections because God has endowed them with their own wisdom, just as butterflies will travel thousands of miles to a place they have never been simply because they have been endowed with that particular wisdom to do so.

To understand the spiritual side of this verse, we see that the flocks are coming to the water where the rods are. This pictures the people of the world coming to spirituality - maybe picking up their Bible to read. These are the flocks who see the rods in the water.

The water is the word and the rods are Paul's letters to the church which tell the gentile world about Jesus. Those who receive the message will be converted and become a part of Jesus' flock.

They will receive the mark which distinguishes them from the rest of the flock; the Holy Spirit, given by God. Just so you know, this isn't meant that the rest of the Bible isn't just as important, but it is made clear in the Bible that Paul's writings are intended for the church during this dispensation.

This is all being pictured by Jacob, while outside of the Promised Land, building up his flocks from the gentile world. Paul is the apostle to the gentiles, and he was specifically chosen by Jesus for this dispensation. We find that recorded in Acts 9 -

¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶ For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

The fact is that all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for doctrine and reproof, but not all Scripture is applicable in the same way at the same time. James and Peter wrote not to the gentiles in the church, but to the Jewish people of the church.

This doesn't mean those letters aren't meant for us too, but that they hold a different application than Paul's. This is what we're learning from this short and seemingly obscure passage about rods in water.

If the church misses the significance of Paul's writings, their doctrine becomes convoluted. As long as we keep our theological boxes straight, the plan that God is accomplishing makes much more sense and our relationship with Him is properly aligned.

³⁹ So the flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted.

Whatever was actually going on in the minds of the goats, they in fact did have streaked, speckled, and spotted offspring instead of the predominately solid colored ones which would then belong to Laban.

One thing is for sure, this actually happened because God's word records it and it is ultimately because God directed it, even if human means were employed in the process.

This then is a picture of the continuation and growth of the church. The rods are in the water. They are Paul's words to the church and the water is the word. The flocks are bringing forth young who are marked with the special designation of the church. They are a separate people with a separate purpose in God's unfolding plan.

II. Come Out and Be Separate

When I chose the text verse for the sermon today, I didn't realize until later that it was actually from 2 Corinthians, just as were all the verses used to describe Paul's effect on the church mentioned above. A portion of the text verse,

“Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.” ¹⁸ “I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.”

This is the idea that also came to my mind concerning this particular set of verses, even though I didn't remember that the quote came from 2 Corinthians until after I had put it here. We are called to be separate from the world and to not be mingled with it. This is the picture we'll see now.

⁴⁰ Then Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the streaked and all the brown in the flock of Laban; but he put his own flocks by themselves and did not put them with Laban's flock.

There is real wisdom in what Jacob is doing. After the first season, he has begun to get his own streaked animals. He puts them in front of the solid colored ones so that when those feed, the streaked ones would always be in their sight.

Now he could rely less on the branches and more on the actual animals, but he used both techniques in order to continuously have the animals preferring to mate with his. When they are eating and when they are drinking it's on their mind.

In the same way, we should be meditating on God's word at all times, even when we're eating and drinking or laying lazily in the fields. Eventually, he had enough to make his own flock which he separated from Laban's.

By doing this, they wouldn't be inclined to mate with solid colored animals and possibly increase Laban's flocks accidentally. He is keeping his flock uniform and separate while still influencing the other flocks.

The spiritual picture here is that the rest of the world is to look to us - the flock of Jesus, just as Laban's flocks were set off to look at the specially marked flocks of Jacob, not the other way around.

We are to be the standard by which the world sets its aspirations. The church is to be the ideal and the goal. Jesus has set us apart for a reason. Because of this, for us to get intermingled with the world can only cause us to become like them, not the opposite.

This is why I'm personally so opposed these new seeker-friendly churches. In the end, it only diminishes the distinction of who we are to be. When we lower our standards of separation, the flock suffers. This is exactly what we're seeing in today's verses.

⁴¹ And it came to pass, whenever the stronger livestock conceived, that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods.

Now Jacob adds in a third tactic to increase his wealth. The sheep give birth twice a year - in the spring and in the fall. But there is also a divide in those born in the first part of the birth cycle, closer to the winter, and those later as the spring has progressed.

Those born earlier would be the stronger and heartier of the flock. Those born later in the season would be the weaker ones. The stronger, healthier ones, got his attention and the others were left in Laban's flock. This again takes us directly to... yes, the book of 2 Corinthians. Paul writes this to us concerning our relationships -

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? Genesis 6:14, 15

The stronger of the flocks are set apart by Jacob and Jesus sets us apart as well. Jacob didn't allow his flocks to intermingle with the flocks of Laban and Jesus sets the same prohibition before us through Paul's hand.

I can't stress enough the amazing symmetry between this short passage today about Jacob's flocks and Paul's letter of 2 Corinthians. As I was researching this, I was completely amazed at what lay before me. This truly is an amazing passage which I never understood until I prayed about and prepared for this sermon.

Because of this separation, Laban's flock continued to spiral downward, while Jacob's got stronger and continued to breed multi-colored offspring. This is seen in the next verse.

⁴² But when the flocks were feeble, he did not put *them* in; so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's.

The flocks have all come from the same place, one original flock of Laban's sheep. However, they have become separate and distinct flocks over time and the weaker ones are kept separate from the stronger. The weaker ones are kept in Laban's flocks and the stronger ones belong to Jacob.

Looking at this from a spiritual perspective, Paul writes in both 2 Corinthians 12 and 13 about the contrast between what is weak and what is strong. I want to read you both so that you can clearly see the symbolism of what Jacob did as it is fulfilled in the church -

⁹And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

"...since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you. ⁴ For though He was crucified in weakness, yet He lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but we shall live with Him by the power of God toward you. ⁵ Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—

unless indeed you are disqualified. ⁶ But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified. ⁷ Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified. ⁸ For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. ⁹ For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete." (2 Cor 13)

Our strength and the expansion of the church is wholly dependent on the strength of Christ. Jacob separated what was weak from what was strong and the strong grew and flourished. Likewise, it is only through an understanding of our weakness that the strength of God through Christ is revealed.

Paul asks us to examine ourselves to see if we truly are in the faith. If so, then we are of Jesus' flock and we'll be separated and flourish because of the strength He provides. If not, then we will be, as Paul states, disqualified. Think of the picture these flocks are making.

⁴³ Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.

Through attentive care by the shepherd, his flock has grown so big that he has been able to sell or trade parts of it for all kinds of other wealth - female and male servants and camels and donkeys.

These are the signs of wealth of the time, just as a large company with lots of employees and expensive cars would be today. In the same way, Jesus has become exceedingly prosperous, having begotten many sheep for His flock.

As this is the last verse of today's passage, I thought to tie it in with a New Testament verse. One came to mind immediately and I went to find it, knowing the verse, but not where it was. When I got it, I was just as astonished at it as I was throughout the entire sermon.

This is the verse and yes, it comes from the same book of 2 Corinthians. Tell me it doesn't perfectly mirror the verse I just read about Jacob -

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

-2 Corinthians 8:9

Jacob left Canaan and became poor, not accepting anything as wages except His brides and the fruit of his flock. Jesus gave up His glorious heavenly home to come and dwell among us. He procured His bride. Through the fulfillment of the law He established a church without spot or wrinkle.

By His work, administered through Paul to us, He obtains the fruit of His flock - a called out group of gentiles. Though He was rich with heaven's glories, He became poor. Now with Him we might also become rich and a part of His eternal plan.

Closing Verse: *Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift! 2 Corinthians 9:15*

Next Week: Genesis 31:1-13 (Return to the Land of Your Fathers) (74th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Jacob's Flock/Jesus' Church

Now Jacob took for himself rods of green poplar
And of the almond and the chestnut trees
Peeled white strips in them from bottom to top
And exposed the white which was in the rods of these
And the rods which he had peeled link by link
He set before the flocks in gutters to deceive
In the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink
So that when they came they should conceive

So the flocks conceived before the rods, and yes they begot
And the flocks brought forth streaked, speckled, and spotted
Then Jacob separated the lambs by their stock
And made the flocks face toward the streaked
And also all the brown of Laban's flock
But he put his own flocks alone as their genes he tweaked

He did not put them with Laban's flock
He kept them apart, maintaining the purity of his stock

And it came to pass in this plan so wise
Whenever the stronger livestock conceived

That Jacob placed the rods before the eyes
Of the livestock in the gutters. Who would have believed?
That they might conceive among the rods
And that his flock would increase against all odds

But when the flocks were feeble then no longer
Would he put them in the gutters
So the feebler were Laban's and Jacob had the stronger
The story is before us and wisdom it utters
Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous
And had large flocks and female and male servants too
And camels and donkeys, it's not preposterous
It really happened because God blessed his work, it's true

And as we see, this story pictures the church
Those who are the flock of the Lord Jesus
Throughout the world His Spirit does search
And by His grace He does transform us
Through the writings of Paul, His apostle to the gentile
A flock is being readied, day by day and mile by mile

The message is bringing about that wondrous change in us
And molding us into a people special to our Lord Jesus
And so while He transforms us let us remember to give Him praise
And to live our lives in holiness and honor Him all our days

Great, glorious, and splendid God above
Thank You for Your indescribable Gift of love
He is our precious Lord whom You gave to us
And so let us ever proclaim the glorious name of Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 31:1-13

(RETURN TO THE LAND OF YOUR FATHERS)

Introduction: Jacob left Canaan and spent 20 years in Mesopotamia. Before he left, the Lord promised to be with him and keep him wherever he went. Some sermons ago, we saw that his time out of the land of promise pictures Israel's times of exile from their homeland.

God, who cannot lie, promised that He would return them to their land. In fact, in Leviticus chapter 26, it's hinted that there would be not one, but two exiles of the people. Isaiah picked up on that and promised that they would be returned a second time, stating this before they had been exiled even once.

Jeremiah gives us information concerning the duration of the first exile - 70 years. Then Ezekiel gives more information to allow us to know the exact amount of time of the second exile.

The surety of God's word is realized in the kept promises found there. And because of these promises, which all the world has seen fulfilled, time and time again, we can be all the more sure in the promises which are still future to us now.

This is why prophecy is such an important tool in the Bible and why it is such an important tool in history as well. It affirms the belief of the believer and it is a witness against the unbeliever. The world today, even among Christians, is filled with disbelief at the promises made to Israel.

For the saved Christian, their rewards and losses will be partially based on their treatment of this group of people. For the unsaved, the very condemnation they deserve will be highlighted by their rejection of His hand upon them.

Text Verse: *And I will cause the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel to return, and will rebuild those places as at the first. 8 I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned and by which they have transgressed against Me. Jeremiah 33:7, 8*

Let us endeavor to accept God's word and accept that regardless of whether they deserve it or not, Israel is back in their land by God's direction and they will remain

planted there because of His promises to them. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Jealous of Prosperity

Now *Jacob* heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, "Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what was our father's he has acquired all this wealth."

This is now approximately the year 2265AM. Interestingly, this chapter begins with jealousy outside Jacob's immediate family towards him. The last chapter began with jealousy within the family and directed toward Leah -

Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die!"

This is no mistake and it's showing us the contrast between the two chapters. Jealousy is actually used both times to bring about God's purposes. The first time, to build up Israel's family, and the second time it will precipitate them leaving for Canaan.

Laban's sons accuse Jacob here of taking away all of their father's wealth, but this is untrue. Laban actually still had sheep, it's just that what Jacob has is now so much more than what Laban has.

They are green with envy and accusing him of stealing everything.

We know Laban still has flocks because the original flock was divided 6 years earlier. His sons took the abnormal colored ones and Jacob took the normal colored ones. Laban had plenty of sheep from both flocks as we'll see later in verse 19.

If Jacob has prospered, it in no way diminishes what they should have earned during the same period. If they had simply been attentive to their flocks and diligent in their work like Jacob was, they would have increased in wealth as well.

But Jacob worked hard and was blessed, which of course brought about their envy. Jealousy is a green-eyed monster and they are jealous. The Geneva Bible says about this verse, "The covetous think that whatever they cannot take, is taken from them."

The term Laban's sons use for wealth is the word kavod. It is a word which indicates heaviness. Jacob has become heavy with wealth. But along with the wealth comes something else the Bible warns about - cares and anxieties. Ecclesiastes 5 says this -

¹⁰"He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also *is* vanity. ¹¹ When goods increase, They increase who eat them; So what profit have the owners Except to see *them* with their eyes? ¹² The sleep of a laboring man *is* sweet, Whether he eats little or much; But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep."

This is proven true around the world. When people are poor but have enough to sustain them, they are generally content with life. But as wealth increases, we worry about our things. We put locks on doors and alarms on our cars.

We worry about dust on the shelves and whether or not the pillows on the couch are properly aligned. If our neighbor buys a new TV, we buy a bigger one. We worry over the things we have to the point that we lose sleep thinking about them.

Solomon wrote those words about 3000 years ago and they ring all the more truly in the world today. As wealth for the masses has increased, worry over our stuff has led to a world full of neurotic people who rely on pills to take away their worries.

² And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, and indeed it *was not favorable* toward him as before.

Not only are Laban's sons jealous, but Laban is too. Six years earlier, it was he who had accepted the terms of the agreement which Jacob proposed. And he didn't only accept them, he jumped at them. They were the delight of his heart when he heard them.

They were an offer too good to be true, but now that things had turned against him, he was sullen. And so the Bible says his attitude wasn't toward Jacob as before. Jacob was industrious, crafty, and blessed by God in his work and it has paid off for him, but it has resulted in trouble between him and Laban. Ecclesiastes 4:4 perfectly describes the matter -

"Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also *is* vanity and grasping for the wind."

Envy is such a powerful force that it often leads to murder. The most famous case of envy leading to murder in human history occurred in Jerusalem against a descendant of Jacob. We read about it in Matthew 27:15-18

¹⁵Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. ¹⁶And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. ¹⁷Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ¹⁸For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.

It was so obvious even to Pilate what was going on, that he offered the people an alternative to the decision of the leaders. Their envy had caused them to condemn an innocent man. Who would have ever imagined that their condemnation led to the only thing that could ever lead to their salvation.

The amazing work of God is never more evident than in the life of His Son, including the envy that those He walked among used against Him.

³Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you."

This is the first time that the term Lord, or Jehovah, has been mentioned since two sermons ago. During the last sermon, which pictured the growth of the church, the term "Lord" wasn't mentioned at all.

Now He reenters the narrative to speak to Jacob. "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you." The Lord knows the right time for all things, including the movement of His covenant people for His covenant purposes.

This passage then is certainly a picture of the return of Israel to their homeland. We can back up now to verse 1 and see that the jealousy of Laban's sons is a picture of the jealousy of the world at the prosperity of the Jewish people.

The exact same terminology that they used is used time and time again by people of the world. We hear it all the time even now - "The Jews have taken away all that is ours and from it they have acquired all their wealth."

The world goes from the attitude of Laban's sons to the next attitude, that of Laban. Their countenance changes towards the Jewish people *because* of jealousy and they no longer turn their faces towards them. And what is the result?

Seizing what they have earned, growing hostility towards them, and eventually either exiling them or killing them. It is the theme of the book of Esther during the first dispersion and it has been seen again and again and again in the past 2000 years, culminating in the Holocaust and the Russian pogroms. As Proverbs says -

Wrath *is* cruel and anger a torrent,
But who *is* able to stand before jealousy? Proverbs 27:4

Despite the conflict and despite the situation, the Lord's words to Jacob are reflected twice to the people of Israel, after both the Babylonian and then the Roman exiles - "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you."

Before we move on, I want to ask, do they deserve being returned to the land? Do the people Israel merit what God has given them? No. I was watching an episode of House recently and one of the characters was a Jewish guy who was in the porn business.

This isn't uncommon, nor is it uncommon that many Jews are entirely secular or who follow any of countless religions - Buddhism, Hinduism, or whatever. I know Jews that have carved idols in their homes that they think somehow bless.

I could go on, but is this deserving of God's favor? The answer is "No." So why has God reestablished them as a nation once again? The answer is found in Ezekiel 36 -

²²"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I do not do *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. ²³ And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I *am* the LORD," says the Lord GOD, "when I am hallowed in you before their eyes."

The reason this has happened is because they bear His name; they are His people and He will be glorified through them, whether they acknowledge it now or not. In fact, He says they have profaned His name among the nations, something they continue to do to this day. But God is faithful to His unfaithful people.

The time has come. The description of the land found two chapters later in Ezekiel could only be speaking of modern times. The prophecies have never been fulfilled in the past and anyone who can't see this is either deluded or an anti-Semite, or both. Just as Jacob was returned, so is Israel today. And time marches on...

After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword *and* gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. Ezekiel 38:8

II. Unfair Treatment

⁴ So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field, to his flock,

Make a mental note that Rachel is placed first in this verse. Even though she is the second wife, she is the beloved of Jacob and also the one who pictures grace rather than the law. Rather than going back to the camp, he called the two of them to the field. His flight is going to be in secret and so secrecy will be maintained.

Plus, by staying away from the camp, he would avoid meeting up with Laban's family which, by this time, could actually turn bad. The Lord has directed him to move and he will do so carefully.

⁵ and said to them, "I see your father's countenance, that it is not favorable toward me as before; but the God of my father has been with me.

Here in the fields and among his flocks he notes that their father isn't looking favorably at him any more. He is worried about what will occur between them and what has already come between them - which we'll read about in a minute.

Despite what has happened though, he says that the God of his father has been with him. The same God who lead Abraham and Isaac isn't limited by boundaries. Jacob might not be in the land of promise, but he is still under the covenant care.

This is no less true with Israel during their exiles. They may have been outside of the covenant graces, but not outside of the covenant care. Exile to them occurs because of disobedience, but even in exile, God has tended to them and cared for them.

⁶ And you know that with all my might I have served your father.

Jacob didn't just serve Laban for the past six years, but for twenty full years now. The first seven years were for Rachel and that should have been the end of the matter, but then Laban deceived him and it meant another seven years of work.

If he was a crummy worker, Laban would have just given him Rachel and that would have been it. But he worked so well that Laban got seven more years of work from him. If he had slacked off during the second seven years, he never would have hired him after the agreement was up. But he did.

When he did, he said that the Lord had blessed him because of Jacob's work. The last six years were no different, except that the blessings went to Jacob and not Laban. And once again we see the same pattern in the Jewish people among the nations.

They move in and bring prosperity to those around them. Eventually the area benefits from their work too and their efforts promote the society's welfare. There is nothing wrong with this.

But eventually they, like any hard working citizen in America today, get penalized for their labors. What is earned through industry is envied and taken by the lazy and wicked.

⁷ Yet your father has deceived me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not allow him to hurt me.

Time and time again in the Bible, the term "ten times" or the number 10 is used as an idiom meaning "numerous." It indicates a fullness of times. In the case of Laban, whenever Jacob's flock began to grow, Laban would change the rules of his wages.

This verse here shows the gracious nature of Jacob because he could have stood on and demanded the original agreement. However, he allowed Laban to roll right over him. This is the same thing that has happened time and time again to the Jewish people as well as to conservative, hard working Christians.

In America, our wages are changed anytime the government needs more money. They simply break whatever promise they made and raise taxes or pass another fee. The ones who suffer the most are those who work the hardest and are the most diligent. Again, we can turn to Ecclesiastes 5:8 to see this truth -

If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent perversion of justice and righteousness in a province, do not marvel at the matter; for high official watches over high official, and higher officials are over them.

With every new level of authority over a person comes another level of oppression and perversion of justice. Jacob had only one level above him and yet he felt the injustice of it.

Laban's attitude towards Jacob is a picture of what has happened throughout history - the mistreating of God's hardworking people out of jealousy and an inability to demonstrate self industry.

However, when a person knows where their blessings come from, they know that whatever another does to harm them is temporary.

Jacob the deceiver of his father is deceived by his own father in law and yet God protected him in the process. His faithfulness has testified to his state before the Lord and he has prospered.

⁸ If he said thus: 'The speckled shall be your wages,' then all the flocks bore speckled. And if he said thus: 'The streaked shall be your wages,' then all the flocks bore streaked.

This shows the direct providence of God over the flocks of Jacob. We have to go back to the previous chapter to see what the original terms were. There it said, "...every one that *is* not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the lambs, will be considered stolen, if *it is* with me."

The original agreement was that **all** of the abnormally colored flocks would be Jacob's. However, it quickly became apparent that the majority of the new births were abnormally colored. So Laban changed it to only a portion of them - such as the speckled.

The next season, only speckled would be born and so Laban would say, "Ok the speckled will be mine and the spotted will be yours." The next season, they would come out all spotted. This then shows that there was more than just genetic engineering on Jacob's part.

What is happening here goes back to a thought in the previous sermon which I have to explain now. The flocks of Jacob are a picture of the people of the church, selected by God and who are marked in a unique way to identify them.

I said then that the external markings of the animals cannot be equated with circumcision in the flesh. Laban continuously changed the terms and so the markings must be pointing to a different type of marking - the sealing of the Holy Spirit.

This is an internal identifier and not mere circumcision, which is only an outward sign. This is important to understand, because the flocks Jacob obtained were pointing to the true people of God - both Jew and gentile - who are selected by God as His people. We'll see this more clearly in a few verses.

No matter though, the colors always came out to Jacob's advantage and thus it had to be by God's providence. Laban was too blinded to see this. We as humans are likewise too blinded to see God's blessings on His people - be it Christians or Jews. The world envies without thinking.

One point to be made is that Jacob never tells his wives about his own methods for increasing the number of odd-colored flock. But this doesn't imply he was hiding anything. What is true and you can go look in the mirror to see it, divine help in no way excludes self help. In fact, they compliment each other.

When we sit around waiting for God's miracles, we very well may be wasting the very miracles He is waiting to give. The blind man on the roadside who wanted Jesus to heal him didn't just sit there and hope He would come over and do it. Instead he acted -

⁴⁶ Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging.

⁴⁷ And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁸ Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁹ So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you." ⁵⁰ And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus. ⁵¹ So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." ⁵² Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

-Mark 10:46-52

If you want it, He may provide it "through you to you" and not "to you" alone. Don't sit idly by and expect God to do all the work.

⁹ So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given *them* to me.

Whether it was by personal efforts which were blessed by God, or by God's blessing apart from his efforts, Jacob has let us know that the transfer of the wealth is ultimately by the hand of God. Laban has only himself to blame and Jacob has only God to credit.

Jacob is telling his wives this so that they understand the situation he is facing and what the result of it ultimately must be.

III. The God of Bethel

¹⁰ "And it happened, at the time when the flocks conceived, that I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the rams which leaped upon the flocks *were* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted.

This verse and the next two are extremely complicated to understand and there are clues in the Hebrew which only confuse scholars more. It appears there are two separate visions, one in verse 10 and one in verse 11 & 12.

The first is thought to be at the beginning of his six years of labor, although some think that it came afterwards. If it was at the beginning, then it was to teach him in advance that no matter what course of action he took, God would bring about his prosperity.

If it is at the end of the six years, it was to show what God had done for him during his years of labor. Either way, the result comes out the same, but it would have made a difference to Jacob. And it makes a difference to us to know the outcome too.

In other words, we can look at this as a lesson directly related to the Bible. God has given us His word in its pages, just like Jacob had a vision. We can look at the word and know the final outcome of what **will** happen and be assured of it; with absolute confidence.

Or we can look at the word and see what it says God **has done** for us and we can see how He has accomplished everything so far, and also what we need for our future lives.

So the thought we can make here concerning the Lord's word to Jacob is either, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." Or, "I have built my church and the gates of hell could not prevail against it."

Either way, the outcome will be the same. How we perceive the words of the Bible is the most important decision we can make. If it is truth, then what it tells us *has been* is true, and what it tells us *will be* is therefore true. We are somewhere along the path of the words it proclaims and moving towards their fulfillment.

One thing to tell you here is that all of a sudden, a new word to describe the colors of the flock comes out in this verse, translated here as "gray-spotted." This is the Hebrew word *berudim*.

This color has never been mentioned before. It comes from the word barod. The spots are white like hailstones. The other goats were white with black, but these are black with white.

They are completely new and their introduction is probably to show that no matter what Laban asked for, God introduced something new to show the truth of his blessing to Jacob. In other words, God is in complete control.

¹¹ Then the Angel of God spoke to me in a dream, saying, 'Jacob.' And I said, 'Here I am.'

This is either Jacob's second dream, or the internal response to the first. Jacob has a vision where he sees what happened with the flocks. After this, be it six seconds or six years, the Angel of God speaks to him and he answers.

This "Angel of God" is the Lord who spoke to him at Bethel. Therefore it is God; it is Jesus. All are one in this picture and He will identify Himself this way in just a minute. He now confirms the dream that Jacob relayed to his wives just a verse ago.

¹² And He said, 'Lift your eyes now and see, all the rams which leap on the flocks *are* streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you.'

And sure enough, just as Jacob's dream showed the mating rams' colors, the Lord confirmed his dream. The Lord knew that Laban had cheated him and would continue to cheat him, and so He directed the flocks according to His wisdom as the Creator.

Everything that's happened has been at the Lord's direction. It is meant as an encouragement to him so that he will commit himself to what he will next be directed to do - return home to the land where his brother is and who once intended on killing him.

God has been watching and God will continue to watch over him.

¹³ I *am* the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar *and* where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family.”

The reassuring words echo back 20 years. Jacob was 77 when he left Canaan. He traveled through Bethel and had a vision where the Lord told him, "Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.”

And true to His promise, He has been with him, kept him, and is now directing him back to the land of his birth. The Lord reminds him of the pillar and the vow as well. In essence, He's saying "I am fulfilling my words to you, now you will fulfill your vow to me."

Jacob's time of exile is ending and Israel's time of exile has ended. God, who is ever-faithful, attends to His people, His family, and His flock.

This is the end of today's verses and it asks us to think on the things we may have vowed when we were in dire straits. We ask the Lord for help and make promises in the process. When He helps, we need to remember our promises.

Did we promise to give up sex, drugs, gambling, or booze? Then keep the vow. Did we promise to go to church every week for the rest of our lives? It may be painful, but keep the vow. The Bible asks us to pay our vows, whatever they are and we are reminded of that here.

Maybe you've never encountered the saving grace of the Lord before. You can do that without a vow. He simply wants you and He wants to be Your Lord.

Closing Verse: *For behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says the Lord. 'And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.'"* Jeremiah 30:3

Next Week: Genesis 31:14-30 (Jacob's Flight) (75th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Return to the Land of Your Fathers

Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying
Jacob has taken away all that was our father's
And from what was our father's, his bills he is paying
He has acquired all this wealth, and us it bothers
And Jacob saw the countenance of Laban, it was truly sore
And indeed it was not favorable toward him as before

Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to your fathers' land
And to your family, and I will be with you - at your right hand
So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah at once
To the field and to his flock to tell the score
And said to them, "I see your father's countenance
That it is not favorable toward me as before

But the God of my father has been with me
And you know that with all my might I have served him faithfully
Yet your father has acted deceptively
And changed my wages ten times
But God did not allow him to hurt me
Let me tell you about his crimes
If he said, "The speckled shall your wages be
Then all the flocks bore speckled as he could clearly see
And if he said, "The streaked shall be your wages
Then all the flocks bore streaked, causing him rages
So God has taken away the livestock of your father
And given them to me, to me and not another

And it happened at the time when the flocks conceived
That I lifted my eyes and saw in a dream that I gotted
And the rams which leaped upon the flocks I perceived
Were streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted
Then the Angel of God in a dream spoke to me
Saying "Jacob" and I said "Here I am."
And He said, "Lift your eyes now and see

Direct your eyes toward each ram
All the rams which leap on the flocks you pass through
Are streaked, speckled, and gray-spotted
For I have seen all that Laban is doing to you
And the ill treatment that he has plotted
I am the God of Bethel where you anointed
The pillar and where you made a vow to me
Now arise, get out of this land as I have appointed
And return to the land of your family

This is Jacob's life's story
The genesis of the people Israel
The people through whom would come the Glory
And it is a marvelous story to tell
Through this family will come our majestic King
The Savior of the world and our glorious Lord
It is to our beloved Jesus we sing
He, God incarnate, the Eternal Word

Thank You O God for this beautiful story
Of the coming of Christ and His majestic glory

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 31:14-30 (JACOB'S FLIGHT)

Introduction: Today's sermon is going to have more historical details and less pictures of things to come than others, but we'll also see a few things that we can apply to our lives, especially concerning the conduct of Laban, the father of Jacob's wives.

The Bible gives us stories and we can often take from them lessons about our own habits and conduct. What we do with our lives is ultimately on record, just as these accounts are. Someday, we'll stand before the Judge of all mankind and be evaluated.

So let's take today's story, like all the others, and think on the things that happen. Also, let's remember that what we're reading about is the true story of God's people, how they got started and how they interacted with others. Today, Jacob will begin his trek back to Canaan and towards his family home.

Let's join him in the trek and learn as we go.

Text Verse: *For thus says the LORD of hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye." ⁹ For surely I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me. Zechariah 2:8,9*

Israel is a people united to each other and to God in a singularly unique way. But Israel is more than a people, Israel is a concept of uniting and restoring God to the people of the world. Jacob has been in a form of exile and will now head home. Israel was twice in exile and twice brought home.

These people are, as Zechariah tells us, the apple of His eye. As believers in Christ Jesus, the true Israel, we become a part of the people of God. By knowing the Genesis stories, we can see God's hand upon His people and His care for them and we can have assurance that He is also caring for us in the same way. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Considered as Strangers

Last week we saw Jacob explain to his wives why he intended to return to Canaan. He had been cheated by Laban, but God watched over and provided for him. Finally, the

Lord told him directly that he was to return home. This then is where we start today, with the reply of his wives...

14 Then Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, "Is there still any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house?"

At times the Bible says something that needs to be taken in the context of how the words are formed. If I were to say, "John and Tom answered their boss and he said, 'We'll have that done by lunch'" we would know that one answered for both because "he" is singular.

This is what happened here. In the Hebrew the verb is singular even though both Rachel and Leah are mentioned. So one of the two is answering for the other, but they both agree. They obviously feel that they've gotten a raw deal from their dad.

When they got married, Laban gave each of them only one maidservant when he could have given them more. And to them his attitude since then has been the same. He's given them nothing and they know nothing else is coming.

Whatever inheritance they otherwise expected will never come, and anything he has will be given to the sons when he dies. They know that they will be entirely excluded from any inheritance.

One thing to think about as we continue on is the minuteness of the details. This is just a regular pastoral family in a world full of people. There were governments stretching from Europe through Asia by this time and there were great empires to the south as well.

And yet for all the kingdoms and kings, the Bible is silent on what they were doing. God's word and His attention for our learning is focused on this one man, his family, and his struggles in life. Despite all the wealth, pomp, and power of the world's kingdoms, God has focused on the family of a middle-classed shepherd.

As Matthew Henry says about such an account - "The Bible teaches people the common duties of life, how to serve God, how to enjoy the blessings he bestows, and to do good in the various stations and duties of life."

But more importantly than even that, these accounts serve two other purposes. The first is that they show us how God called, maintained, and has cared for His people. And

secondly they give us pictures of what He will continue to do in the future as He unfolds His plan for the people He will call.

¹⁵ Are we not considered strangers by him? For he has sold us, and also completely consumed our money.

Rachel and Leah look back on the past 20 years and reflect on the fact that their father actually sold each one of them for Jacob's labors. This implies that because he was a hired hand, they too were like hired hands to their dad. As Jacob's wives, they were in no greater position than he was.

Just as Jacob was a stranger, they are reckoned in the same way. And he didn't only sell them, but he consumed all the profit he made off of them. In the Hebrew, they repeat the word "eat" - *vayokhal gam akhol* indicating that he had devoured what he had gotten and continued to devour it even to the present time.

There was nothing left; he had eaten it all, and he was eating away anything that was coming in as it came. Laban is perfectly pictured by Proverbs 30:15 -

The leech has two daughters—
Give *and* Give!

Laban had two daughters, Rachel and Leah, and he sold them for Give and Give. Laban is the man who doesn't understand the principles of moderation and prudence. Speaking of the vanity of selfish toil, Solomon tells us this in Ecclesiastes 4 -

⁴Again, I saw that for all toil and every skillful work a man is envied by his neighbor. This also *is* vanity and grasping for the wind. ⁵The fool folds his hands And consumes his own flesh.

¹⁶ For all these riches which God has taken from our father are *really* ours and our children's; now then, whatever God has said to you, do it."

Jacob had acquired all of his livestock and wealth from Laban's flocks. These were his wages and what came about was agreed on in advance, even though Laban changed the terms time and time again, it always came out in favor of Jacob. God had blessed him.

But the wives looked at everything they had as their deserved inheritance. In the end, as Matthew Henry says, "God forced Laban to pay his debts, both to his servant and to his daughters."

Although I'm not one who believes in tithing, we are to give our share in life - to God, to our family, and to the government. I know a CPA who will testify that when a person cheats in one way, they will inevitably lose that same money in another.

What you don't give to God for what He renders to you, He will remove from you in another way. When you cheat the government in taxes, you will fritter it away in another meaningless way. In the end, being charitable and fair comes with its rewards.

II. Heading for Home

¹⁷ Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels.

Once the decision was made, the action is taken. It doesn't matter how large his camp is, the people are tent dwellers, and they along with all the people and flocks which could have filled a valley could leave it completely empty in just a few hours.

There would be nothing left but holes in the ground where the tent posts had been. At this time, the oldest son, Reuben, is no more than about 12 and the youngest, Joseph, is probably about 6. So all the family gets put on camels and head towards Canaan.

¹⁸ And he carried away all his livestock and all his possessions which he had gained, his acquired livestock which he had gained in Padan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

The word "gained" or *rakhash* is used twice in this verse to indicate that he took only what he had gained. Everything that went with him was acquired by him and nothing was stolen. This word is used only 5 times in the Bible and all are in Genesis.

It is always used in connection with wealth which is either taken into or out of Canaan, by Abraham, Jacob, or Esau. Well see later that he left with enough to give away more than 580 animals as a present. That, along with everything else he had would have made him a very wealthy man after just 6 years of work.

¹⁹ Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel had stolen the household idols that were her father's.

While Jacob was preparing the flock to move, Rachel and Leah probably went back home to gather whatever things they had. This was at the time that Laban was shearing his sheep and it tells us that he hadn't lost everything to Jacob. He still had his own flocks tended by his sons and they were a three day journey away.

While the wives were gathering their things, Rachel stole, as it says, "the household idols that were her father's." The word *teraphim* is used to describe what she took. It's a word used other times in the Bible. But if you ever want a headache, read the commentaries on what people suppose these teraphim were.

There are as many opinions as there are commentators, and some are very insightful and ingenious. However, it is actually unknown what they were exactly. Later, in verse 30, Laban will call them *elohai*, or "gods" and so they were probably little figurines like buddhas that people put in their house today; good luck charms.

It is Rachel who stole them and as she is a picture of the New Testament grace, or the Church Age, it's possible that she did this to show their ineffectiveness to do anything at all and to deliver her father from idolatry.

This thought goes back as far as a guy named Theodoret who lived in the 4th century. A Jewish scholar gives a similar reason - to deliver her father from idol worship. What Rachel will do with them later in this chapter will show us the contempt that she has for them. She certainly wasn't expecting to benefit from them.

If Laban was a believer in the Lord, as it seems to be, his devotion to Him is divided. What Rachel is doing here is similar to what is called iconoclasm. Iconoclasm is the deliberate destruction of icons, idols, statues and the like within the church.

Iconoclasm has happened several times in both the Old Testament, such as during the reign of King Josiah, and within the church as well. The Protestant Reformation was one of the highlights of this. People turned away from the open idolatry of the Roman church and back to worshipping God without idols.

However, idol worship is still very strong in the Roman church even today. As an example, the Pope will often issue edicts granting indulgences for prayers to statues of Mary. The last Pope actually went to a shrine of Mary and petitioned her. Let me read to you the account -

"Benedict XVI placed the world in Mary's hands during his one-day visit to the shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary in Pompeii, near Naples. The Pope's leading of the Supplication of the Blessed Virgin of the Rosary, a prayer written by Blessed Bartolo Longo (1841-1926) was one of the high points of this 12th pastoral trip in Italy. 'We implore you to have pity today on the nations that have gone astray, on all Europe, on the whole world, that they might repent and return to your heart,' the text of the prayer reads. With the words of Bartolo, the Pontiff turned to Mary, saying: 'If you will not help us because we are ungrateful and unworthy children of your protection, we will not know to whom to turn.' In a gesture of filial love, the Pope then offered the Madonna a golden rose."
zenit.org 19 Oct 2008

This is the force of idolatry, even in the world today. The leader of over a billion Catholics supposedly placed the fate of the world in the hands of a dead person, prostrated himself to an image of her, prayed to it, and told it that if it didn't help us, then he had no idea who to turn to.

I can tell him who to turn to. Turn to Jesus and get off your face in front of pieces of wood and stone. John, in his first letter, after speaking for five chapters about Jesus, the Word, love, light, the truth, and other noble things closes with these words -

"And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." 1 John 5:20-21

Never, not once, does the Bible ask us to direct our thoughts, our attention, or our eyes toward any person - living or dead - except Jesus. Praying to Mary, the saints, or any person or thing other than to God through Jesus is both inappropriate and a violation of the message of the Bible.

This is what will bring about the wrath of God on an unrepentant world. It is no less than an abomination. This is what Rachel was trying to keep her father from - the sin of idolatry.

²⁰ And Jacob stole away, unknown to Laban the Syrian, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee.

What is interesting is that a form of the same word, *ganab*, which was used to describe Rachel's stealing of Laban's idols, is used in this next verse to describe what Jacob has done by fleeing. She stole the idols and he stole away, or more specifically it says -

vayiknov yaakov eth lev lavan (3:22) - "Stole Jacob Laban's heart."

The heart in the Bible is the seat of understanding, and so this is used as a way of saying that he deceived Laban through deception. However, John Gill sees this in a different way. By stealing Laban's heart, he says that he stole...

"that which his heart was set upon; not his gods, these Rachel stole away; nor his daughters, for whom he does not appear to have had any great affection and respect; but rather the cattle and goods Jacob took with him, which Laban's eye and heart were upon."

John Gill seems right in this. When Jacob left with his wealth, he also left with Laban's heart.

²¹ So he fled with all that he had. He arose and crossed the river, and headed toward the mountains of Gilead.

The river here is the Euphrates and people argue over how he could have gotten his family, camels, flocks, and goods over the river. One dubious source said God dried up the river for him to walk over on dry ground.

But getting over the river isn't a difficult thing to imagine. There have been rope-pulled ferries for eons and there are rope made bridges spanning rivers around the world. There would have been routes of travel that included these or other ways of crossing and the speculation isn't difficult to think through.

If God had dried up the river, the Bible would have said as much. How they crossed is far less important than that they crossed in a customary way and headed for Mount Gilead and towards Canaan.

I recommend that you read commentaries with a grain of salt.

III. The Perpetual Fountain

²² And Laban was told on the third day that Jacob had fled.

In a previous sermon we learned that Laban's flocks were kept three days journey apart from Jacob's. This was so that they wouldn't get intermingled because the color of the animal determined who it belonged to.

Because of this, it took three days for Laban to hear the news.

²³ Then he took his brethren with him and pursued him for seven days' journey, and he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead.

Here it says that Laban took his brethren with him. Because of this, it was probably six days after Jacob left. It would have taken three days to get to Laban, three more for Laban to return to Haran, and then the seven days of pursuing Jacob.

This seems likely because of the distance from Haran to Gilead where they finally meet up. Jacob, traveling with his children and flocks, would take about 13 days to that far. Laban, could do the same distance in seven days. After this time though, Laban finally comes close to him on Mount Gilead.

The meaning of the name Gilead is hard to pin down, but Jones' Dictionary of Old Testament Proper Names says that it comes from two words - *gulla* which means "spring," and *ad* which means "perpetuity." And so it is termed Perpetual Fountain.

²⁴ But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said to him, "Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad."

The translation here makes it sound like Laban can't say anything at all to Jacob. To speak "neither good nor bad" means you can't say anything. That's probably not a great translation. Instead it says, *mitov ad ra* - from good to evil.

This could be one of two things. Either don't start speaking nicely to him and then start accusing him of doing wrong. Or it could mean that because God has decided that Jacob should return to Caanan then Laban shouldn't promise anything good if he will return to Haran and he should threaten him if he doesn't.

God has made the decision and so Laban needs to not speak from *good to evil* concerning the matter.

²⁵ So Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mountains, and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mountains of Gilead.

I'm not sure why the version of the Bible I use, the NKJV, says "mountains" in these verses because the word is singular. Laban finally meets up with Jacob during his trek home. Jacob is on the mountain and Laban and those who came with him are there too.

²⁶ And Laban said to Jacob: "What have you done, that you have stolen away unknown to me, and carried away my daughters like captives *taken* with the sword?"

"As if,,, as if,,, as if I've done nothing wrong over the past 20 years." Laban's comments to Jacob are as if he were a marauder who had come and stolen his daughter's away. This was, and still is, a common thing in parts of the world. And the people who do it are the lowest of all.

In 1 Samuel 30, the Amelekites, who were Israel's great enemies, did this to David. While he and his men were out preparing for battle, the Amelekites came and stole away the families and property. David went in pursuit of them and got everything back.

This is the type of thing Laban is accusing Jacob of. He' saying he was an outlaw and a kidnapper by what he's done.

²⁷ Why did you flee away secretly, and steal away from me, and not tell me; for I might have sent you away with joy and songs, with timbrel and harp?

In an attempt to get the upper hand in the negotiations which are surely coming, Laban says what he *would have* done if things had gone differently. "Of course I would have thrown you a big party and had a rock concert for you."

He notes that the fun would have included joy, songs, timbrel, and harp. What he says almost mirrors the kind of celebration the psalmists asks us to give to God. Let me read a portion of Psalm 81 so you can see -

¹Sing aloud to God our strength;
Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob.

²Raise a song and strike the timbrel,
The pleasant harp with the lute.

One of the instruments, the harp, is mentioned throughout the Old Testament and the shape of it is actually the basis for the Hebrew name of the Sea of Galilee. The harp is a *kinnor* and the Sea of Galilee is known as *kinneret* because it is shaped is like a *kinnor*.

So if you don't remember anything else from today's sermon, maybe you'll remember that the Sea of Galilee is named after an ancient instrument which goes back even before Noah's Flood.

²⁸ And you did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters. Now you have done foolishly in so doing.

When Laban says "his sons and daughters" he is speaking about his grandchildren as well as Rachel and Leah. The term includes them all. Having said this, he probably hadn't kissed his daughters since the night of their wedding.

He is simply making a show like so many of us do. Everything is nicer when it doesn't really happen. Have you ever noticed that? We can make up any fancy dream in our head and say it is so because there's no way to prove it wouldn't have happened.

However, our delusions are rarely shared with the people around us and Laban's delusions are still being disbelieved 4000 years later. He is a bag of wind and a man of pretense but no substance.

²⁹ It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.'

What he says here is obviously true or he wouldn't have pursued Jacob at all. It *is in his power* to harm him, but God wouldn't allow it. What makes it all the more ironic is the way he speaks to Jacob.

In Hebrew he says *yesh la'el yadi laasot immakhem ra* - (4:54) my hand serves me as my god to do you evil.

In other words, "I am my own source of power and I could have done whatever I wanted to you." But he found out that there is another, greater Power that he had no control over. To get a picture of Laban's attitude, we can read a similar account in Habakkuk 1 -

¹⁰They mock kings and scoff at rulers. They laugh at all fortified cities; by building earthen ramps they capture them. ¹¹Then they sweep past like the wind and go on—guilty people, whose own strength is their god.” (NIV)

He gives power to the weak, And to *those who have* no might He increases strength. ³⁰ Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall

utterly fall, ³¹ But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew *their* strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:29-31

One more thing about this verse is that when Laban speaks to Jacob, he says "the God of your father spoke to me last night." When he does, he uses the plural word for "your." What he is implying is that the entire house belongs to God and not just Jacob.

If he wasn't allowed to do anything to Jacob, he wasn't allowed to do anything to anyone in the family either. The whole family has come under the covenant care of the God of Jacob's father. This might seem like trivia, but it's a rare and singular way of speaking.

This is a lesson which is reflected in 1 Corinthians 7 when speaking about the children of a married couple where one is a believer and one isn't –

If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. ¹³ And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.

³⁰ And now you have surely gone because you greatly long for your father's house, but why did you steal my gods?"

Laban is saying here that he understands the reason for Jacob leaving, which is because he misses his father's house, but there is no excuse for him stealing his personal household gods. It's kind of funny if you think about the whole thing.

Laban's wealth had decreased and Jacob's had steadily increased over the past six years. Jacob's family had grown to 4 wives, 11 sons, plus at least one daughter. After all this, Laban's gods get stolen, which means they couldn't even protect themselves much less him.

And after that, God speaks to him in a dream and told him not to harm Jacob. You'd think he'd be glad to have the stupid idols gone from his life, but he perversely looks for them anyway. Matthew Henry nailed it when he said, "Happy are they who have the Lord for their God. Enemies may steal our goods, but not our God."

This is where we have to leave off for today. Each one of us can reflect on some of the things we've seen and how we can apply them to our lives. How are we going to deal with the little idols in our life for example.

What are we clinging to that is a substitute for trusting God. Are we reading horoscopes in the morning. Do we have a good luck crystal or a little buddha in our car or on our mantle? These things, like in Laban's home, don't help, they only hinder us.

And what about how we speak to others? Do we try to justify our past failures like Laban did by claiming we would have done things differently if given the chance? Laban was a failure at being a father and also being a boss, but that doesn't mean he had to continue deluding himself.

If we've failed others, we can admit it and move on in a new direction, or we can cover things up with excuses and blame. And maybe one more quick thing to think on - Laban intended to do harm to Jacob, but God came to him in order to stop him. Unlike Laban, we now have God's complete word to us.

He has completely revealed what He expects and so we don't need dreams and visions. He's given us the Bible to know, believe, and follow. And He's given us people who are instructed in it and willing to instruct us - pastors, teachers, and commentators.

Whether you come to Church on the Beach or go somewhere else, make sure that you listen, learn, and apply these things to your life. Unlike Laban, your walk will be grounded and your life will be without excuse or blame. And one more thing before we finish, if you still have a void between you and God, lets get that fixed first.

Jesus is the answer and if you've never had a moment in your life where you have voluntarily called on Him to be your Savior, don't let another moment pass by without doing so.

Closing Verse: *He falls down before it and worships it, Prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!"* ¹⁸ *They do not know nor understand; For He has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, And their hearts, so that they cannot understand. Isaiah 44:17, 18*

Next Week: Genesis 31:31-42 (What is My Trespass and What is My Sin?) (76th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Jacob's Flight

Rachel and Leah answered and said to him
Is there still any portion or inheritance for us
Getting anything from our father's house seems slim
We are considered as strangers, a minus and not a plus

For he has sold us and completely consumed our money
For all these riches which God has taken from our father
Are really ours and our children's, this isn't funny
Now what God has said to you, do it without bother

Then Jacob rose and set his sons and his wives on camels
And he carried away all the livestock and possessions
Which he had gained, yes all of his mammals
Which he had gained despite Laban's oppressions

And he set to go to Isaac, his father to see
In the land of Canaan after years twenty

Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep
And Rachel had stolen the household idols
That belong to her father, that he did keep
But this would make Laban almost homicidal

And Jacob stole away unknown to Laban the Aramean
In that he did not tell him he intended to flee
So he fled with all that he had not telling him
He arose and crossed the river quietly

And he headed toward the mountains of Gilead
Surely knowing this would make Laban really mad

And Laban was told on the third day
That Jacob had fled and gone away

Then he pursued him with the brethren he had
For seven day's journey he went
And he overtook him in the mountains of Gilead
Yes, seven days time was spent

But God had come to Laban the Syrian in a dream
By night and said to him a warning
"Be careful you do not speak in a way which would seem
Either good or bad. Don't forget this in the morning

So Laban overtook Jacob finally
Now Jacob had pitched a tent in the mountain
And Laban with his brethren pitched plainly
In the mountains of Gilead, the Perpetual Fountain

And Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done
That you have stolen away unknown to me
And carried away my daughters in this run
Like captives taken with the sword so brutally

Why did you flee secretly and steal away from me
And not tell me for I might have thrown you a huge party

With joy and songs, with timbrel and harp
We could have all dressed up and looked really sharp

And you didn't allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters
Now you have done foolishly like one of the plotters

It is in my power to do you harm
But the God of your father spoke to me last night
Saying, "Be careful that you speak without alarm
Speak neither good nor bad to Jacob, alright?

And now you have surely gone away
Because you greatly long for your father's house
But why did you steal my gods this way
Doing this makes you seem like a louse

And so continues the story of Jacob's life
It is one filled with trials and with strife

And it is the same for all of us
We have trials and tests that shape who we are
How much better if we know Jesus
Trust in Him, at these times is better by far

This word He has given is meant to help our way
And to keep us on a path which is straight and sure
So let's continue to read it each and every day
And apply it to our lives to help us endure

Thank You Lord for these stories
Which guide us toward our future glories
Thank You above all for our wonderful Lord
Who is shown to us so beautifully in this precious word

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 31:31-42

(WHAT IS MY TRESPASS AND WHAT IS MY SIN?)

Introduction: Surprisingly, the order in which the children of Israel were born and the mothers to whom they were born provide patterns which give us clues about the future of these people. In the same way, today's account reaffirms the same pattern.

Unbeknownst to Jacob, Rachel stole the household idols of her father and carried them along with her. A search is made for these idols and the order of the search, along with a few other hidden details, shows us once again - and quite clearly, that Israel would have two exiles during their history.

At some point after the ending of the second exile, which occurred in some of our lifetimes, they will go from the law to grace. They will give up their idols and will turn to the Lord and His perpetual fountain of grace. All of this is symbolized in this beautiful story today which occurs on Mount Gilead.

We have full assurance that Israel will call on the Lord as a people and Christ will return to them, just as the ancient prophets saw, and just as Jesus Himself spoke. And to help us see this clearly, he has included details of this in a search for household idols.

Text Verse: *“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? ¹⁰ I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings. Jeremiah 17:9, 10*

Laban went after Jacob as he fled to his home in Canaan. The night before he met up with Jacob, the Lord searched him out and in his dream he told him to speak to Jacob nothing from good to bad.

This wasn't an isolated instance in human history, but it is the way God deals with all men. He searches our hearts, tests our minds, and rewards us according to our actions. In order to be pleasing to God, we need to know what pleases Him. The way we do this is through understanding His word. And so... May God speak to us *through* His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Laban's Search

Last week we saw Jacob get his family together and head for the land of Canaan. After he left, Laban heard that he was gone and pursued after him. This is where we start up today, with verse 31...

³¹ Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, “Because I was afraid, for I said, ‘Perhaps you would take your daughters from me by force.’

His answer attends to the matter of his wives first, rather than any theft Laban suffered. What Jacob notes here isn't at all far-fetched. The world of Islam today would still do this. If someone were to marry a Muslim, the family would certainly do one of three things.

One would be to insist that the non-Muslim convert. The second would be to steal back the family member by force. And the third would be to execute them for marrying out of the faith. Any or all of these are normal among them, and this stems from the mindset of the people of this very area.

Jacob had worked for and paid off his debt to Laban. Also he took nothing from him when he left. Rachel took his household gods which he knew nothing about. He had every right to leave and his flight was actually the prudent thing to do considering the circumstances of the past 20 years.

³² With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live. In the presence of our brethren, identify what I have of yours and take *it* with you.” For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.

After addressing what he felt was the main concern, he brings up the second matter in a way which would absolutely confirm his innocence. If the idols are found in his camp, Laban would have the right to execute whoever stole them.

He makes this agreement openly, as it says, "in the presence of our brethren." This would be in the presence of everyone - those with him and those with Laban. They would be impartial witnesses. If the idols weren't found, Laban would have absolutely no recourse because Jacob's innocence would be seen.

At this time, Jacob has no idea that it was Rachel who took them and his words "do not let him live" will probably be regretted later when Rachel dies giving birth. He may actually feel this was God's divine judgment on his words which he speaks here. As Matthew Henry says about this -

"How just soever we think ourselves to be, it is best to forbear imprecations, lest they fall heavier than we imagine."

Along with the gods, Jacob adds in an all-encompassing note, "...identify what I have of yours and take *it* with you." This allows Laban, right in the front of everyone, to make a claim to anything in the camp that belongs to him.

By doing this, Jacob is proving that everything which goes along with him has been attested to as his. There will be no later ability to make a claim on anything he has. Believe it or not, a few years back, someone in Egypt tried to sue Israel for the goods they plundered at the time of the Exodus.

The Bible records in Exodus 12 that Israel plundered the Egyptians as they left. And so in 2003 Nabil Hilmy, dean of the faculty of law at Egypt's Zagazig University, announced his plan in the Egyptian government weekly, Al-Ahram Al-Arabi, to sue Israel.

The suit quickly disappeared though. Suing Israel based on an account in the Bible would therefore verify the Bible. Once they did this, then they would have to admit Israel's right to the land and everything else about Israel, including being God's chosen people.

That is the last thing in the world that the muslims want. Kind of funny, but this is the thought process of those who have hated and continue to hate Israel. God, however, has and continues to look after them, even against those in the church who attempt to diminish Israel's role in the world.

³³ And Laban went into Jacob's tent, into Leah's tent, and into the two maids' tents, but he did not find *them*. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent.

It's a bit hard to follow this verse unless you look at it as not necessarily being in sequence. And this is important. It seems to say Laban went into Jacob's tent, then Leah's tent, then the tent of the two maids, then back into Leah's tent and then into Rachel's.

It doesn't seem to make any sense at all and people have proposed various reasons for why the order is so hard to understand. In reality it could be that he simply went into each tent, finishing with Leah's and then went into Rachel's, or something like that.

However it actually happened, the order **the Bible** gives is important because of who the people picture. The Lord is telling us this for a reason. Jacob is the leader of Israel, Leah pictures the law, and Rachel pictures the grace of God.

The search reflects the status of the people of Israel since their inception. The first search in Jacob's tent reflects Israel before the coming of the law. The second is noted as Leah, living under the law. Then it mentions, surprisingly, the tent of the two maids, but the word is singular - one tent, two maidservants.

This then would reflect the two times of servitude of the Jewish people after the law - the first was in Babylon for 70 years and the second is the Roman dispersion of the people in AD70. Then it says that Laban left the tent of Leah (which was actually noted before the maids) and went into Rachel's tent.

In other words, the two dispersions of Israel were under the law. Only after those dispersions will they, as a people, come into the covenant, or tent, of grace. To understand this completely, one has to understand the re-gathering of Israel in modern times as is laid out in Ezekiel 36 and 37 and also in other books like Zechariah.

This same order is seen in the birth of Jacob's 12 sons. Sons were born to Jacob by Leah, then the two maid servants, then by Leah again, and only after that by Rachel. As surely as sugar is sweet, we're given these patterns to show us Israel's history - the law, two dispersions, and then coming into grace's everlasting covenant.

³⁴ Now Rachel had taken the household idols, put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. And Laban searched all about the tent but did not find *them*.

Rachel obviously heard Jacob's words about putting to death whoever had the idols and so she packed them away in a camel's saddle and sat down on them. Using a bit of cunning, she's devised a plan to keep him from finding them.

As he pokes around in her tent, she gives him news to help him decide where to look and where not to look...

³⁵ And she said to her father, "Let it not displease my lord that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women *is* with me." And he searched but did not find the household idols.

A lot of commentators will insert a passage from Leviticus 15 here. Let me read you what that says -

"¹⁹ 'If a woman has a discharge, *and* the discharge from her body is blood, she shall be set apart seven days; and whoever touches her shall be unclean until evening. ²⁰ Everything that she lies on during her impurity shall be unclean; also everything that she sits on shall be unclean. ²¹ Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. ²² And whoever touches anything that she sat on shall wash his clothes and bathe in water, and be unclean until evening. ²³ If *anything* is on *her* bed or on anything on which she sits, when he touches it, he shall be unclean until evening."

It's not uncommon for people to cite these verses and then equate them with what Rachel has done - "Because the law says she's unclean, Laban wouldn't touch her or anything she is touching." This isn't correct. The law is the law and this predates the law.

Laban may not want to touch her because she's on her period, but it's not because the law demanded it. What's being pictured here is Israel's final rejection of idolatry. If you go to Israel today, or into many Jewish homes around the world, you'll see all kinds of idols.

You might see a buddha or feng shui or some hindu god made of brass or wood. Whatever... they will have it, but Rachel has rejected the idols by sitting on them. Laban would never have imagined they would be under her and receive such treatment.

But Israel of the future, like her, will defile their images someday. Isaiah 30:22 tells us it is so -

You will also defile the covering of your images of silver, And the ornament of your molded images of gold. You will throw them away as an unclean thing; You will say to them, "Get away!" Isaiah 30:22

The word Isaiah uses for "unclean thing" is *da'ah*, a menstrual cloth. As surely as Rachel sat on Laban's idols, Israel will someday defile and cast away their idols too. In the same chapter in verse 26, Isaiah tells us what it will be like for Israel on that day.

Moreover the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, And the light of the sun will be sevenfold, As the light of seven days, In the day that the LORD binds up the bruise of His people And heals the stroke of their wound.

The time is coming, and may it be soon.

II. Jacob's Innocence

³⁶ Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban, and Jacob answered and said to Laban: "What *is* my trespass? What *is* my sin, that you have so hotly pursued me?"

If the gods were found, Laban would have had the upper hand, completely and entirely. He could have then claimed that some of the flock was stolen or made any other charge he wanted, whether valid or not, it wouldn't have mattered.

But now Jacob assumes the upper hand and exercises it to rebuke Laban. Jacob is now found without guilt. The accuser can no longer accuse and he is vindicated before his brothers. Jacob's words to Laban are so perfectly reflected by a prophesy of the future in Zechariah that it really is astonishing -

"In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. ² "It shall be in that day," says the LORD of hosts, "that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land. (13:1, 2)

Here they are, right here in this story, on Mount Gilead, translated as the Perpetual Fountain, and Israel is cleared of the guilt of the idols it has been accused of, just as Israel of the future will be too.

³⁷ Although you have searched all my things, what part of your household things have you found? Set *it* here before my brethren and your brethren, that they may judge between us both!

Jacob's statement implies that there is nothing of Laban's in his camp. When he says, "Set it here before my brethren and your brethren that they made judge between us" he is stating it in a way which means that Laban has found diddly.

His actions in pursuing him and accusing him are baseless. From this springboard of innocence, he will now explain, in front of everyone, the mistreatment he has received. This will double Laban's guilt before them all and will thus doubly vindicate him.

³⁸ These twenty years I *have been* with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried their young, and I have not eaten the rams of your flock.

Twenty years. This makes Jacob 97. During this time, he worked 7 years for Leah, 7 for Rachel, and then 6 for whatever possessions he now has. During all of that time, he shows his attentiveness to the flocks because it says the sheep and the goats have born young.

This means that they were well tended to. He also says that he didn't eat the rams of the flock. The female are rarely eaten because they are the ones to bear more and thus increase wealth, but the rams are taken from time to time for meals.

However, Jacob never did this. He never dipped into what belonged to Laban, although he wouldn't have been wrong from time to time if he asked Laban for an animal. But instead, he ate lesser foods, maybe lintels, or something which was more difficult to obtain through hunting, like a deer.

He's been faithful to Laban, worked hard for him, and increased him for twenty long years. But this brings us to an important concept in the Bible - the significance of the number 20. It is a meaning which is consistently found in the Bible -

Twenty is 1 short of 21. Twenty-one is the three-fold 7. Three is divine completion. Seven is spiritual perfection. So 21 would be divine completion of spiritual perfection. Because 20 is one less than 21 then it signifies, "divine expectancy."

And there are many illustrations to support it:

Isaac waited 20 years to have a son while Rebekah was barren

These 20 years, Jacob worked and waited to return to Canaan

Israel waited 20 years for a deliverer from Jabin's oppression

Israel waited 20 years for deliverance by Samson

The Ark of the Covenant waited 20 years at Kirjath-jearim while the people lamented after the Lord

Solomon waited 20 years for the building of the two houses

There was 20 years between Jerusalem's capture and destruction; and for those 20 years Jeremiah prophesied concerning it.

This 20 year period is a period of waiting and it represents the full time of Israel's waiting to go from their establishment as a people, through the time of the law to the

kingdom age. The time of divine spiritual perfection; the kingdom age which is coming soon.

³⁹ That which was torn *by beasts* I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it. You required it from my hand, *whether stolen by day or stolen by night*.

Again, Jacob makes his plea before the assembly. There were predators in the open fields and from time to time one would kill one of the flock. Although it wasn't any fault of Jacob's, he bore the loss. Later, under the law, and speaking of exactly such an occurrence it will say this in Exodus 22 -

"If it is torn to pieces *by a beast*, then he shall bring it as evidence, *and* he shall not make good what was torn." (13)

The fact that this is in the law as a protection for the people indicates that this is what is right and honest. Jacob and Laban were before the time of the law, but the general principle of honesty would dictate that Jacob shouldn't have to pay for such a loss, but he did.

And more, any animal that was stolen - by day or by night, Laban required from Jacob. Based on Laban's dishonesty as presented by Jacob, it is an indication that Laban could have stolen from the flock and then demanded a replacement as well, thus stealing from Jacob twice.

Jacob airs all of this in the presence of the people to show that he has been both mistreated and unfairly acted against even until the present moment.

III. Jacob's Protector

⁴⁰ *There I was! In the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from my eyes.*

In this particular area of the world, the days can be extremely hot and the nights very cold. As the day heats up over the open expanses, the area aches from the lack of moisture. If it weren't for wells, it would be intolerable for both man and animal.

At night it gets so cold that any humidity in the air settles to ground level and turns into frost. This is the normal weather and it would be multiplied in one direction or another as the seasons changed, but it would never be comfortable.

It also seems to imply that Laban didn't provide any suitable camping material for Jacob. Instead, he fended for himself. Finally, because of the cold, because of the frost, because of the wild animals, and because of thieves - all of these things kept him awake. Sleep literally evaded him most of the time for 20 years.

⁴¹ Thus I have been in your house twenty years; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times.

In this unappealing state of employment, he continued on for 20 full years under three promises - twice for wives and then for set wages. However, seven of those years were for a wife he didn't want. Only during the last six was it for wages. And even then, Laban constantly cheated him by changing the agreed terms.

He has shown, in front of everyone witnessing their discussion, that the wives and the flocks are his and he was deserving of far more based on the work provided. None of this can be contested because it is spoken in the presence of the witnesses.

And the fact that Laban wronged him is now in the open for all to see as well. Laban has dealt deceitfully with Jacob and Jacob's words testify to it.

⁴² Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed.

What may seem perplexing is how Jacob describes God. He says, "the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac." He is speaking of the same God, but using three terms. It's not actually confusing though when you think it through.

By saying he is "the God of my father", he is being humble and saying that he is watched over by the same God, but deferring the title to his father. Secondly, Abraham was already dead but Isaac is alive. Therefore, God is the God of Abraham in his eternal state.

However, because Isaac is still alive, God to him is the God he fears. He walks before Him with dread. He knows that he can lay waste a valley such as Sodom and Gomorrah. He can destroy the earth by flood and He can bring the stars from the sky and crash them on the earth. He is the One who controls the womb of the woman and the breath of all living things.

Isaac knows these things and he fears His God. This is why Jacob describes Him this way. And we should note that nothing has changed with the coming of the law, nor with the coming of Jesus. Under the law, Solomon said these words to sum up his life of learning at the end of Ecclesiastes -

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. ¹⁴ For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil." 12:13, 14

And Paul tells us the same basic thing in Ephesians 2, even after the coming of Christ –

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure." (12, 13)

Despite being our kind and gentle Savior, Jesus is our Lord. He is to be respected and feared. It is He who will bless our rights and judge our wrongs. And when we speak of Him, it should be with reverence mixed with awe, fear, and trembling.

⁴² (con't) **God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked *you* last night."**

Jacob now brings in more facts about the glory of God. He is the God who sees all things, including the affliction of His people and He is the God who is sovereign over all things, including the dreams they have in their sleep.

Jacob is implying that God even knows where we sleep and what we think in our minds. He is aware of, and watching over, all these things. And so we should bring "every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

God came to Laban and rebuked him. He searched him out and determined that he needed correction of both his intents and his attitudes. How would God correct you if He came to you in your sleep tonight? As we finish up today, the question for you may still be unsettled.

Have you made a commitment to this wonderful God who sees into our hearts, our minds, and our dreams? This same God who watches over His people and defends them against injustice and oppression - Have you met Him? Have you made peace with Him?

Closing Verse: ³¹ *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?* ³² *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?* ³³ *Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Romans 8:31-33*

Next Week: Genesis 31:43-55 (The Witness and the Watchtower) (77th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

What is My Trespass and What is My Sin

Then Jacob said to Laban, in his discourse
"Because I was afraid, for I said
Perhaps you would take your daughters by force
And if so, in a fight I might end up dead
If you find your gods with whomever, men or women
Do not let them live, so you shall do
In the presence of our brethren
Identify what I have of yours and take it with you

For Jacob did not know
That Rachel had stolen them, yes it's so
And Laban went into Jacob's tent
And into Leah's tent he went too
And into the maid's tent he went
But he did not find them and so he withdrew
Then he went out of Leah's tent
And entering into Rachel's tent he went

Now Rachel, the household idols she had taken
And put them in the camel's saddle to hide
Her contempt for them cannot be mistaken
She sat on them; their power she denied
And Laban searched all about the tent
But did not find them, And to her father she said
"Let it not displease my lord by this event
I cannot rise before you from this bed

For the manner of women is with me, so pay no mind
And he searched but his household idols he did not find
Then Jacob was angry and rebuked Laban
And Jacob answered and said to him plainly
What is my trespass? What is my sin?
That you have so hotly pursued me
Although you have searched all my stuff
What part of your household things have you found?
Set it here before our brethren, don't be gruff
So they may judge between us, let them gather around

These twenty years I have been with you
Your ewes and your female goats have not
Miscarried their young, And it's true
I haven't eaten your rams, but I could've eaten a lot
That which was torn by beasts I did not bring to you
I bore the loss of it; it's something I had to do
You required it from my hand
Whether stolen by day or stolen by night
I was in the day consumed by drought in the land
And by night the frost was a terrible plight

And my sleep departed from my eyes
And none of this to you was a great surprise
Thus I have been in your house twenty years
I served for your two daughters fourteen
And six years for your flock through trials and jeers
And you changed my wages ten times between
Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham
And the Fear of Isaac, had been with me
Surely now you would have sent me away with an empty-hand
God has seen my affliction and had pity

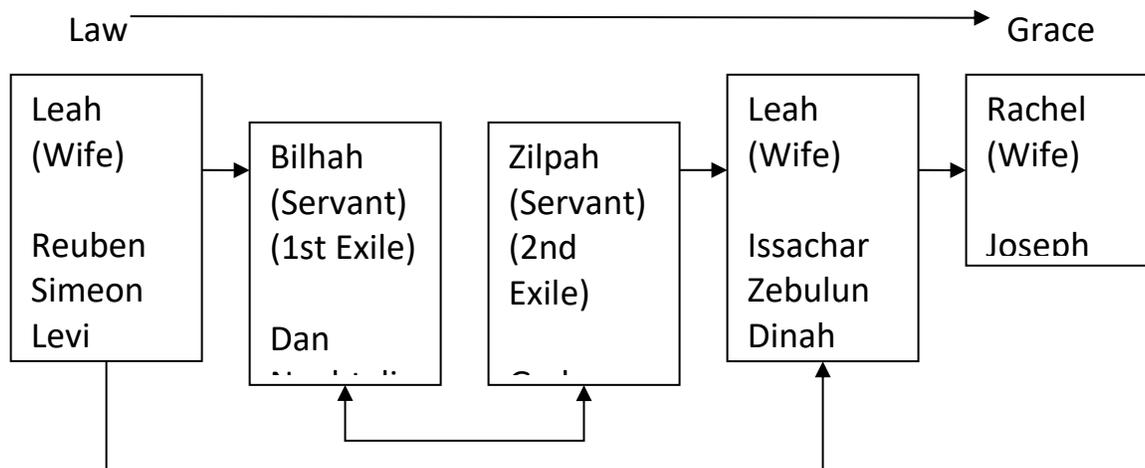
He has seen the labor of my hands alright
And so he came to you and rebuked you last night.”
God carefully looks after those He has called
And He defends them in their time of need
When those around afflict us, He is appalled
And returns upon them justice with speed

He is the covenant keeping holy and awesome Lord
 Who watched over Jacob so long ago
 And we too can know Him through His great word
 And upon us His great riches He will bestow
 Through Jesus we are brought near to our God
 And through His shed blood reconciliation is made
 By His hand someday on golden streets we will trod
 And from Him will come still waters and blissful shade

Thank You O God for our Lord Jesus
 Who has so tenderly reached out to us

Hallelujah and Amen...

**How the Order of the Birth of Jacob's Children Prefigures
 the History of the Nation of Israel**



GENESIS 31:43-55 **(THE WITNESS AND THE WATCHTOWER)**

Introduction: In the 13th century, the Christian philosopher Thomas Aquinas wrote the *Summa Theologica*, one of the greatest works ever on doctrines related to the many facets and workings of God, creation, man, divine government, and other things.

Each of these categories is subdivided into an astonishing array of wisdom and logic. One might think that the first premise he would have argued would be God - His existence, His nature, His attributes, etc. The Bible starts with creation, but from the premise that it is God who created - you'd think he'd do the same.

But he looked elsewhere to establish his arguments. Believe it or not, he started with *The Nature and Domain of Sacred Doctrine*. In other words, the Bible. Why would he do this? The answer is that until the nature and validity of the Bible can be determined, all the philosophy, logic, and reason in the world about God is irrelevant.

Without God's word, there can be no true understanding of our relationship to Him. He said that "because man is directed to God, as to an end that surpasses the grasp of his reason... that the end must first be known by men who are to direct their thoughts and actions to the end. Hence it was necessary for the salvation of man that certain truths which exceed human reason should be made known to him by divine revelation."

Aquinas went on through ten articles addressing the nature of Sacred Scripture before continuing with the rest of the *Summa*. God's word is the single most important physical object on planet earth. Without it we cannot know Jesus and without Jesus we cannot be saved - and yet we ignore this book... to watch TV.

Today, we will review a passage which actually reveals God's intent to give the world a Bible and which even gives us clues about the nature and structure of the Bible that He will give. And it will show that God is watching over His word very carefully.

Text Verse: *The word of the LORD came to me: "What do you see, Jeremiah?" "I see the branch of an almond tree," I replied. ¹² The LORD said to me, "You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled." Jeremiah 1:11, 12 (NIV)*

God spoke His word to us through His prophets and apostles. In this word are promises, blessings, curses, and assurances. If one, yes if even one aspect of this word fails, then

God has failed. The sacredness and reliability of this word is tied directly to His holiness and truthfulness and so... May God speak to us through His *word* today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Laban's Loss

In the previous few sermons, we saw Jacob, by God's direction, determine to return to the land of Canaan. He left secretly and when his uncle found out, he in turn chased after Jacob and finally caught up with him.

On the night before they met, God appeared to him and told him that he was to do nothing harmful to Jacob. That next day, Laban met with Jacob, searched his tents for household idols that were stolen from him and then Jacob defended of his actions, including his innocence concerning the idols. This is where we start today...

⁴³ And Laban answered and said to Jacob, “*These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and this flock is my flock; all that you see is mine.*”

Jacob has fully defended himself against Laban and now Laban, without admitting any guilt or any wrongdoing toward Jacob, makes a great and boastful claim that everything in Jacob's possession was derived from him.

He is acting in a way that will allow him to seem generous in not insisting on keeping it all. Instead, he will allow Jacob to have it.

^{43(con't)} But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne?

Laban has claimed that everything Jacob has now came from his wealth and that he is generous in allowing Jacob to keep it. His reason is that he simply couldn't find it in his heart to deprive his departing family of their well being.

His own daughters told Jacob before they left that Laban had treated them as strangers, but suddenly he claims they are so near and dear to him.

It needs to be remembered that Laban is in the presence of his own family members who he is going to return home with and so he is trying to make himself look good in their eyes and diminish Jacob's standing at the same time.

⁴⁴ Now therefore, come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me.”

The separation is final and Laban realizes that. Jacob isn't coming back and everything is going with him. But just like six years earlier, Laban realized that God was with Jacob. In the past, he asked Jacob to stay and work for him and it has become completely evident that Jacob is blessed.

God has made him fruitful, powerful, and is his protector. If this is so, and because Laban has actually mistreated Jacob time and time again, it is a fear of Laban's that Jacob may determine to come back and take revenge on him for his bad treatment.

Because of this he asks for a covenant between the two. The covenant will be, as he says, a witness between them. If Jacob agrees, it is implied that all past quarrels will be forgotten and anything which is misplaced between them will be overlooked.

Instead, there will be an agreement of peace and good intention which will stand as a testimony between them, especially because it will be in the presence of God and all the witnesses. This covenant is so important that God determined to record it by Moses' hand several hundred years later as a witness forever.

II. God is Witness

⁴⁵ So Jacob took a stone and set it up *as* a pillar.

In the verses which preceded Jacob's departure from the land of Canaan, Jacob set up a stone as a pillar. This was on the night after **he had his dream** concerning the ladder and which involved a promise of Jacob's protection.

Now in the verses which precede his return to Canaan, he sets up another pillar. This is coming after the night in which **Laban had a dream** from God concerning Jacob's protection. The symbolism shouldn't be missed - God promised protection to Jacob and it came, even in the form of a dream to rebuke Laban.

In the same way, God has promised that He will always preserve the people Israel who have descended from Jacob. This preservation of them, whether they deserved it or not, is based on His faithfulness and His ability to keep His word.

People that don't understand this can never realize the immense wonder which has occurred in this group of people throughout the ages. He has taken care of them despite all of the people who have continued to come against them, speak ill of them, and attempt to wipe them out.

God's hand is on them, just as His hand is upon the people of the church during this time of grace and blessing which we call the church age. Jacob's pillar is a testament to God's faithfulness. It also symbolizes Jacob's willingness to agree to Laban's proposed covenant.

⁴⁶ Then Jacob said to his brethren, "Gather stones." And they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there on the heap.

In addition to the pillar, Jacob tells the gathered people to make a heap. The Hebrew word is *gal* and it would have been a circular heap which will serve two purposes. The first is a round table that they can use for dining and the second would be to remain there as an altar and a testimony to the covenant.

A meal is where the details are sorted out in life's problems. It is where foes become friends and where agreements are made. A meal is where we have to stop from our own labors and reflect on whatever situation is at hand.

By taking the time to sit and eat a meal, they will be able to sort out the problems which have arisen from the past and resolve them for the future. A meal is still where we meet with the Lord and proclaim His death until He comes again. It is where we leave aside our past and renew our determination for the future.

⁴⁷ Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed.

This is the very first time that a language other than Hebrew is used in the Bible. Laban's name of this round heap is Jegar Sahadutha which is an Aramaic, not a Hebrew word. In all, there will be about 250 verses which contain Aramaic out of about 31000 verses in the Bible.

Most of the Aramaic will be found in Nehemiah and Daniel, but there will be scattered words and sentences elsewhere. For example, one sentence in the book of Jeremiah suddenly appears in Aramaic, but everything else in the book is Hebrew.

There will even be a few times in the New Testament where the Greek is citing Aramaic, not Hebrew words. What this verse does for us is to show that the language of the land, the same land where Abraham came from, was Aramaic.

It is the language that Rebekah, Jacob's mother, would have spoken. Hebrew then is the language of Canaan which Abraham would have learned and adapted after moving there. Both languages are similar, but they evolved differently over the years.

Jacob calls the mound Galeed which means the same thing in Hebrew as Jegar Sahadutha in Aramaic. They both mean "Heap of Witness." By naming the mound in their own languages, it was a way of confirming that this covenant applied not only to them, but to their posterity after them.

⁴⁸ And Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me this day." Therefore its name was called Galeed,

The great Bible scholar Adam Clarke notes the irregular division of this verse and the next one and he disagrees with it. And so for a little diversion, I'll give you my thoughts on the Bible's verse divisions. From time to time things will be divided in odd places.

One chapter in Acts ends on a semi-colon, and there are other irregularities in how things appear to be arranged or divided in the Bible. The first words compiled in the Bible happened about 3500 years ago when Moses walked up Mount Sinai and received the Torah, the first five books of the Bible - aka Pentateuch.

After that, about 40 people were used of God to write portions of His word. Three languages are used as well. The final book to be received came about 1600 years after the time of Moses when John penned Revelation on the island of Patmos. Other than a few books, all of them were written by Hebrew people.

The Hebrew Bible is arranged differently than the Christian arrangement of the Old Testament. And it wasn't until around AD350 that the books of the New Testament were finally agreed on and arranged.

Two people in the 13th century took the time to divide the Bible into chapters. One was Archbishop Stephen Langton, the other was Cardinal Hugo de Sancto Caro. The divisions Langton made were the ones that continued to be used.

Then in 1551 Robert Stephanus divided the New Testament into individual verses and the divisions as we know them today were first published in the Geneva Bible of 1560.

Although this might seem like an unnecessary history lesson, the structure of the Bible, the arrangement of the books, the chapter divisions, and yes - even the verse divisions as we know them now, show a wisdom which transcends the 3000 years, forty human authors, other people of God, and three languages used in the compiling, structure, and publication of the modern Bible.

When we read these seemingly odd points of division, such as in the verse we're looking at right now, and which Adam Clarke didn't like, we should be careful to not find fault without searching for the patterns which are so beautifully revealed in what is given.

I tell you this because I believe that the divisions, even to the verse divisions, are divinely inspired by God. Patterns which are revealed through studying them shows this to be true. God's hand and His fingerprints are very clearly evident in His word.

Remember this and use care when you search its wonders and mysteries. Anyway, Laban acknowledges that the heap they ate at is a witness between the two parties. The Bible then goes on to say, "Therefore its name is called Galeed."

The meaning isn't evident in English, but the heap is the word *gal* and "witness" is the word *ed*. It comes from the verb 'ud, meaning to return or repeat. Basically, the idea is "to second a motion." Therefore the two are combined to provide the name Galeed.

⁴⁹ also Mizpah, because he said, "May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from another.

Mizpah means "watchtower" and if the name "heap of witness" is implying a covenant between the two, the name Mizpah is implying that the Lord is the One watching over the covenant.

He would be the one to stand as the judge over any transgressions of the agreement, just as we saw with the covenant between Abraham and Abimelech which occurred in their distant past.

Despite the age of these covenants, boundaries have been formed around the land and between the peoples of the surrounding lands. God continues to monitor what man has

long ago forgotten. He stands at the watchtower ensuring the ancient covenants are kept. This book, the Bible, is a testament to His care about such things.

⁵⁰ If you afflict my daughters, or if you take *other* wives besides my daughters, *although* no man is with us—see, God is witness between you and me!”

Laban has determined to set parameters for the protection of his daughters as a part of the covenant. He is not allowing any additions to the family of Jacob in the form of wives. If you remember what Leah and Rachel picture from a previous sermon, then maybe you're starting to see the pattern here.

If not, I'll explain it in a few minutes. Jacob is bound to the two wives and God is a witness concerning this. In this verse he says that "no man is with us." This doesn't mean that they are off alone making this agreement.

Instead it's speaking of the future when there is no one to observe what either is doing. In that time, God will still be watching. I assure you, what this is alluding to is as important as any precept contained in the Bible. God is watching it and will hold offending parties to account.

III. A Sacrifice on the Mountain

⁵¹ Then Laban said to Jacob, “Here is this heap and here is *this* pillar, which I have placed between you and me.

Curiously Laban notes the heap and the pillar as if **he** had set them up. Earlier, it said that it was Jacob who set up the pillar and it was Jacob who directed the heap to be made and yet Laban claims that they were by him. Why would this be in the Bible? Remember who Laban pictures, remember who his daughters picture, and then maybe you'll start to see why he is claiming the right to having placed the heap there. As always, these pictures are being given not as a one for one comparison, but they're designed to show how things will come about in the future.

This account between Jacob and Laban really happened and so God has shown it to us for His reasons. Keep searching what you already know and it will become clear. The heaps and the pillar were erected by Laban's consent although they were directed originally by Jacob.

⁵² This heap *is* a witness, and *this* pillar *is* a witness, that I will not pass beyond this heap to you, and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm.

The heap and pillar witness to the peace between the two parties. There will be harmony between them as long as they don't pass beyond the boundaries which have been set in order to cause harm. If they are breeched, then the account is to be judiciously and righteously settled as the violation of a covenant.

⁵³ The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father judge between us." And Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac.

The Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary notes about this verse, that "it is observable that there was a marked difference in the religious sentiments of the two. Laban spake of the God of Abraham and Nahor, their common ancestors; but Jacob, knowing that idolatry had crept in among that branch of the family, swore by the 'fear of his father Isaac.' They who have one God should have one heart: they who are agreed in religion should endeavor to agree in everything else."

In other words, Laban is still worshipping the God of their fathers. Abraham is Nahor's brother and their father is Terah. The problem with Laban's words is that in all of their lives, idolatry had crept in.

Joshua 24:2 says this: "And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Your fathers, *including* Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, dwelt on the other side of the River in old times; and they served other gods."

Laban is confused about who God is and how to serve Him. Remember, he had household idols and yet he has also referred to the Lord, Jehovah during the covenant.

And so to stave off any hint of idolatry, Jacob swears by the same God, but uses the term "the Fear of his Father Isaac." Isaac is still alive and he walks in fear of his God. The God that he serves isn't the God of the dead, but of the living.

This is the same sentiment that is given by Jesus in Matthew 22. When questioned about a matter concerning the resurrection, Jesus corrected His listeners by saying, "But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, ³² 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

Jacob is doing the same thing to Laban now. God is alive and is to be feared, not placed as a God of the dead along with a household full of idols. His word is everlasting and His eyes watch over it and the covenants it contains for all time. If all of this seems trivial, I can assure you it's not.

⁵⁴ Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his brethren to eat bread. And they ate bread and stayed all night on the mountain.

The confirmation of the agreement is made by a sacrifice on the mountain and the eating of bread. Is this anything you've read elsewhere in the Bible? Are you reading your Bible? Are you trying to take what you know and weave it together right now? If so, I know the Lord is smiling on your efforts.

If not, then why not? Has God put these stories in here so that we can read and forget them? Or are they here to tell us about things that are irrelevant to anything except the life of Jacob and Laban?

Never stop asking the word to speak back to you. It is alive and active - sharper than any two-edged sword and it will awaken your soul if you will let it.

⁵⁵ And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.

It can be inferred from what God said to Laban on the night before he met up with Jacob that he intended to do harm to him and his family. At a minimum, he came with the intent to call down curses on Jacob which would in turn be considered a curse upon the family, but now he kisses his family and blesses them.

Just as God vowed to Abraham and to Isaac and which is passed on to Jacob, we read these words from Genesis 12 -

"I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (v 3)

God turned the curse into a blessing and so we can assume that when Laban departed and went to his place that He was blessed for the blessing he gave.

Now that we've looked at the surface of the story, the historical and cultural aspects of what happened, we need to ask ourselves, "Why is this story here? What is it that God wants us to see? The answer is, as always - Jesus." Here is the Light -

Laban pictures the man of the world, Jacob pictures the Lord. Laban came to Jacob and claimed that the daughters, family, and flock were his. Remember, Leah pictures the law and Rachel pictures grace. We've seen this time and again. The flock is the church, the children are the people Israel.

Laban is making a claim to them based on the fact that they all came from him. And this is true, they did. In the same way, the Law was penned by a man, Moses, even though it was given under inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And what Jeremiah wrote came from Jeremiah and it bears his unique style and wording.

The same is true with the New Testament. When we read Paul, we can tell his style and yet it bears the same unique mark of God. The things Laban said came from him really did, even though they are also Jacob's. The word of God, the church, and the people of Israel all came through man and yet they are God's.

Laban offers to make a covenant and it will stand as a witness. Jacob then sets up a pillar, but later Laban claims he set up the pillar. What is the pillar? It is the same symbolism as the pillar back in chapter 28. The pillar is Christ.

How could both of them have set it up as Laban claims? Christ came from God, but He also came from man. The pillar, Christ, was set up by both. He is the God/Man.

Jacob's brethren "gathered stones" into a heap. The heap is the Bible. Jacob's brethren picture those 40 or so men who received and wrote the Bible. The heap was formed into a circle. The structure of the Bible makes a clear pattern which forms concentric circles and it is based on the Hebrew aleph-bet.

It has a symmetry which is astonishingly beautiful and amazingly precise. It shows intention, precision, and beauty - all represented by the *gal*, heap, and the *ed*, witness - the Galeed. The use of two languages - Hebrew and Aramaic, to name the heap indicates that this witness is meant for all people, Hebrew and gentile alike.

This is the reason why, for the first time in the Bible, a non-Hebrew word is used. This witness will stand as a testament to all people for all time. It is a witness between God and man of the pact of peace made between the once antagonistic parties.

It is Galeed - the heap of witness, but also Mizpah, the watchtower. It is the place where God watches for transgressions of the covenant and it is the place where man can watch for them as well. It proves man's obedience to God and God's faithfulness to man.

And what may have seemed difficult to understand was the prohibition against taking any other wives besides Laban's daughters. What is that speaking of? Again, we need to return to what they symbolize - Leah is the OT law and Rachel is NT grace.

They are the two testaments to God's dealings with man. God has given one word which includes these two testaments. Nothing else can be added to them, such as the book of mormon, the koran, the writings of Ellen G. White, who founded Seventh Day Adventists, or any other writing.

But the prohibition isn't just to add wives, it is also to not harm the two wives Jacob has. This is the standard. Any violation of this will be witnessed by God and acted on. And this is noted again and again in the Bible itself - never add to or take from the words of this book. As it says, "God is witness between you and me."

When a violation of the agreement is made, God does witness. He tells us in His own word. We read this in John 5, when Jesus speaks of the Father -

"If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. 32 There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true.
(v.31, 32)

This is why Laban was able to claim that he placed the heap and the pillar between them. Jesus came through man as did the Bible. They are both the work of God, but human agents were involved in the process of both. The Bible is a physical, tangible word. Not a spiritual concept without form.

Jesus is a physical, tangible man. It says in John, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

The word of God, the Bible, and the Word of God, Jesus, are how man sees, understands, and knows God. Laban said "I will not pass beyond this heap to you." The symbolism is that the Bible is the point which we will not exceed to come to God. In other words, it is our point of knowing Him and nothing else. The Bible tells us of Jesus and Jesus reveals God.

Then he said, "and you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar to me, for harm." Jesus and the Bible are the standard by which we will be judged. Nothing is added to them by God and they are all-sufficient for His dealings with us.

The peace is found in these two. They are where restoration and harmony between God and man are realized. Next Laban invokes the God of Abraham, the God of Nahor, and the God of their father to be the judge. When Jacob swears though, he does it by "the Fear of Isaac."

He did this to confirm that the God Laban was speaking of is the same God, the only God, and the Living God who is to be feared. Even if man misunderstands God, God is God. When we misunderstand Him, it doesn't change who He is.

We discovered in this chapter that all of this has occurred in Gilead. Gilead means the Perpetual Fountain. The fountain is noted in the psalms, Jeremiah, and elsewhere as God. He is the Source and the giver of life. In Psalm 36 it says -

For with You *is* the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light. (9)

God's throne is the Perpetual Fountain symbolized by where the men are meeting, Gilead. And there on the mountain it says that "Jacob offered a sacrifice and called his brethren to eat bread." This is the first time this type of sacrifice is noted in the Bible. It is called *zebakh*. What occurs here is reflected in the 50th Psalm -

"Gather My saints together to Me,
Those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." (V.5)

The sacrifice symbolizes Christ's cross which restores us to God. The bread is His body, it is the Lord's supper which we take to commune together with God. Finally, after the meal it says that in the morning Laban arose, kissed his sons and daughters and blessed them and departed, returning home.

Laban, instead of cursing as he intended to when he came to Jacob, blessed the family. As the promise says, those who bless you, I will bless. Laban, a fallen man, a troubled man, a confused man, blessed and did not curse, and he returned to his place.

Man's dwelling is in the earth and while we walk on this round ball, we too have a choice. Will we accept the terms of the covenant, accept the sacrifice, and eat of the

meal? Will we live in harmony with the Lord in the presence of His witnessed heap, His word, and His pillar which is His son?

The choice is ours to make. It seems that Laban chose wisely and I hope you will as well. This is the last time that Laban is referred to directly in the Bible. He will be mentioned only two more times, both in Genesis 46 and only in reference to the children of Israel born to Bilhah and Zilpah, not as an individual.

To me, he is one of the most curious people we've come across so far. I couldn't get my thoughts about him straight until this last chapter where he is mentioned. In the end, he is a picture of all of us - a fallen son of Adam who needs to get his thoughts about God straight and to get his conduct towards the Lord corrected.

He and his role in these past many sermons have been an enigma to me and he has cost me more sleepless time and more searching than anyone I have yet encountered. And I finally know the reason. He is the person searching the world for that which won't satisfy and who so desperately needs an encounter with the true God.

There on the hill known as the Perpetual Fountain, it appears that Laban made peace with God and accepted both the witness and the watchtower - the word and the Son.

Closing Verse: *The words of the LORD are pure words, Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times. ⁷ You shall keep them, O LORD, You shall preserve them from this generation forever. Psalm 12:6, 7*

Next Week: Genesis 32:1-8 (This is God's Camp) (78th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Witness and the Watchtower

And Laban answered and to Jacob he said,
These daughters are my daughters
These children are my children, this he pled
And this flock is my flock you tended by the waters

All that you see is mine
But what can I do this day to these

My daughters or to their children so fine
Whom they have borne, tell me please
Now therefore come let us make a covenant, you and I
And let it be a witness between us, yes let us try

So Jacob took a stone and as a pillar he set it up
Then Jacob said "Gather stones" to each brother
And they took stones and made a heap where they could sup
And they ate there on the heap with one another

Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed
Laban said "This heap is a witness between you and me indeed."

Therefore its name was called Galeed
Also Mizpah because he said to Jacob his brother
May the Lord watch between us, take heed
When we are absent from one another

If you afflict my daughters I decree
Or if you take other wives besides my daughters too
Although no man is with us, see
God is witness between me and you

Then Laban said to Jacob, "Here is this heap, you see
And here is this pillar with it also
Which I have placed between you and me
This heap is a witness and this pillar is a witness, you know

That I will not pass beyond this heap to you, not even with my arm
And you will not pass beyond this heap and this pillar for harm

The God of Abraham, the God of Nahor too
And the God of their father judge between me and you

And Jacob swore by the Fear of Isaac His father
Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain
And called his brethren to eat bread with one another
And they ate bread and stayed all night at the Perpetual Fountain

And early in the morning Laban arose to go
And kissed his sons and daughters goodbye
And blessed them, then Laban departed, you know
And returned to his place maybe with a tear in his eye

The symbolism we see in this short story
Tells us of God, His word, His Son, His glory

And that we are to hold fast to the word
Not adding to it nor harming it in any way
Because it is our witness from the Lord
And so we should search it's mysteries each and every day

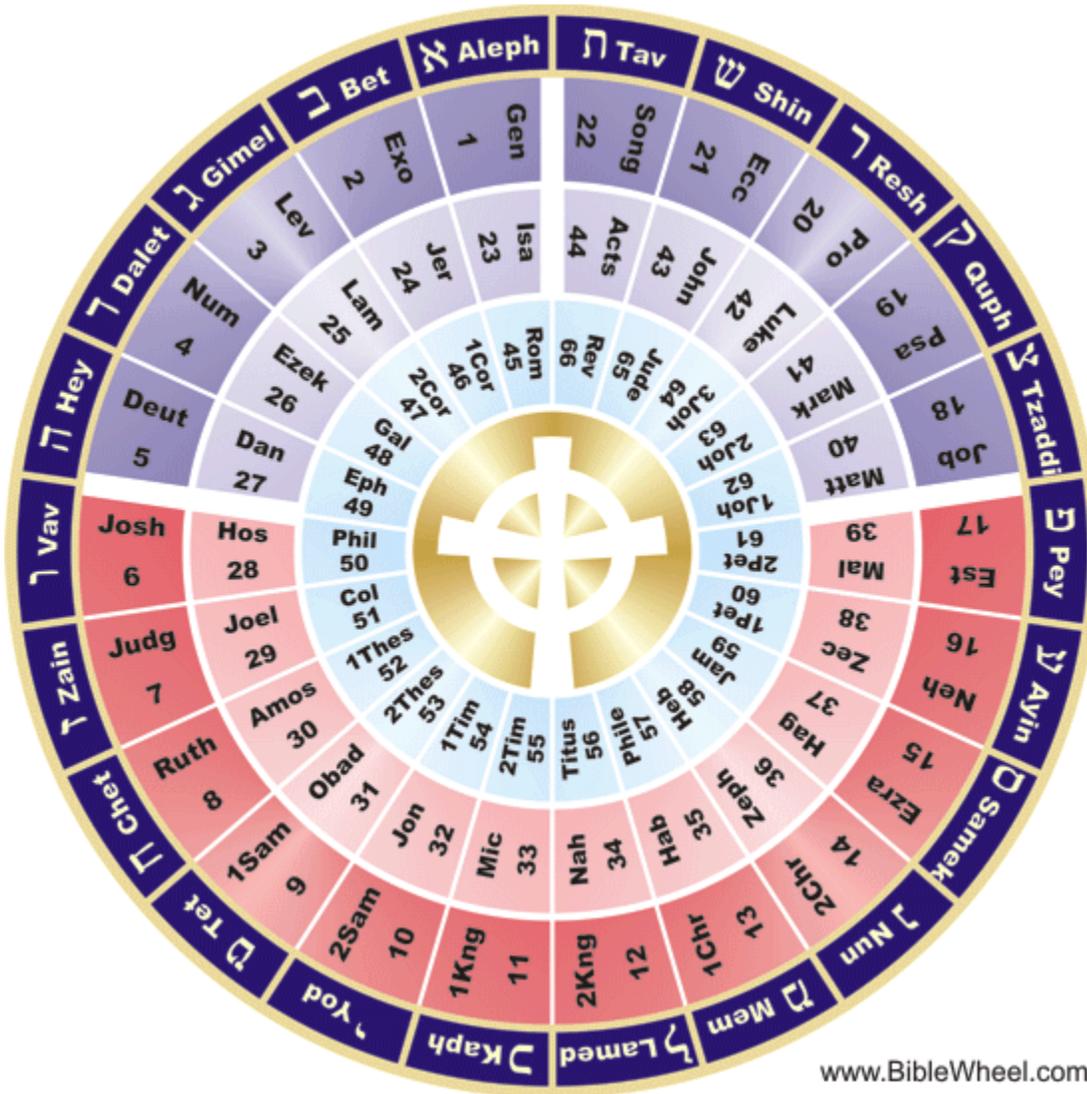
Christ is the pillar and the center of our faith
He is the One whom the Bible does proclaim
And God in His word about Jesus it does saith
And so let us forever and ever exalt His glorious name

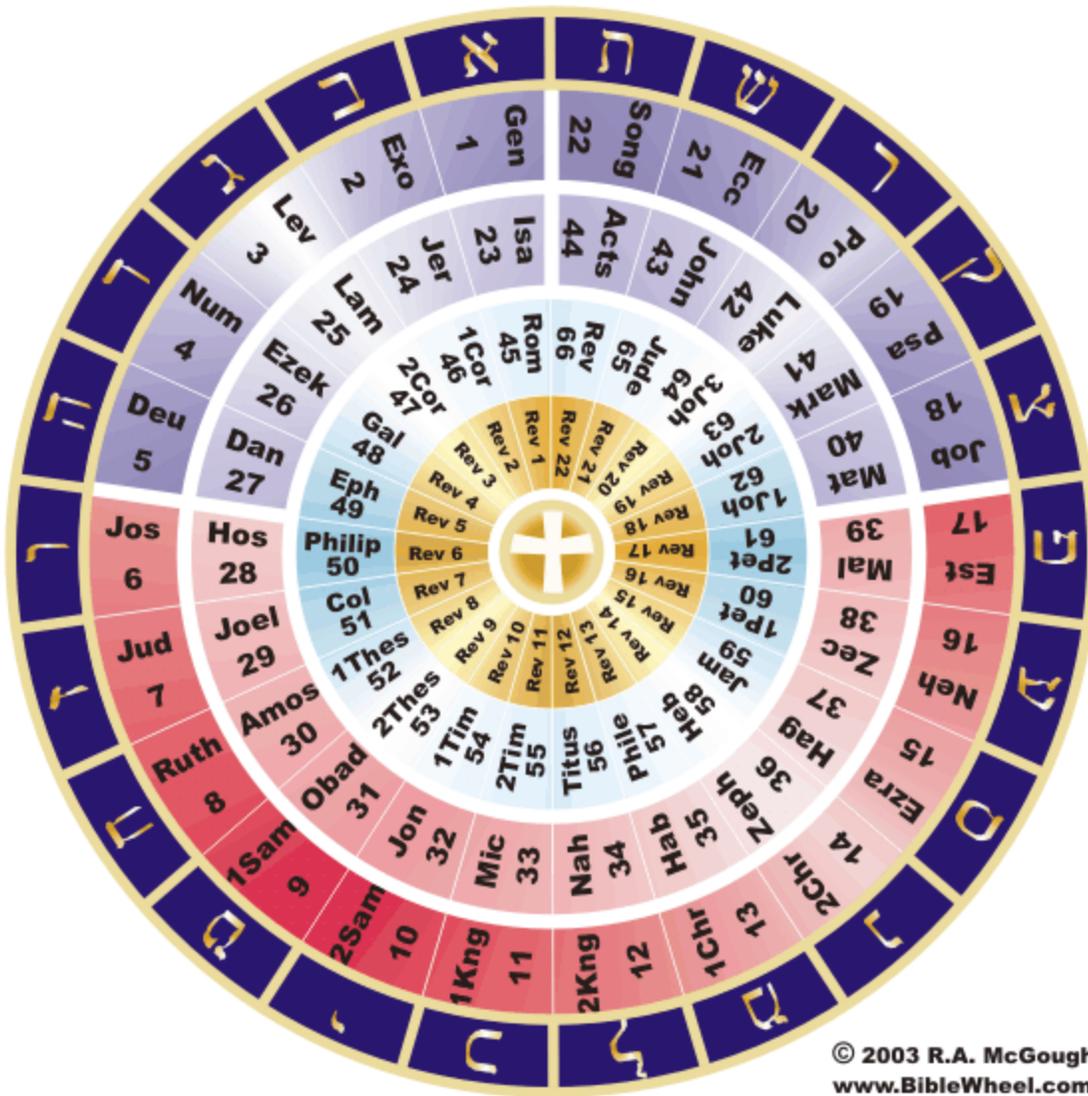
Oh beautiful and majestic awesome Lord
Thank You for Your wondrous, precious word

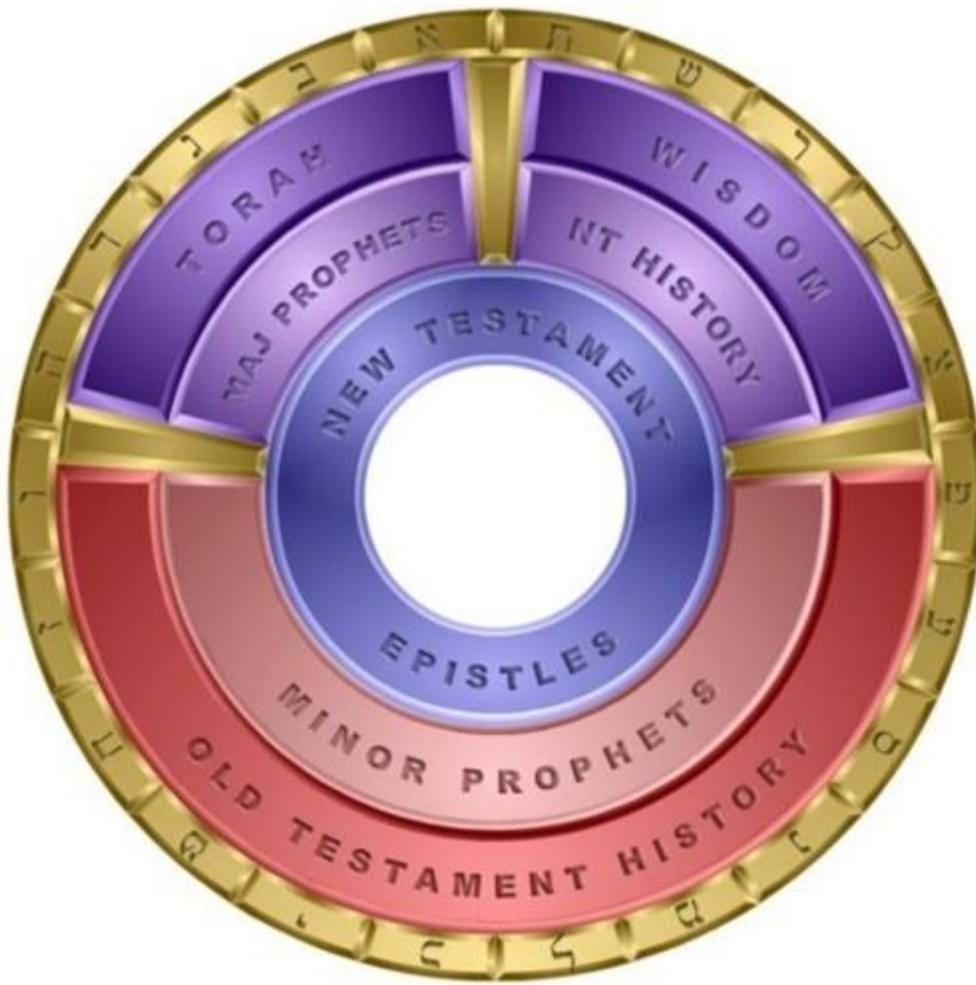
Let us cherish it and never depart from what it does say
Until the time when You return for us some glorious day

Hallelujah and Amen...

BIBLE WHEEL







GENESIS 32:1-8 **(THIS IS GOD'S CAMP)**

Introduction: In today's story, we're going to see a brief overview of the nation of Israel and how it was divided into two separate entities, the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The wisdom of this occurrence was directed by God for the sake of protecting His people as they led to the Messiah.

Text Verse: *Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the Lord brings back the captivity of His people, Let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad. Psalm 14:7*

We'll review the verses today where Jacob's time of exile is ending and he is heading back to the land of promise. On his way there, his time and the events which occurred will be used as a picture of the future of his people and the world which is a threat to them.

We'll also see the divine protection of him and his group which continues to be realized throughout their time as a people. For almost 4000 years since Jacob, they have endured and been kept. God is amazingly faithful to His promises and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Two Camps

¹ So Jacob went on his way, and the angels of God met him.

Laban departed from Jacob and headed back to Padan Aram. Now that he is gone, Jacob continues his journey toward Canaan. While on his way "the angels of God met him." The English word for angels comes from the Greek word *aggelos*.

It signifies a messenger. In Hebrew the word is *malach* which comes from the root word *laakh*. This carries the same concept as the Greek - to send, minister, or employ. And so throughout the Bible we find it used to identify both heavenly beings and humans. Prophets, priests, and spirits have all been described by this word which we translate as "angels." Therefore, it is more suited to the name of the office, rather than the nature of the being. When Jacob left Canaan 20 years earlier, the last thing recorded was his vision of the ladder and the angels ascending and descending on it.

Now as he's reentering the land, he again has a vision of angels. The understanding that we can derive from this sighting is that they have been there all along, but he simply didn't know it. And this is completely in line with a host of other passages in the Bible. One is found in Psalm 34 -

The angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him,
And delivers them. Psalm 34:7

The angels have been with him and kept him and we know it's so because the Lord promised His protection at the time of the vision of the ladder way back in Genesis 28 -

Behold, I *am* with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.
-Genesis 28:15

True to His promise, he has been with Jacob, kept him, and is now returning him to the land of promise. In this, we see the words of Psalm 91:11 perfectly fulfilled -

For He shall give His angels charge over you,
To keep you in all your ways. Psalm 91:11

The Lord gave His angels charge over Jacob and they have certainly kept him in all his ways. Matthew Henry says "When God designs his people for extraordinary trials, he prepares them by extraordinary comforts."

There is a life lesson for us in this idea of angelic protection and it is one we can hold on to. It comes from the New Testament book of Hebrews which says, when speaking of angels -

Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? Hebrews 1:14

If you've ever heard of some miraculous deliverance from an accident or a trial, there is no reason at all to think that it didn't come about as the result of the divine intervention of angels.

God will call us all home in His good timing, but in the interim, His angels are carefully tending to those who will, in fact, inherit salvation.

²When Jacob saw them, he said, "This is God's camp." And he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

Jacob sees the angels, knows he is protected, and declares *mahaneh elohim zeh* - "this is God's camp." What's rather amazing is that before he left Canaan 20 years earlier, when he woke from his sleep after his vision of the ladder he said, "Surely this is God's house." So here are bookends - the house and the camp.

The difference between a house and a camp is that a house is permanent and fixed, but a camp is moveable and changing. The house of God is heaven, His permanent dwelling, but the camp of God is where His presence is displayed and revealed among men. It is where His angels congregate to serve His purposes.

Joel 2:11 shows us the display of God's presence from His camp -

The LORD gives voice before His army,
For His camp is very great;
For strong *is the One* who executes His word.
For the day of the LORD *is* great and very terrible;
Who can endure it?

Now on Jacob's return, he sees the camp of God and says, "This is God's camp." His pronouncements concerning the House of God and the Camp of God are these bookends on his 20 years of exile. There is Bethel at the beginning and Mahanaim at the end.

Like so many other names of places and people which come from a spoken word, Jacob names this place based on what he just said - *mahaneh elohim zeh*. This is God's camp. "**Our camps** (plural) are Mahanaim" - and so it becomes the name of the location.

Mahanaim is mentioned 13 times in the Bible. And for the ever-so short time of two years, it became the capital of Israel at the same time that David was ruling in Hebron. We see this in 2 Samuel 2 -

But Abner the son of Ner, commander of Saul's army, took Ishbosheth the son of Saul and brought him over to Mahanaim; ⁹and he made him king over Gilead, over the Ashurites, over Jezreel, over Ephraim, over Benjamin, and over all Israel.
(8, 9)

To help you remember this place, I want you to understand where the name is derived from. It comes from a verb, *hana*, which means to bend down or settle. The word is used when speaking of evening time in Judges 19:9. A camp settles as the day settles - so you can see the comparison between the two.

A derivative of the word *hana* which will give you a mental picture of this is the word *hanit* which means "spear." When a spear is thrown, it leaves the hand, arcs upward, and then back down, like the shape of a tent or the setting of the sun.

Jacob sees the camp of God and the tents next to his and he calls the place "two camps" or Mahanaim. There is his camp and there is God's camp. Two camps. Again, as we've seen in the past, two signifies that which contrasts and yet that which confirms.

The two testaments contrast and yet they confirm. The second Person of the Trinity has two natures – God and Man. They contrast and yet confirm. The two witnesses of Revelation contrast – one a gentile and one a Hebrew - and yet they confirm.

In this case, there is a contrast between the two camps. One is physical, one is spiritual. One is earthly, one is divine. One is mortal, one is eternal. They contrast and yet they confirm - they are the two camps of God's dealings. They are God's tools in His plan of redemption - here you see the importance of Israel.

This will not be the only time these camps will be seen. Both in the Bible and in recorded history, they are noted. In the Bible, God's angelic protection is seen, for example, in 2 Kings 6 -

¹³ So he said, "Go and see where he *is*, that I may send and get him." And it was told him, saying, "Surely *he is* in Dothan." ¹⁴ Therefore he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. ¹⁵ And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" ¹⁶ So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who *are* with us *are* more than those who *are* with them." ¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. ¹⁸ So when *the Syrians* came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, and said, "Strike this people, I pray, with blindness." And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

Extra-biblically, in AD70 at the destruction of the temple and the exile of the people of Israel, the camp of God's angels departed. The almost surreal account is recorded by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus -

...a few days after that feast, on the one and twentieth day of the month Artemisius, [Jyar,] a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared: I suppose the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals; for, before sun-setting, chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding of cities. Moreover, at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the temple,] as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, "Let us remove hence." The Wars of the Jews, Book 6, Chapter 5:3

Israel rejected the Lord and for their disobedience, the curses of Deuteronomy 28 were, for a second time in their history, executed upon them. The camp of God was removed and the angels departed hence.

However, numerous accounts of Israel's renewed protection have been given in the past 50 years. Here is one of them -

During the Yom Kippur War, a lone Israeli soldier in the Sinai led a captured Egyptian column back to Israeli lines. When the Egyptian officer was asked why he surrendered an entire tank column to a single Israeli soldier, the Egyptian officer replied, "One soldier? There were thousands of them. The officer said the rest of the 'soldiers' had melted away as they approached the Israeli lines. The Israeli soldier reported that he was alone when the Egyptian commander surrendered to him. He didn't see the army of angelic warriors. The Egyptians did. (Angels on the Battlefield)

This account reflects the words found Psalm 68:17 -

The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *Even* thousands of thousands; The Lord is among them *as in* Sinai, in the Holy *Place*.

Once again, God's camp is surrounding His people as they are being prepared for the return of Christ and the establishment of His millennial reign. This is great stuff and it

echoes the words of today's verses. Before we go on, let me give you a little instruction on angels.

I want to do this because people all around the world, and Christians especially it seems, far too often misuse the intent and purpose of angels. As Hebrews noted, angels are ministering spirits of God, not self-determining agents.

In the Bible, they do what they are appointed to do, not what they want to do. Therefore, praying to them or relying on them to help us make decisions is completely misguided. God gives us all manners of help.

He gives us His word to guide us, brains to think with, muscles to work with, food to keep us going, the sun to shine on the day, and angels to minister as He directs.

Our devotion, our attention, and our prayers are to be directed to God alone and never, never toward angels. And to help us understand this, we'll see this very premise in next week's sermon where Jacob makes his great prayer to God. Pay attention to how Jacob acts in those verses and you'll see this.

What he does is right in line with the account I read from 2 Kings 6. The prophet Elisha was protected by a whole host of angels, but he prayed to the Lord, not to the angels. It is the Lord who directs the angels, not Elisha, and not the angels... and not us.

II. The Messenger's Message

³Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

The word used for Jacob's messengers is *malakhim* - angels. In other words, his servants are being sent by his direction just as angels are sent by God's direction. He had sent these guys earlier to go to his brother and notify him that he was coming.

Here in this verse, we return to a concept we saw many sermons ago when Esau was picturing fallen man. Esau's name is linked to the word *asah* - "made." It is the word used to describe the making of man in Genesis 1. Edom is linked to the word Adam. Adam the man was made from the red soil of the earth.

And then God includes the other name of the land, Seir - which means "hairy." If you missed the sermons on Esau, it would be good to go back and watch them. Esau was

born hairy, like a garment, as if he were fully developed at birth. He pictures Adam made as an whole man.

The name of the land, Seir, meaning "hairy." Hair in the Bible denotes awareness. It is tied directly to his Esau's hairy body. It is the Lord who forms us in the womb and as cognizant, sentient beings.

This is all explained in detail in those sermons and we should try to remember these things as we continue on. God is including all of these names and places to show us pictures of what is going on in His plan of redemption.

The messengers, the *malakhim*, that Jacob is sending out picture the prophets of the people of Israel whose words were sent out to the people of the world, pictured by Esau. The people of the world now have a spiritual awareness and are being given the word of the Lord. I hope you're seeing the comparison that's being made.

⁴ And he commanded them, saying, “Speak thus to my lord Esau, ‘Thus your servant Jacob says: “I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now.

The messengers of Jacob are commanded to speak to Esau using the term *adoni*, my lord. Jacob, despite having both the birthright and the blessing is deferring the honor to Esau. He additionally calls himself "your servant." It's the same term Isaac used to explain to Esau that he was made Jacob's servant in chapter 27 -

Then Isaac answered and said to Esau, “Indeed I have made him your master, and all his brethren I have given to him as servants; (37)

Jacob is subordinating himself in order to gain Esau's favor, and hopefully temper anger he may still feel, and to restore a right relationship between them. Jacob probably already has an idea about how Esau feels because he knows where Esau is living, even though it's not the same place as when he left twenty years earlier.

In other words, they probably have from time to time been in communication with each other, but any letters or messages may not tell Jacob the true condition of Esau's heart and so he's being prudent in his dealings with his estranged brother.

What this verse is picturing is as clear as it could be. If Esau is picturing fallen humanity and Jacob is picturing Jesus, then the messengers Jacob sends before his arrival picture the prophets who have proclaimed the message of Jesus' coming.

"Your servant is coming." Time and time again that thought is seen in the Old Testament prophets. One who would be King of Israel, the Messiah of the world, and yet a Servant to the world's people. Isaiah 49 shows us this as clearly as crystal -

“And now the LORD says,
Who formed Me from the womb *to be* His Servant,
To bring Jacob back to Him,
So that Israel is gathered to Him
(For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the LORD,
And My God shall be My strength),
⁶ Indeed He says,
‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob,
And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,
That You should be **My salvation** to the ends of the earth.’” (5, 6)

Finally in this verse, Jacob reminds Esau that he has been gone and has lived with Laban twenty years building a flock which represents the church, but now he is coming home.

The number 20 is 1 short of 21. Twenty one is the three-fold 7. Three is divine completion. Seven is spiritual perfection. So 21 is the number of divine completion of spiritual perfection. As 20 is one less than 21 then it signifies, "divine expectancy."

Some sermons ago it was noted that this 20-year period represents the full time of Israel's waiting to go from their establishment as a people, through the time of the law to the kingdom age. The time of divine spiritual perfection.

Jacob has been established as a people, he has a family who will become the tribes of Israel, he has a flock which is the church, and he is heading back to the land of Canaan to continue this journey of expectancy there. And so he continues...

⁵ I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.””

This verse shows that he obtained great wealth in his time away. He won't be any burden on Esau. But it's also to keep Esau from feeling any threat. Esau would know of the large camp heading back and might think Jacob is coming to wipe him out.

To make sure this doesn't happen, he again calls him "lord." He's showing that despite all he has, he is subjecting himself to Esau. He will be no threat to him. Instead he is looking to find favor in his sight. We can see this thought reflected in Ecclesiastes -

If the spirit of the ruler rises against you,
Do not leave your post;
For conciliation pacifies great offenses. Ecclesiastes 10:4

Matthew Henry notes it this way, "It is no disparagement to those that have the better cause to become petitioners for reconciliation, and to sue for peace as well as right."

III. Esau's Response

⁶Then the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he also is coming to meet you, and four hundred men *are* with him."

It's been 20 years since Jacob left. In that time, Esau has become a prominent chieftain of the people he is with. He had married daughters of the Hittites and also of Ishmael and he had consolidated power among them. This is evident by the large force he's bringing along.

It's debated why he's bringing all the people with him. Some scholars look at him coming to avenge himself on Jacob, others feel he was going to defend himself from Jacob if necessary, and some are sure that he intended to honor Jacob.

Considering that he is bringing 400 people along, it's probably the that he wanted to give Jacob a negative impression, but ultimately to honor him. Otherwise, he would have either told him he was coming on friendly terms, or he would have carried through with unfriendly ones.

No matter what Esau was thinking, Jacob will take it in a negative context as we'll see in the next verse. Regardless of this, the number 400 is given and it is precise. God could have simply stated that Esau came with a large army of his people, but instead the number 400 is given.

Therefore, He wants us to explore why the number is used. The number 400 is the product of two other numbers - 8 and 50. Eight is the Hebrew word *sh'moneh*, which comes from the root *shah'meyn* which means to "make fat" or "cover with fat." This gives the impression of superabundance.

When *shah'meyn* is used as a participle it means "one who abounds in strength." As a noun it is "superabundant fertility" or "oil." So that as a numeral it is the superabundant number.

Fifty is the number of jubilee or deliverance. It points to deliverance and rest following on as the result of the perfect consummation of time. And so 400 is the product of 8 and 50. It is a divinely perfect period resulting in rest.

It is the timeframe used by God to indicate the bondage of the people from Abraham until the Exodus which is recorded in both Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6. All of this might seem like over-analyzing a bunch of Edomites riding across the land on camels, but it's not.

The number 400 here is pointing to the entire time of man's history as a people, from their time in Eden, all the way through the kingdom age, the millennial reign which is still future to us now. As noted, it is a divinely perfect period resulting in rest.

This is how numbers work in the Bible, lesser numbers are used in a consistent manner to come to a greater result. And this is the reason for God's inclusion of this number. Jacob is interacting with Esau just as Jesus interacts with humanity through His plan of redemption in order to bring about this divinely perfect period which will result in rest.

In the next verse we will see one way in which God accomplished that -

⁷ So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies.

Jacob has no idea what Esau's intentions truly are. And with the coming of him with 400 people, he becomes afraid and distressed. If there were nothing to fear, he wouldn't have done this. But it was Jacob who left 20 years earlier at the threats of Esau.

Adam Clarke explains Jacobs feelings this way, "He that has a good conscience has a brazen wall for his defense; for a guilty conscience needs no accuser; sooner or later it will tell the truth, and not only make the man turn pale who has it, but also cause him to tremble even while his guilt is known only to himself and God."

Jacob's conscience tells the truth of his past actions and now they lay open before the future and the meeting with Esau. And his fear and distress is now starting to show a

lack of trust in the very promises of God which he had been given. His worry is the weakness of his soul as he struggles with what lies ahead.

The Geneva Bible says about this verse - "Though he was comforted by the angels, yet the infirmity of the flesh appears."

And so, in order to protect at least a portion of his people Jacob divides them into two separate camps. If one camp is attacked, maybe the other will be safe. This division of Jacob into two camps pictures, or is realized in the division of the people of Israel into the northern and southern kingdoms.

This was an action directed by God in the book of 1 Kings. God, knowing the future, knew that this was the right and appropriate action to preserve His people. However, in the chapters ahead, the camps will reunite under Jacob.

And the same promise was given to Israel. The Bible foretold that there would no longer be a division between the two kingdoms. Guess what, that time is now. There is one united Israel coming to the end of its divinely perfect period.

⁸ And he said, "If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape."

In the camp's division, comes the wisdom of many battlefields. While the enemy is engaged with a portion of the force, the others can either rally to them, flank them, or escape alive. Jacob is so unsure of the outcome that he takes this course of action. (Mention MacArthur's use of this tactic in Korea).

This battle technique is noted several times in the Bible. One great example comes from the time of King David in 2 Samuel 10 -

⁹ When Joab saw that the battle line was against him before and behind, he chose some of Israel's best and put *them* in battle array against the Syrians. ¹⁰ And the rest of the people he put under the command of Abishai his brother, that he might set *them* in battle array against the people of Ammon. ¹¹ Then he said, "If the Syrians are too strong for me, then you shall help me; but if the people of Ammon are too strong for you, then I will come and help you. ¹² Be of good courage, and let us be strong for our people and for the cities of our God. And may the LORD do *what is* good in His sight."

In Jacob dividing his camp, he may actually consider that this is a part of God's promise to keep him alive. All he can do is trust that God is in control of the situation and his actions are the correct course of what to do.

Jacob's dividing of his camp was to avoid the possibility of annihilation. God's division of Israel served this same purpose. When the northern kingdom was destroyed and carried away captive, the southern kingdom remained.

A remnant of all of the tribes of Israel remained in Judah after the exile of the northern kingdom, and Israel as a people has been protected by God since then, despite two exiles. There are no lost tribes of Israel as lots of people claim.

Both testaments of the Bible confirm this. God's camp has faithfully watched over Israel throughout the ages. In just 8 verses, we've seen the wisdom of God reflected in Jacob's decision to divide his camp. One action picturing another as God unfolds His word before us.

Now that Jacob has made the division, He will take the wisest course of action of all and it is where we will turn next week for four verses of instruction that can guide all of us all the days of our own troubled lives.

Before we read our closing verse, please give me a couple minutes to explain the cross of Jesus and its importance to you. All of these stories, all of these pictures in God's word are leading to one ultimate goal - the revealing of Jesus and His work on our behalf.

Closing Verse: *As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: 'For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.' Then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.'*¹⁷ *Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand. Ezekiel 37:16, 17*

Next Week: Genesis 32:9-12 (Jacob's Prayer)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Two Camps

So Jacob went on his way
And the angels of God met him as he went along
When Jacob saw them, he did say
"This is God's camp, look at the angelic throng

And he called the name of that place Mahanaim
Because there were two camps as it would seem

Then Jacob sent messengers before him
To Esau his brother in the land of Seir
The country of Edom, a land somewhat grim
His older brother had left Canaan and moved to there

And he commanded them saying
Speak thus to my lord Esau these words I allow
Thus your servant says, as he was praying
I have dwelt with Laban and stayed there until now

I have oxen, donkeys, and flocks too
And male and female servants as well
And I have sent to tell my lord, yes to you
That I may find favor in your sight and my worries dispel

Then the messengers returned to Jacob saying
We came to your brother Esau alright
And he is also coming to meet where you are staying
And four hundred men are with him so sit tight

So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed
And he divided the people that were with him
And the flocks and the herds and camels at his behest
Into two companies because things looked quite grim
And he said, "If Esau comes to the one company
And attacks it, then the other company which is left
Will escape destruction and flee to safety
And of all that I have I won't be bereft

Just as Jacob separated his company into two
God divided Israel in a similar way
And though the northern tribes were exiled in BC722
Some of all 12 tribes have endured to this day

They are a people set apart by Him for His glory
Both to usher in the Messiah and receive Him again someday
This is the marvel of Israel as told in God's story
And so for this group of people, let us remember to pray

But we in the church are God's people too
United to Him in a glorious way
We are sealed with His Spirit and born anew
Promised eternal life because Jesus our debt did pay

What a glorious God You are to look upon us so
What a wonderful plan You have revealed to us
In Your awesome presence we shall walk forever we know
All because of the giving of Your Son, our Lord Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 32:9-12 (JACOB'S PRAYER)

Introduction: We all have different gifts and different abilities within the Lord's church. Paul tells us some of the different gifts that we're given. We all will excel at one or more of them in varying degrees.

In Romans 12, he tells us this -

For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, ⁵so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; ⁷or ministry, *let us use it* in *our* ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; ⁸he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

Elsewhere, he gives other lists of the gifts we may have and he gives explanations of their use and the conduct we should exercise along with them. One aspect of the Christian life, which is surely a gift and yet not specifically described as one, is the gift of prayer.

Prayer is something everyone can do and something everyone is instructed to do. And there are as many theories on how to pray successfully as there are pastors who preach on what a successful prayer is. There are many model prayers in the Bible, but even model prayers need to be looked at carefully.

The Lord's prayer is the most well known model prayer. "Lord teach us how to pray" His disciples asked, just "as John also taught his disciples." After asking this, we read -

² So He said to them, "When you pray, say:

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as *it is* in heaven.

³ Give us day by day our daily bread.

⁴ And forgive us our sins,

For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one. Luke 11:2-4

Luke quotes Jesus as saying, "When you pray, say..." Some people take this as a command and faithfully repeat the prayer word for word - day after day. But in Matthew Jesus says to pray "in this manner" before giving the Lord's prayer. In other words, use this structure but not necessarily the exact prayer.

Is that it then? Pray a prayer like the Lord's pray and that's all you need? The answer is that the Lord's Prayer was given to the disciples under the Old Covenant. Our sins have been forgiven, past tense, so that part doesn't really apply. "Forgive us our sins" would be redundancy; He already forgave us at the cross.

We can acknowledge our sins, we can ask to be kept from committing more sins, but concerning forgiveness, we should thank Him for having received it once for all time. In all, using the structure of the Lord's prayer makes much more sense than a rote repeating of it.

It glorifies God, it looks for His coming kingdom, it looks for His will and guidance in our lives, it asks for His provision, it reminds us to be merciful as we have received mercy, and it asks for Him to be with us and keep us from temptation, and to deliver us.

An important point about the Lord's prayer is that it is lacking something. For us the Lord's prayer is lacking. Did you know that? It lacks any mention of Jesus. We are told time and time again in the New Testament that we are to have our contact with God through Jesus. Here's an example from Colossians 3:17 -

And whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

As always, understanding the context of a passage, who the addressees are, and under what dispensation it's presented helps us to understand how it applies and how we should apply it. The Lord's prayer is no different.

Paul tells us in Romans 1 that "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, 10 making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you."

It doesn't sound like he was using the format of the Lord's prayer at all. He is praying for the needs of others and himself. He tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5 to "Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray without ceasing, ¹⁸ in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

Paul's idea of prayer is continuous, filled with thanks, and it is overflowing in joy. Praying without ceasing then is a state of life. It goes beyond getting on your knees one or several times a day. Rather it is something that can and should happen at any time and in any situation.

Soldiers pray in the middle of battle. Athletes seem to love to pray before competing. People pray when someone gets sick, when they need money, or when they're in trouble, but for the most part people don't pray without a specific reason.

The key is to know that there is *always* a reason. Paul thought about the Romans, or the Ephesians, or the Thessalonians continuously. And anytime they came to mind, he was in prayer for them. In the same way, we can look up and see a beautiful white cloud and pray a quick prayer of thanks to God.

When we get a green light on a day that we're running late, we can thank the Lord when we zip through it. If an old friend comes to mind out of the blue - say a prayer right then for them. No matter what enters your thoughts, pray about it. If it's a good thought, let it be a prayer of thanks.

If it's an evil thought, let it be a prayer that it will be taken away and not return. If it's something which causes anxiety, then pray that the Lord will relieve it. In any or all of these prayers, ask that the Lord be glorified through the granting of it.

Praying without ceasing is actually having God on your mind at all times. If He is there on your mind, then every thought that goes through your head will include Him; it will be a prayer.

This is the life of the Spirit filled believer - being constantly in tune with the Lord. As I say from time to time, "If you're saved, you have all the Spirit you will ever receive at the moment you accept Jesus. But the Spirit can get more of you." One of the ways this can happen is through that state of constant prayer.

I'd like to give you an example of a good prayer and an example of a bad prayer. The good prayer honors God, is directed through His Son Jesus, and is in line with the prayer

we'll see Jacob give in our verses today. The bad prayer on the other hand dishonors God, is directed to a created being, not God, and is completely out of line with anything ever found acceptable in the Bible.

One of the prayers was given by our first President, George Washington. The other was given by a previous pope of the Roman Catholic Church. Listen to them and see if you can tell which is the good one and which is the bad one -

Oh, eternal and everlasting God, direct my thoughts, words and work. Wash away my sins in the immaculate blood of the lamb and purge my heart by the Holy Spirit. Daily, frame me more and more in the likeness of thy son, Jesus Christ, that living in thy fear, and dying in thy favor, I may in thy appointed time obtain the resurrection of the justified unto eternal life. Bless, O Lord, the whole race of mankind and let the world be filled with the knowledge of thy son, Jesus Christ. George Washington; his prayer book.

Most holy Virgin, who pleased our Lord and became his mother, Virgin Immaculate in your body and soul, in your body and soul, in your faith and love, at this solemn jubilee of the promulgation of the dogma which proclaimed you to the entire world as conceived without sin, look kindly on us unfortunate ones who implore your powerful protection. The infernal serpent, upon whom the primeval curse was laid, continues, alas, to attack and tempt the hapless children of Eve. Ah! Do you, our blessed Mother, our Queen and Advocate, who at the first moment of your conception did crush the enemy's head, do you gather together our prayers and we beseech you (our hearts one with yours) present them before God's throne, that we may never allow ourselves to be caught in the snares laid for us, but that we may reach the portal of salvation, and that the Church and Christian society may once more chant the hymn of deliverance, of victory and of peace. Amen. Pope Pius X, 8 Sept 1903 Mediator, Perfect being, Redeemer, Savior, Avenue to God.

I'm guessing you know which prayer was proper and honoring of God, and which prayer was blasphemous and out of line with any precept found in the Bible. If not, you have a serious defect in both your theology and your prayer life. Let's get that corrected today.

The Bible is filled with model prayers. These are occasions where specific attention to a particular situation is needed. The occasions vary and so the prayers vary, but from each model prayer, we can learn how to form our own special prayers for our own special times of need.

Text Verse: *Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have relieved me in my distress;
Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer. Psalm 4:1*

Today we'll look at just four verses which form the first model prayer given in the Bible. Jacob is about to encounter his brother who previously intended to kill him and he doesn't have either the manpower or resources to defend himself. He is, like Israel has always been, completely at the mercy of the Lord's protection.

He acknowledges this today and shows us how we too can pray in a similar situation. Let's take a look at his words and see why God included them in His own word and what He can therefore teach us, and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Obeying God's Directive

Jacob's prayer is given in four verses and contains several key points. The first is who the prayer is directed to. The second is a reminder of the Lord's direction which is what actually brought him to the need for the prayer.

The third is a deep sense of his unworthiness. The fourth is an acknowledgement of God's favor upon him and what God has done for him. The fifth is his petition for protection. And the sixth is that his plea is based on what has already been promised by God, restating those promises as a reminder that they were made.

⁹Then Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac,

The Lord told Jacob to return to Canaan and Jacob obeyed. He packed up his belongings and headed off. Laban chased after him and finally caught up with him, but the meeting turned out peaceful because, as Laban said,

"...the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Be careful that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.'" 31:29

So the move was at the Lord's direction. Protection after he headed out came from God as well. Jacob is relying on God to continue to accomplish His word and so he begins his prayer as "O God of my father Abraham and God my father Isaac." Jacob prays to God. Not anything or anyone else.

He is bringing to remembrance the covenant which has been passed down two generations already and of which he is the most recent recipient. This God, who transcends time and exists throughout the generations is the same God who was there with his fathers - Abraham and Isaac.

Because the promise given to Abraham is based on the promise given to Adam, it implies that He was there at the very beginning and He is therefore the Creator. The One true God. Because He is, He is sovereign over time and over all that happens within time.

Introducing Abraham and Isaac is for the purpose of bringing to remembrance the covenant established and passed down through them. Notice that Jacob isn't praying to the idols that Rachel brought along, and he's also not praying to the angels that he saw in the camp of God.

Never once in the Bible is prayer allowed to or through anyone but God. Prayers to Mary, to the saints, to angels, or anyone or anything else is not only frowned upon, it is forbidden. Jacob knew this and we should too. A prayer to other than God is a failure to give Him the credit and glory that He alone is due.

^{9 (con't)} **the LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you':**

After calling Him "the God of Abraham and the God of my father Isaac" he addresses Him by name - Lord or Jehovah, and he reminds him of what He told him - "Return to your country and to your family and I will deal well with you." This serves two purposes.

The first is that he has been obedient in leaving and heading home, and secondly, that it was by the Lord's direction. This doesn't mean Jacob thinks the Lord forgot, but that he is calling it to remembrance. "You have spoken, now fulfill your word."

This is exactly what David does in 2 Samuel 7. He calls to remembrance the word of the Lord as a reminder of both His faithfulness and as an assurance that He will fulfill it -

“Now, O LORD God, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, establish *it* forever and do as You have said. (2 Samuel 7:25)

II. Our Unworthiness

The fact that we are here at all testifies to the Lord's mercy. It is we who neglect Him, who sin against Him, and who turn our backs to Him. We are unworthy of the least of His favors and what we deserve He is slow to give in hopes that there will be reconciliation first. 2 Peter 3:9 tells us this is so -

"The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

The promise Peter is speaking about is the Lord's coming. One might wonder why the Lord's coming is being connected by Peter to people perishing. Well, the reason is that when He comes, people will perish. There will only be two categories of people then, just as there are now - the saved and the unsaved.

His coming is delayed because He is merciful. Were He to have come in the year 2000, I would have perished. Were he to have come a bit earlier, others of us would have perished. But His timing is planned and designed so that those who will repent will have the chance.

As tough as this sounds, it's reality. If nothing else clues us in to our own unworthiness, the cross certainly must. If the death of Jesus was necessary for us to live, then how unworthy we truly are.

Jacob was on the other side of the cross and even he could figure this out. It's amazing that so many of us still can't. Without the cross, you too will perish. Choose wisely in how you deal with it.

¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant;

Some people simply know. They can look around the world at all of God's splendid creation and the wisdom it displays and they can tell that God is a great God; a majestic and wise Creator. Jacob, like his fathers, knew this. It's not by chance that the more religious people in the world are those that live closer to nature.

When your hands are in the soil, your mind considers the creation. It's a seemingly self-evident fact because the seasons are so perfectly timed that year after year the animals know when to mate, the crops know when to start coming out of the earth, the sun knows when to head north or south.

The balance and precision of nature invariably leads people to ponder the wisdom of the Creator and the intricacy of His creation. As people move away from the country and congregate in urban areas, they quickly lose these thoughts and God becomes an afterthought in the busy life of the city. Eventually, He's no longer even an afterthought; He is first denied and then despised.

If you've ever looked at a political map of the United States, it's abundantly evident that the liberal, anti-God crowd is generally centered in the urban areas and the more religious and down to earth people are in the more rural areas.

Those who experience God's handiwork appreciate the mercies of the Lord more directly. Every meal is a gift and every breath is a blessing. To the others who ignore Him, they look to what they *think* they deserve - "I have done this." "I have a right to this" "It is all about me."

Jacob has been a man of the land and has been wholly dependent on God for everything he has. He acknowledges it and reminds the Lord of it. It is all about Him and it was undeserved. Adam Clarke gives us his thoughts on this verse -

"A man who sees himself in the light of God will ever feel that he has no good but what he has received, and that he deserves nothing of all that he has."

And Matthew Henry adds in his thoughts as well when he says, "Those are best prepared for the greatest mercies that see themselves unworthy of the least."

¹⁰ con't **for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies.**

When we pray, do we remind God of the comparisons in our life?

"Lord, I started out with a little loan and through your blessing I now have a great company."

"Lord, I was a geeky girl in school and now I have a husband and a child."

"Lord, I could have died in that car accident when I was young and yet here I am all these years later."

It's good to remind the Lord where we were and where we are now. It shows Him that we know where everything we have come from and that He gave it to us. Jacob crossed the Jordan with his staff, meaning he had very little of his own. And now, before

crossing the Jordan again and returning to Canaan, he has become two entire companies of people."

I tell the Lord many times as I speak to Him that if I were to acknowledge every blessing He's given me, I wouldn't have time for anything else. My life has been filled with abundance and it has all been His grace. I can take credit for none of it. How about you?

Tell Him the comparisons, not because He needs to know them. He already does. Tell Him because you are acknowledging to Him that YOU know them.

III. Our Complete Dependence on God

¹¹ Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau;

Time and time again in the Psalms the writers use these same words to the Lord, "Deliver me." David says in Psalm 25 -

Keep my soul, and deliver me;
Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You. Psalm 25:20

David says "let me not be ashamed" not because he feared people would say bad things about him because he was somehow above reproach. If you follow David's life, he couldn't have cared when other people spoke ill of him. Often when they did, others went to defend him and he turned around and stopped them.

He would tell them that if someone was cursing him, well... maybe the Lord told them to do it. That wasn't his concern at all. When David says, "Let me not be ashamed" he gives the reason - "for I put my trust in You." In other words, "My shame would be if someone thought they prevailed over You because of my defeat."

David had the Lord's honor in mind when he looked for his deliverance. It wasn't for the sake of his own skin at all. Jacob isn't worried about himself either. Like David, he is concerned about the Lord's honor. He's told Him as much already by bringing the covenant to mind.

If he and his family is destroyed, then the covenant promises will be made void and it is the Lord's honor that would suffer. This is Jacob's concern; this is Jacob's reminder.

¹¹ (con't) for I fear him, lest he come and attack me *and* the mother with the children.

Jacob feared, David feared, and any person concerned about the integrity of God's promises will fear as well. Not for themselves, but for the honor of the Lord. If Esau attacks Jacob, the women, and the children and he prevails, then what will Esau think?

"I - yes I have prevailed. I have nullified the prophecy given to my mother before I was born, and the blessing given to my brother. I have prevailed over God and man." This is Jacob's concern.

In 2 Chronicles 14, a million man army came against little Judah. An immense and overwhelming force was set to annihilate God's people. King Asa knew that if this were to happen, the promises of the Lord would have been nullified. And so to remind Him of His honor and that He alone had the power to save, we read this account -

⁹ Then Zerah the Ethiopian came out against them with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots, and he came to Mareshah. ¹⁰ So Asa went out against him, and they set the troops in battle array in the Valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. ¹¹ And Asa cried out to the LORD his God, and said, "LORD, *it is* nothing for You to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O LORD our God, for we rest on You, and in Your name we go against this multitude. O LORD, You *are* our God; **do not let man prevail against You!**" ¹² So the LORD struck the Ethiopians before Asa and Judah, and the Ethiopians fled. ¹³ And Asa and the people who *were* with him pursued them to Gerar. So the Ethiopians were overthrown, and they could not recover, for they were broken before the LORD and His army.

In 1948, five major forces came against Israel - Egypt, Jordan, Syrian, Lebanon, and the Palestinians. There were 43.3 million citizens in these countries and 2.2 millions Jews. The total comprised forces were 710,000 soldiers against Israel's 140,000.

The number of actual fighting forces was less, but the numbers were heavily in favor of Israel's enemies. Despite the overwhelming odds, Israel prevailed.

In 1967, Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, along with Iraqi expeditionary forces came into conflict with Israel. They were supported by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Kuwait, Tunisia, Sudan, and the PLO.

The total combined forces coming against Israel were 547,000 with 247,000 deployed along with 957 combat aircraft and 2,504 tanks. Israel had only 50,000 active troops and

210,000 reserves. They possessed 300 combat aircraft and 800 tanks - hugely outmatched.

In just 6 days, Israel had decisively defeated the overwhelming force. They had about 5500 casualties with less than 1000 dead and a loss of 46 aircraft. The Arab forces lost over 49000 killed, wounded, or captured, hundreds of tanks lost, as well as 452 aircraft.

Only six years later, in 1973, came the Yom Kippur war. Even greater numbers engaged in battle and again, Israel prevailed. The overwhelming numbers of her enemy's personnel and equipment which were destroyed was seen for the third time.

There are those Israelis who credit all three victories to the hand of God, and there are those who claim it was Jewish supremacy and/or the incompetence of the enemies for the victories.

The truth of the matter is that God's name and His honor is tied up in this nation and just as at the time of Jacob and King Asa, it is right to remind Him of this during such times of crisis.

IV. Reminding God of His Promises

¹² For You said, 'I will surely treat you well, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'"

Jacob calls to remembrance God's promises and thus is strengthened in the assurances. If God makes these promises and He is in fact God, then He will keep His promises. But a point we shouldn't miss is that the Bible never records this promise being spoken to Jacob.

The only time descendants are likened to the sand of the sea is when Abraham took Isaac to Mount Moriah as a sacrifice. After his trial, the promise was made in Genesis 22-

¹⁵ Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven,
¹⁶ and said: "By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only *son*— ¹⁷ blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of

their enemies. ¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

Because the promise was to Abraham, and because Isaac was the chosen son, and because Jacob is now the son of promise, the promise spoken to Abraham is also as if directly spoken to Jacob. Like bookends on Jacob's short prayer, the line of covenant promises is invoked.

What belongs to Abraham belongs to him as well. God's faithfulness to Abraham ensures God's faithfulness to Jacob. Jacob's prayer is that of a loving father, a caring husband, an assured heir, and a steadfast and devout believer in God's faithfulness.

Our prayer lives are a reflection of our walk with God. But it can't be a general walk with an unknown God, nor can our prayers be honoring of God if they're offered to Buddha, Allah, Mary, or Krishna. There is one God and one Creator and He has revealed Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ. In John 5:23 we read -

"He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."

The Bible makes it clear that He is the one and only Mediator between God and man and so our prayers are to be directed to God through Jesus Christ. They should be honoring of Him, thankful to Him, and show our dependence upon Him. Yes, we are unworthy of the least of His favors, but because of Jesus, we are called His children.

If you've never made a commitment to this wonderful God who sent His Son to die for your sins, please let me take a moment and tell you how you can have a close and personal relationship with Him. It is the only prayer He desires to hear from you until you become His child. After that, He will hear every prayer...

Closing Verse: *Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity;*

For the LORD has heard the voice of my weeping.

⁹ *The LORD has heard my supplication;*

The LORD will receive my prayer.

¹⁰ *Let all my enemies be ashamed and greatly troubled;*

Let them turn back and be ashamed suddenly. Psalm 6:8-10

Next Week: Genesis 32:13-21 - (Preparing for an Encounter) (80th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Deliver Me, I Pray

Then Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham
And God of my father Isaac, yes him too
The Lord who said to me, "Return to your country
And to your family, and I will deal well with you

I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies
And of all the truth which You have to me shown
For I crossed over this Jordan with my staff
And now I have into two companies grown

Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother
From the hand of Esau, for I fear him - yes I do
Lest he come and attack me, yes me and not another
And the mother and the children I pray for them too

For You said, I will treat you well surely
And make your descendants as the sand of the sea
Which cannot be numbered for multitude, truly
This is the promise which has been handed down to me

I know you are attentive to my prayer
And that You are with me through every test and trial
And in my struggles you are right with me there
Through every difficult day and each wearisome mile

I know of your love and tender care for me
Because you sent Your Son Jesus to die in my place
And because of His work and the cross of Calvary
I shall walk in Your presence and my eyes shall see Your face

Thank You, O God for the love you have lavished upon us
Thank You, O God for the gift of your Son - our Savior Jesus

Praises belong to You and to You alone O Glorious God

For the splendid promises in our life as with You we trod

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 32:13-21 **(PREPARING FOR AN ENCOUNTER)**

Introduction: Today we have another interesting portion of the life of Jacob. The nine verses are all a part of the whole story, and yet they are set off and distinct from both the prayer of the previous verses and the encounter with the angel in the following ones. These offsets are important to analyze as offsets.

When they are, we can more easily determine why the details were included and we can get great insights into how God is working in history and through this marvelous unfolding plan.

Text Verse: *“Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,” Says the Lord of hosts.*

-Malachi 3:1

Through the whole Bible, from its earliest verses, we see hints of One who is coming, One who is anticipated, and One who fulfills all of the pictures which are given. Malachi specifically said that He was on His way, but at other times, we need to look carefully behind the lines to see it. This is what we will experience yet again today and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Gift for Esau

¹³ So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother:

After Jacob's great prayer of faith, he stayed in the same place as where he was. Without moving on, he prepares a gift for Esau. Both actions might seem like the great prayer of faith wasn't very great after all. Is Jacob lacking faith?

Instead of moving forward, he lags behind. And in giving a gift, on the surface it does seem as if he's lacking faith that God will protect him. However, and as I've said in the past, if you want something from God, it doesn't in any way stop you from acting.

The old saying, "Help yourself and God will help you" was as true for Jacob as it is for us. There is no lack of faith in his actions. Instead he's being prudent. As Matthew Henry

says, "God answers our prayers by teaching us to order our affairs with discretion. Jacob prayed, and now he's acting with discretion."

Even the book of Proverbs shows this is true -

A man's gift makes room for him,
And brings him before great men. Proverbs 18:16

Jacob isn't at all distrusting God's help or protection. Instead he is using the means God had already blessed him with to bring about His help and protection.

¹⁴ two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams,
¹⁵ thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals.

This is a total of 580 animals described here. The camels alone would have been immensely valuable both for their milk and for the other uses employed in the region.

The ancient writer Pliny says that, "The she-camel gives milk continually, not ceasing till great with young; the milk of which, when mixed with three parts of water, affords the most pleasant and wholesome beverage."

Jacob divides up the animals in proportion to their ability to mate - 1 male for every 10 females of the goats and sheep, 1 bull for every 4 cows, etc. Jacob would know the right proportions as he had been tending flocks all his life.

He puts together a magnificent gift for Esau and will arrange them in a way that when they are presented the intent will be to completely pacify him before they meet. He's not being at all stingy and he knows from the blessings of the last twenty years of work that God will continue to bless him in the future.

¹⁶ Then he delivered *them* to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves."

There are five groups of animals and so there are five droves being made ready to meet Esau prior to him meeting Jacob. These droves are being placed in the hands of his

servants and they are being directed to go prior to the meeting with Jacob and to keep a specific span of distance between the droves.

In other words, they're not to follow too closely to each other but there should be some distance between each. Jacob is setting, in advance, the distances in order to allow Esau to adjust to each and think on each before meeting another drove.

Each is given in a specific order by Jacob to prepare him for the next drove and to let Esau know that Jacob is still ahead. By doing it this way, there would be a prolonging of the time before the meeting. Esau would be expected to stop, observe the gift, and think on its greatness before the next came.

As with all of these stories, the details are given for a specific reason, and as they always do, they point to something which is which centers on the Person of Jesus. Why five droves? What a distance between them? Why these particular animals?

II. The Servants' Message

¹⁷ And he commanded the first one, saying, “When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, ‘To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose *are* these in front of you?’

Jacob gives very explicit instructions concerning what the servants are to say. At the specific interval given by Jacob, Esau will meet the servant and Jacob already knows that he will ask who he is, who his master is, and where he is heading.

He also knows that he will be curious about the flocks as well. There is a distinct message we're to learn and it's not at all unsurprising when we understand who Esau pictures, who Jacob pictures, and who the servants are, and what the flocks represent.

¹⁸ then you shall say, ‘They *are* your servant Jacob’s. It *is* a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also *is* behind us.’”

The servants are instructed very specifically, they are to say that they are "your servant Jacob's." Said differently, Jacob is placing himself as a servant of Esau and the droves which are being conducted are a present to Esau. They are also instructed to tell Esau that Jacob is behind them.

Esau is eventually going to meet up with him. There is a date of destiny where the two boys, separated so long ago, will again come face to face. Before they do, Jacob is preparing Esau for the meeting; it is a preparation where two past rivals will hopefully attain reconciliation. Are you seeing the pattern yet?

III. Jacob is Behind Us

¹⁹ So he commanded the second, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying, "In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him;

When reading this verse, it's not to be thought that there were only three droves of animals. Rather, just as the first, the second, and the third were instructed, so were all five of the droves. Jacob is being specific with each and every herdsman.

They are given words to speak and it is those words only that they are to convey to Esau. The manner of the words is fixed and unchanging even if the herdsman comes at a different time, they have a unified message to pass on. Again, think about who is being pictured and why God is including such minute detail.

We'll see the reason why in a few minutes. God is giving these seemingly unnecessary details because they are, in fact, necessary, and they're telling us what is coming later in history.

²⁰ and also say, 'Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us.'"

Once again, the word of instruction is given, "Behold, your servant Jacob is behind us. He is there. He is waiting. You will meet him soon enough. Esau, your brother is there and we are here to tell you about him and give you these gifts along the way."

The repetition here is to make sure that they will be extremely careful to speak exactly as they are told. Jacob is ahead - it is a point of immense importance. The gifts would have no significance without the guarantee of a meeting. It would be like giving a wedding ring with no intention getting married.

I hope you're thinking about what's being pictured here. Esau would have been slighted to have all the gifts without an appearance to back them up. How unworthy he would feel without the face to face meeting.

²⁰ (con't) **For he said, "I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me."**

And we're told the reason for the instruction that he's giving. There is going to be a meeting and Jacob is preparing Esau for it so when they actually meet, as he says, *ulai yissa phanai* "perhaps he will accept me." (3:58)

It's a term that some literally translate as "I will expiate his face." In other words, "Any wrath or disagreement will be removed and there will be happiness between us once again." The estranged brother will perhaps accept him. Is this sounding familiar yet?

²¹ **So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.**

After sending off the gifts of the droves, Jacob stayed behind and, as it says "lodged that night in the camp." The question is, which camp? It's important to know which because there were the two camps mentioned before. God's camp and his camp.

In the coming verses it says that he sent his family across the river and he stayed on the other side. Therefore, he is staying in the area of Mahanaim - God's camp. This will be apparent from the meeting with the Angel of the Lord that he has in the next sermon.

The distinction is important because the five droves are being met while Jacob is in God's camp. The details today have been given to us to show us about the coming of Jesus and the different stages which precede His coming.

IV. The Five Gifts Explained

Let me share with you the wonderful details. The first thing to remember is that each of these stories, although all connected, are individual stories. They are select instances of people's lives which are taken to show different things... coming things. That's why the divisions are so logical as you read the Bible.

Each division, although a portion of a continuous, true account, is still a select piece of the life of a person which is meant to show a particular truth. Sometimes in one portion the person, be it Abraham, or Jacob, or whoever is a picture of God the Father. In the next story the same person may picture the people of Israel.

In today's story, we are seeing a pattern we've seen before. Esau represents Adam and his seed, and Jacob is picturing Christ. The nine verses we've looked at have logically been broken down into three thoughts I gave you: A Gift for Esau; The Servants' Message; and Jacob is Behind Us.

What we are seeing here is the coming meeting between the Lord Jesus (the incarnation) and man. Jacob is going to the land of Canaan after a long time away. Jesus, likewise, is returning after a long period. It was He who walked in the Garden of Eden with Adam, but that ended when Adam disobeyed.

From that time, He dwelt apart from man. Esau, who pictures Adam has been living in the land of Seir. I've explained it in several sermons, but Seir means "hairy." Hair in the Bible indicates an awareness. Man is an aware being, he is sentient, and he is conscious of his fallen state.

The first section today dealt with gifts for Esau. This comprised verses 13 through 16.

¹³ So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother: ¹⁴ two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, ¹⁵ thirty milk camels with their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten foals. ¹⁶ Then he delivered *them* to the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass over before me, and put some distance between successive droves."

The Lord has given certain gifts to man to help him along the path toward the our anticipated meeting with Jesus. They are called dispensations. He has worked with man in a progressive way, slowly unfolding his promised plan of redemption.

The five groups of animals look to the five dispensations of God's dealings with us before the coming Christ. These dispensations have come at specifically spaced intervals, just as Jacob sent out the gifts in specifically timed intervals.

The first dispensation was Innocence. Man lived in the Garden of Eden, even if it was for a short time. While there, he disobeyed God and was cast out as judgment. But before this, the first promise came - it was the first gift of grace; a promise that One would come to right the relationship. It is found in Genesis 3:15-

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel."

Esau meets his first flock; Adam met his first gift of grace - a promise of victory over the serpent. This dispensation is reflected in Romans 5:12 - "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned..."

The second dispensation is that of *Conscience*. Man lived in the world and his law was through his instilled conscience. If we could live according to this God-instilled premise, then all would be well, but man once again fell short of this standard.

Before the destruction of the flood which came as the second judgment, the second gift of grace was seen. It is found in Genesis 7:8, "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Esau meets his second flock; Adam meets his second gift of grace. The continuation of humanity through the Flood.

This dispensation, Conscience, is reflected in Romans 1:18, 19 -

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them."

The third dispensation is that of *Government*. Man was given ruling authority over all the earth and was given a covenant in connection with this. If man could properly govern his affairs under God's overarching authority, then he would be granted this right as a united group of people.

However, man cast off God's rule and intended to rule in his own right without God's overarching authority. Because of this, judgment was again pronounced on man. Their language was confused and man was scattered across the world.

Before the judgment of the confusion of languages, came the third gift of grace. It is found in Genesis 9 -

¹³ "I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. ¹⁴ It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; ¹⁵ and I will remember My covenant which *is* between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh."

Esau meets his third flock; Adam meets his third gift of grace. God promises humanity's continuance. This dispensation, Government, is reflected in Romans 13:1 - "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God."

The fourth dispensation is that of *Promise*. From one particular man and his chosen descendants would come a blessing upon the world. This dispensation is found as given to Abraham in Genesis 12 and 13, to Isaac in Genesis 26, and to Jacob in Genesis 28.

During this dispensation, the chosen line was expected to be faithful to God and trust in His word and His assurances. Those who interacted with them were to treat them in a manner which realized their unique role leading to the coming Redeemer.

When those who interacted with them failed to acknowledge this, it would lead to judgment on them. This is seen time and time again as people failed to treat God's chosen line in a manner conducive to the promise.

The ultimate act of this judgment is found in the plagues upon Egypt who had mistreated His people. Despite their mistreatment and their bondage, the fourth gift of the promise was given. It can be found in Genesis 15:13, 14 -

"Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions."

Esau meets his fourth flock; Adam meets his fourth gift of grace. God promises protection of the covenant people leading to the Messiah. This dispensation, Promise, is reflected many times in the Bible. In the New Testament, it is seen in Romans 11:29 -

"For the gifts and the calling of God *are* irrevocable."

The fifth dispensation is that of *Law*. During this period, man was given God's law, by which, as it states, "You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I *am* the LORD." Leviticus 18:5

In this law there were promised blessings for obedience and promised curses for disobedience. The curses included exile from the land of promise, but as God's people,

even in punishment, He promised to keep them as a sign to the people of the world to demonstrate His holiness and covenant care.

Despite their failure to obey, and fail they did, God once again provided the grace necessary for the people. He did it in several ways. One was by providing a Day of Atonement for His people. But even that wasn't enough and judgment came in the form of exile from their homeland.

Even though this judgment came, so came another form of grace. God's fifth gift of grace came prior to the judgment, just as each has. It was the promise of return from exile -

"Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, ² and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, ³ that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you. ⁴ If *any* of you are driven out to the farthest *parts* under heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. ⁵ Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers." Deuteronomy 30:1-5

Esau meets his fifth flock; Adam meets his fifth gift of grace. This dispensation, Law, is reflected in Romans 3:19-20 - "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

In the second portion of our verses today came the servants' message. This comprised verses 17 and 18.

¹⁷ And he commanded the first one, saying, "When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose *are* these in front of you?' ¹⁸ then you shall say, 'They *are* your servant Jacob's. It *is* a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also *is* behind us.'"

Jacob gave the words to the servants and so they didn't speak on their own, but only what they were told. In the same way, during each dispensation, the Lord spoke directly through His servants the prophets. They are those who have testified to His word.

A prophet's words are given by God in order to carry His message to Adam's line, just as these servants were given a message by Jacob to Esau. The call of the prophet is something that occurs in order to ensure His message is as He intends. Let me give you an example of the prophets' call. In Jeremiah 1 we read this -

⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ⁵ “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.” ⁶ Then said I: “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I cannot speak, for I *am* a youth.” ⁷ But the LORD said to me: “Do not say, ‘I *am* a youth,’ For you shall go to all to whom I send you, And whatever I command you, you shall speak. ⁸ Do not be afraid of their faces, For I *am* with you to deliver you,” says the LORD.

These prophets have been directed to speak to Adam's line about the gifts and how to handle them. But they have also been directed to speak something more, something wonderful. The One who is coming will be a Servant, just as Jacob says he is Esau's servant.

In the third portion of our verses today came the thought "Jacob is Behind Us." This comprised verse 19-21.

¹⁹ So he commanded the second, the third, and all who followed the droves, saying, “In this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; ²⁰ and also say, ‘Behold, your servant Jacob *is* behind us.’” For he said, “I will appease him with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.” ²¹ So the present went on over before him, but he himself lodged that night in the camp.

God's prophets not only spoke of righteousness and judgment, but they also told of the coming Savior; they told of Jesus. "Yes, here are your gifts, but Jacob is behind us." "Yes, here is how you are to live, but Jesus is coming."

In the Garden of Eden, right at the beginning, the Lord Himself promised, "He is coming." In the second dispensation, Enoch said, "He is coming." In the third, Noah - a preacher of righteousness would have continued the proclamation, "He is coming."

Just as Jacob assured Esau through each gift, Jesus assures Adam's line through each dispensation. He is behind us and He is coming. Jesus Himself, after the resurrection showed that all the prophets, from the very beginning, spoke of His coming and His glory -

Then He said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?" ²⁷ And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

-Luke 24:25-27

This is the marvel of these nine short verses today. They are a promise of a future meeting between Jacob and Esau, between Jesus and Adam. They are verses of hope and of restoration. In these verses were five sets of gifts. They were gifts of grace and reconciliation, and each points to a particular dispensation as well.

The order in which the gifts were presented wasn't given, but I believe the order is as follows. The dispensation of *Innocence* is seen in the lambs. The lamb is an animal of innocence. At the Passover, the innocent lamb died in place of the firstborn, picturing Christ's innocent death -

"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth." Isaiah 53:7

The dispensation of *Conscience* is seen in the goats. The goat is a hairy animal and, as I noted, hair in the Bible denotes awareness. The dispensation of Conscience was the time of awareness which followed the time of innocence.

The third dispensation, *Government*, is seen in the donkey. The donkey is a picture of ruling status. The judges and leaders are noted as riding on donkeys numerous times in the Old Testament. And the same is spoken about Jesus, in both testaments, as riding on a donkey in His kingly, ruling role.

The fourth dispensation is *Promise* and is reflected by the camels. The term for milk-camel is *meniqtot*, a word derived from *yanaq*, meaning "to suckle." The term is used by Sarah at the time of Isaac's birth, the son of promise.

The very notion of suckling is one of promise and anticipation. Isaiah in particular uses this term numerous times in anticipation of the Lord's promises to His people.

The last dispensation before Jesus' coming was *Law*. This is seen in the cows and bulls. Many animals were a part of the sacrificial system of the law, but the bull in particular was used as the substitute for the sins of the high priest on the Day of Atonement.

The high priest is the administrator of the law and he prefigures Jesus as our Mediator. He is prefigured by this particular gift to Esau. As you can see, all of this has been pictured in these nine verses today. Five droves and five dispensations. The gifts were presented to pacify and bring about eventual reconciliation.

The fulfillment of that reconciliation is, of course, found in Jesus - the One whom all of these things are pointing forward to.

Closing Verse: *Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19*

Next Week: Genesis 32:22-32 (He Struggles With God and Man) (81st Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Five Gifts of Grace

So he lodged there that same night
And took what came to his hand
As a present for Esau his brother alright
And the present was quite grand

Two hundred female goats and twenty male goats also
Two hundred ewes and twenty rams he chose
Thirty milk camels with their colts were selected to go
And forty cows and ten bulls he counted nose by nose

Also twenty female donkeys he selected
And ten foals for them he detected

Then he delivered them to the servants' hand
Every drove by itself one at a time he sent
And he said to his servants so they would understand
"Pass ahead putting distance between the droves, and so they went

And he commanded, saying to the first one
"When Esau my brother meets you and asks concerning who
To whom do you belong, and where are you going my son?
Whose are these in front of you?

Then here is what you shall say
"To your servant Jacob they belong
It is a present sent to my lord Esau this day
And he also is behind us, soon he will come along

So he commanded the second and the third
And all who followed the droves saying
In this manner you shall speak to Esau, with this word
That your servant Jacob is behind us, at the camp he is staying

For he said, "I will appease him with this grace
With the present that goes before me
And afterward I will see his face
Perhaps he will accept me favorably

So the present went on before like a lamp
But he himself lodged that night in the camp

Jesus too lodged in God's camp as the gifts were given
But eventually He appeared so we could move from death to livin'

Each of the dispensations was meant to teach us a lesson
Of how we needed God's direct hand of grace
Without His word and Jesus, we'd all be a guessin'
As to how to live rightly and to again see His face

But Jesus did come during the fifth dispensation
And we behold His glory through the word He has decreed
Now we can impart to all the wonderful declaration

That through His cross we are reconciled indeed

Thank You O our glorious and splendid Creator
Receive praises and honor from each of us
For You have become our Vindicator
Through the work of Your Son, our Lord Jesus

Marvelous and beautiful are all of Your ways
And so we shall exalt and praise You all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 32:22-32 (HE STRUGGLES WITH GOD AND MAN)

Introduction: Normally I type a sermon and then later type the introduction, making it longer or shorter, as necessary in order to reflect what we will talk about, how it may apply to us, what may be hinted at in the coming verses, or whatever.

I also do this so that the introduction will bring us to a sermon consistent in length to other sermons. Today though I first typed this introduction because I didn't care how long or short the sermon turned out to be. I've waited for 80 sermons to get to where we are.

And before I started typing, I must have said "Thank You Lord" out loud 20 times. I take sermon typing seriously and it is the most important part of my week, not giving the sermon, but typing it. I am preparing an analysis of God's word. Before typing this one, I actually cried. Oh God, how could you allow me to present your word to others?

Today's passage is, regardless of how the rest of the sermon actually comes out, one of the most important passages in the entire Bible to me. Though we have seen Jacob grow into a family, today is the true establishment of Israel. It is a story which will continue on in joy, beauty, kingship, amazement, and glory for a people who strive with God.

It will also continue on in disobedience, punishment, woe, wrath, consuming anger, and unbelievable carnage for a people who in a different way strive with God. When we hear the name Israel, we are hearing a name which is closer than any other to the mystery of the apple of God's eye, the joy of His heart, and the focus of His eternal covenant.

Text Verse: שְׁמַע, יִשְׂרָאֵל: יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ, יְהוָה אֶחָד. - *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!"*⁵ *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Deuteronomy 6:4, 5*

When asked what was the greatest of all the commandments, Jesus turned to this verse and repeated it to the people of Israel. This is your command and this is your warning. You can strive with this God and be in His favor or you can strive with this God and be the object of His wrath.

The meaning of the name Israel is a double entendre. He strives with God - either on His behalf or against His will, but either way Israel strives with God. This people, beloved of God and with whom continues the everlasting covenant promises, are the people who ushered in the Messiah, and to whom this Messiah will return again someday *when* they call on Him as Lord.

This is the people Israel and today we will see the renaming of Jacob to reflect the coming struggles with God. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Alone in a Struggle With God

²² And he arose that night and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven sons, and crossed over the ford of Jabbok.

The context here demands that we remember who these people picture. There are two wives - Rachel and Leah. Leah pictures the law, Rachel pictures grace. The two female servants are Bilhah and Zilpah who picture the two exiles of the people of Israel.

The children picture the people of Israel as a collective whole. Jacob is taking all of them in the night and preparing them for what lay ahead by having them cross over the ford of the river Jabbok. Jabbok means "pouring out."

Jabbok is named here because it shows what will come to this group of people. And it will be just like the name Israel, a double entendre. There will be pouring out of God's favor upon them - love, grace, mercy and the like - even the Holy Spirit. But there will also be a pouring out of God's wrath upon them.

In the years ahead for this group of people, God will deal with them in a singular and unique way. It will be a relationship distinct from all other peoples on earth and it will show to the world God's immense love and His covenant keeping faithfulness.

²³ He took them, sent them over the brook, and sent over what he had.

The Hebrew here says he caused them to pass over. In other words, he is sending the family across the Jabbok while he will remain on this side alone. He is preparing himself for what may be the greatest struggle of his life and he will do it in a way which will allow him to seek God's face uninterrupted by others.

²⁴ Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day.

Alone on the north bank of the river, a Man is suddenly introduced into the story without an introduction of the Man. Jacob is going to be given a new experience, one which will prefigure the nation who comes from him - Israel. It will also show us about our relationship with God as well.

In order to bring about such an event in any of us, God will begin with our senses. We are physical beings and so He will use our physical experiences. But we are also rational beings and so He will come to us through our memories, our reason, our logic.

And finally we are spiritual beings and so He will come to us by communing with us on a spiritual level. This is how He meets with Jacob; this is how He deals with Israel; and this is how He deals with us. So who is this Man? There can only be one answer. We will see that He is God, and if God be a Man then the Man is Jesus.

Regardless of how you perceive Him at this point in human history, it is none-the-less Jesus. He walked with Adam in the Garden. He closed the door of Noah's Ark. He walked up to Abraham with two angels and had a meal with him. All these were given the title of Jehovah. If Jehovah be a man, then He is Jesus.

He appeared inside Lot's house before the destruction of Sodom and took him by the hand as it began. Time and time again, He has appeared visibly and physically to His chosen line. Entering His own history and shaping it so that it will lead directly to Him. I am unashamedly of the opinion that the term "pre-incarnate Christ" is a logical contradiction.

Either it is Christ Jesus or it isn't. And so, as I speak to you, I assert the unusual belief that this is the risen and eternal Christ who had already gone to Calvary's cross and who ascended as the Master of time and space. *How... how* He can appear in His own genealogy is a mystery, but *that* He did is a truth I can't deny.

Now He meets Jacob. Jacob has been a man of self-determination. He bartered with his brother - the birthright for a bowl of soup, and he conspired with his mother to obtain his blessing. He set up a pillar and made a vow to God before leaving Canaan and then obtained two wives, a family, and wealth from his father-in-law.

Now on his return, he has taken wise measures to ensure his brother will receive him favorably. All the time God has been with him, but he hasn't been fully dependent on Him in the truest sense.

In wrestling with this Man, Jacob will learn what it means to be reliant and dependent on God in a new way. Again, and don't forget this fact, this struggle of Jacob is reflected in Israel's struggle with God, and it also reflects our struggle with Him too.

If we lose sight of this, then the story becomes a mere curiosity in a book of much curiosity. This cosmic wrestling match which occurred a bit less than 4000 years ago was remembered by Hosea when he reminded Israel of their responsibilities to God -

“The LORD also *brings* a charge against Judah, And will punish Jacob according to his ways; According to his deeds He will recompense him. ³ He took his brother by the heel in the womb, And in his strength he struggled with God. ⁴ Yes, he struggled with the Angel and prevailed; He wept, and sought favor from Him. He found Him *in* Bethel, And there He spoke to us—⁵ That is, the LORD God of hosts. The LORD *is* His memorable name. ⁶ So you, by *the help of your God*, return; Observe mercy and justice, And wait on your God continually. Hosea 12:2-6

The struggle at night is a struggle all of us need to remember and reflect on all our days as we live in God's presence.

²⁵ Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him,

The match continues throughout the night and it is a well balanced match; neither getting the upper hand upon the other. One would wonder why, if this is the Lord, He couldn't defeat Jacob. Well, Jacob was a man of strength even before his birth. In the womb, Genesis 25:22 tells us he struggled with his brother.

And he had been struggling with man and nature ever since. His life was one of meeting and defeating adversaries. Whether they be an antagonistic brother or a large rock over the mouth of a well. He was exceptionally capable as a physical being.

^{25(con't)} He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him.

The Man - Jehovah, the LORD - seeing he can't prevail over Jacob, uses His knowledge of the human form, which He created, to complete His spiritual development of Jacob

through a physical reality. He touches him right at the socket of his hip in order to reduce him to a state of complete dependence.

Interestingly, and something that would be a mistake to miss, is a connection between the name of the river Jabbok, in Hebrew *Yabbok*, and the act of wrestling which has been mentioned twice. The word for "wrestle" in Hebrew is *abag*. The placement of the match and the match itself are being tied together.

The term *abag* is one which indicates dust. The idea is that when one wrestles, dust is raised into the air. Everything is being tied together in this struggle to show us the work of Christ which results from the struggles of Israel from whom Christ came.

There is a struggle in each person which is reflected right here. There is the dust which reflects man. Man was raised from the dust of the earth to become a living being. But man fell. He is still of the dust but lacking true life. Jacob's struggle are man's struggles.

The struggle of Jacob and Esau in Rebekah's womb is the struggle of God and man. Jesus came after Adam, but He prevailed over Adam. This was pictured by Jacob coming out of the womb after Esau, but grabbing his brother by the heel as he came.

Jacob has the birthright and the blessing; Jacob has the promise and the vision; Jacob has the wives who picture the law and grace. He has the sons which each tell a story of the coming Christ. He has the flock picturing the Church. We've seen that all of this and so much more is looking to the coming Christ - all of it.

And now Jacob, a man of the dust is struggling with God by a river call the Pouring Out. Suddenly his hip is wrenched. In the Song of Solomon, chapter 5, we read these words describing Solomon -

His legs *are* pillars of marble Set on bases of fine gold. (15)

The very pillar of man's strength which are his legs have now lost their ability to hold Jacob up. He can no longer rely on them as he once did. He can no longer prevail in this struggle as a wrestler relying on His own strength. With a single touch by the Man of mystery, he is utterly dependent on Him to stand.

This One has become his only hope. Are any of you seeing Israel in this? Are any of you seeing yourself in this? There is an utter dependence on this Man by the man of the dust. The life of Jacob, the moment in this cosmic wrestling match, the span of Israel,

and the span of your own existence turns on this one definitive act of God - a touch in your mortal weak spot.

There is a time when we no longer can rely on ourselves, but must rely wholly on Another. Until that comes, we remain of the dust. But when it is realized, the pouring out, represented by the Jabbok river, changes us from an earthly existence to a heavenly promise.

The name of the river came from the match between these men. In the same way, the pouring forth is a result of the man's struggle with God and it will come no other way. This pouring forth began in Israel after the resurrection, and it happens often in many individuals each day as **their** weakness is traded for **His** strength.

The Geneva Bible says, "For God assails his with the one hand, and upholds them with the other."

II. The Day Breaks

²⁶ And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks."

Jacob wrestled with the Man who created him and he overpowered Him. Now this Man pleads for His leave. "The day is breaking, let Me go." This is no doubt a picture of the true Israel, Jesus, who went to the grave but received His leave from it as the day broke. And unless the Spirit returns to you, oh man of dust, you will remain in the eternal grave.

The man of the dust, which is His body as it lay in the grave, was to depart from that place. The symbolism of the battle in the dust between Jacob and God is beautifully realized in Jesus' resurrection. The return of the Spirit into the body of the Man.

It is seen in Jesus as our Lord, it is seen in each of us when we acknowledge that fact, and it will be seen in Israel when they call on Him as a nation. All of this is tied up in this mysterious match. In Zechariah 12, we see the final pouring out on Israel pictured by this struggle between God and man. Something future to us now -

¹⁰ "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only *son*, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. Zechariah 12:10

This pouring out on Israel hasn't happened yet, but it is coming. All will be as it should and the heavenly drama will be seen in the people Israel who have struggled with God for so very long.

²⁶ (con't) **But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"**

It is completely evident to Jacob that this is a divine being. He knows this for a multitude of reasons. God promised to be with him and keep him when he had his vision in Bethel. He saw God's camp, Mahanaim, next to his camp there by the river.

Even the conduct of the match itself has led him to know that this is a divine being. And so he asks for a blessing because he knows that this is a heavenly messenger. His grasp will remain firm until the blessing is received. In this moment, **his** disability has revealed the secret... of a new power.

The power of the weak who is totally reliant on God is that God simply will not resist the honest plea of His helpless child. If nothing else is to be taken away from this passage, this is a key you should never forget.

A faithful petition for blessing when you are at your most helpless moment will result in the bestowal of the blessing. The plea has become a prayer of faith in the strength of God, and the strength of God is revealed in answering the prayer - the Pouring Out.

This is truly Jacob's moment of salvation. He has become a man wholly dependent on God and so he has reached out to Him for His gift. God has met Jacob in the form of a Man and He has come to us in the same form.

In fact, it is this form which we can cling to above all others. Jesus is the One to whom we are totally dependent for our blessing. We have to remember that our sermon two weeks ago dealt solely with Jacob's prayer for deliverance from his brother Esau. And we have to remember that Esau pictures man - made from the dust of the earth. This struggle is our struggle. That prayer is our prayer. The answer to the prayer *is* the wrestling match. Before we come to the Lord as our brother, we need to realize that we have first met Him as an enemy.

Man's true opponent isn't other men, it is God Himself. Until we realize this, peace can't be made with Him. And I'm not just pulling this out of the theological wind. God tells us this in His word -

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

-Romans 5:10

We are told this repeatedly in the Bible. We are at war with God, we are children of wrath by nature, we are His enemy because of sin. Only after the battle can we sue for peace. And that battle starts at birth as David tells us in the Psalm 51:5 -

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

²⁷ So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob."

By asking his name, it is an indication that He is granting the request. He already knows the name, but it establishes the basis for the blessing. This is no different than being asked to state your name in court. I assure you, they know your name if you are there, but the basis for the testimony is the stating of the name.

Jacob gives his name - the only one he has ever had - Ya'akov or heel grabber. His name has reflected his life and now his life will take a new direction.

²⁸ And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."

The Man now tells Jacob something amazing, you have struggled with God and men. The Lord above the ladder is the Man who has wrestled in the dark. Jacob struggled with man throughout his life and he prevailed. He now struggles with God and the same is true.

The change in name reflects the change in character. The actual name of Israel isn't easy to define. Some say Prince of God, some God Persists or God Preserves and some "He Struggles With God."

Because struggling is tied in to the giving of the name, the last is correct. "You have struggled with God and with men."

A detailed evaluation of the name Israel by Abarim sounds almost blasphemous at first, but it does reveal what we see in history and in our own salvation and so I will read you their conclusion -

"We can not say with certainty what the name Israel is supposed to mean, although it seems to reflect a certain inability of the Almighty God, namely the not being able to defeat a man like Jacob. We can be sure that God doesn't lack the physical strength to eradicate any human being, so we must conclude that the destruction of Jacob would go against the very nature of God. Perhaps the name Israel denotes God's continuous effort to keep Jacob going, even though Jacob continues to fight God."

Right there is the evident reason for the whole scope of the plan of salvation, as well as for the continuation of both the people known as Israel and the continued salvation of sinners such as you and I. It would go against the nature of God to destroy Jacob because Jesus comes through Jacob based on a promise given at the fall of man.

It would go against the nature of God to destroy the people of Israel for the same reason - they have been brought under God's covenant protection. And it would go against God's nature to remove a believer's salvation, even after continuous failings in His presence; because He has sealed us with the Holy Spirit.

I said some sermons ago that Israel is more than a people. Israel is a concept of uniting and restoring God to the people of the world. The faithfulness of God is tied up in Israel. The plan of God is tied up in Israel. The glory of God is tied up in Israel.

When we say nothing is impossible for God, we mean that from a human perspective. God cannot do what is logically impossible, such as make a triangle which is a circle, or make an odd number that is even. God can't do what is morally wrong either. He cannot violate what makes Himself God, such as being unjust.

And God cannot defeat Himself when He is aligned with you. The struggle of Jacob and this Man has revealed this. When you call on Jesus as Lord, God truly is - once, forever, and completely going to be your Lord, whether you struggle with Him, **for Him**; or struggle with Him, **against Him**.

And as a testimony to this, all we need to do is look at the change in names of Abraham and Sarah. Once God changed their names, their old names were never used again. But with Jacob, for the rest of the Bible both names - Jacob and Israel - are used commonly and interchangeably, sometimes even in the same sentence.

Jacob is the flesh and blood man who still walks in a fallen world. Israel is the hope and promise of the life in Messiah. As Albert Baner notes, "both names have a spiritual

significance for two different aspects of the child of God, according to the apostle's paradox." A paradox which is stated in Philippians 2 -

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure." (12, 13)

III. The Face of God

²⁹ Then Jacob asked, saying, "Tell *me* Your name, I pray." And He said, "Why is it *that* you ask about My name?" And He blessed him there.

Asking for a name is asking for an understanding of the individual. By asking for the name, Jacob is looking to understand the nature of the Man who is God. But the Man returns with a question which is in itself an answer. "Why is it that you ask about my name?"

The answer **is** that no answer will be given. And the answer **is** that the nature of the person, which is reflected in the name, should already be understood even if the name isn't known. In other words, "You don't need my name, you know already who I am."

The giving of a name implies ownership of a person or thing. Just as God changed Abraham and Sarah's name, the Lord changed Jacob's. The ownership is understood in the act. Following the question, the blessing is given. God has blessed the man because He is pleased when a man dependent on Him requests a blessing.

³⁰ So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: "For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved."

Peniel means "Face of God" and the explanation is given for the name - *ki raiti elohim panim el panim*; "For I have seen God face to face." There is a place where man can see God and not die, which sounds contrary to the very words of Scripture.

The Lord told Moses in Exodus 33:20 that, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live." When God united with humanity, He was no less God, but the humanity of Jesus allows for what is otherwise not possible. The eternal Christ wrestled with Jacob in the dust and spoke to him face to face, and Jacob lived.

John did the same - "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—"

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

³¹ **Just as he crossed over Penuel the sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip.**

Here again is another picture of the coming Christ. What has happened is showing what is coming later in us. The sun is rising on Israel just as he crosses Penuel. Penuel means the same thing as Peniel, but they are spelled differently. They both mean Face of God, but they aren't at all speaking about the same thing.

In the previous verse, it says he named the place Peniel - the location. This verse with Penuel isn't speaking of the location, it is speaking about the relationship between him and the God-Man he encountered. Jacob has crossed over the Face of God. He is now, like Abraham, a Hebrew - one who crossed over.

To completely understand this, you'd have to go back to Genesis 14 where the term is used for the first time in the Bible. "Hebrew" is connected to the name of Abraham's great-great-great-great grandfather Eber. Jacob has now crossed over because of his interaction with the God-Man.

And the fulfillment of this for you and me is seen from Paul's hand in 2 Corinthians 4:6, 7

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (**PENUEL**). ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

Paul is tying the spiritual light of Christ in to our salvation because of Jesus - our weakness, His power. It is the same spiritual light Jacob is prefiguring by the shining of the sun on him as he passed by the Face of God - Jesus. In Malachi 4, on the last page of the Old Testament, we read these words -

"But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves."

Jacob had a new relationship with the Lord and the Sun of Righteousness arose upon Him. The inclusion of this verse definitively ties the Man he wrestled with to the coming Redeemer. It is a surety for all who would later call on and revere His name.

Anyone who does becomes a part of the commonwealth of the spiritual blessings of Israel. Jacob's healing, like ours, may not be so much physical as it is spiritual. In fact, our affliction may become a part of our salvation. One commentator says it this way -

"In the greatest of these spiritual victories which, through faith, any of God's people obtain, there is always something to humble them." Paul found this out as have so many since. Christ shines all the more gloriously through our weakness."

³² Therefore to this day the children of Israel do not eat the muscle that shrank, which is on the hip socket, because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip in the muscle that shrank.

The muscle that shrank is a tendon or sinew, not the meaty part around it. This was obviously a tradition in Israel at the time of the law, because it is mentioned at the time Moses received the Torah. However, the prohibition is a tradition and not something that was later prescribed in the law itself.

The fact that it is recorded means that the intention was to pass the knowledge on, but there is nothing beyond this sentence to say any more about it. Surprisingly, this is where the account and the chapter ends. It is a note of reverence for the power of God over the man who struggled with God.

And it is a note of vindication that the man who was physically defeated in his fight still prevailed. Not in the sense that he defeated God, but in the sense that God could not defeat Himself by destroying the man who continued to struggle against Him.

There is nothing contradictory here. What God proclaims must always come about. What God has ordained is eternal and unchanging. Though Israel fight against God, God will keep Israel going. And though you continue to fight against God, if you are His, He will likewise keep you in His grasp.

The strength of Jacob was reduced to weakness through this tendon and so the people of God, in remembrance of this, removed the tendon from their meals. In a similar acknowledgment, the people of God now have their own remembrance.

The power of God is revealed in the weakness of the human Life bound up in the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, and so in acknowledgment of His work we participate in His spiritual strength through the taking of communion. The work of Christ is a marvelous mystery of God's interaction with His creatures.

It reveals God's power and yet it shows us that our uniting with Him is a bond which He Himself will not break because He cannot break it. It is an eternal and inviolable part of His very being.

Closing Verse: *But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. Isaiah 43:1*

Next Week: Genesis 33:1-17 (Jacob Meets Esau) (82nd Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Blessing Upon Israel

Jacob arose that night and took his two wives
His two female servants went along also
And his eleven sons, all these precious lives
And over the ford of Jabbok they did go

He took them, over the brook they were sent
And sent over what he had, before the night was spent

Then Jacob was left alone after he sent them away
And a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day

When He saw that He did not prevail against him to this point
He touched the socket of his hip
And the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint

As He wrestled with him, and his mighty grip

And He said let Me go for the day breaks, you see
But he said, "I will not let you go unless You bless me!"

So He said to him, "What is your name?"
He said, "Jacob" - it's always been the same

And He said, Your name shall no longer
Be called Jacob, but Israel
Struggling with God and with men, you were found stronger
You have prevailed, yes you did excel

Then Jacob asked saying, yes he did proclaim
Tell me Your name, I pray
And He said, "Why is it that you ask about my name
And He blessed him there that day

So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel
"For I have seen God face to face
And my life is preserved, I am alive to tell
Of my struggle with God here in this place

Just as he crossed over Penuel, resuming his trip
The sun rose on him, and he limped on his hip

Therefore to this day the children of Israel
Do not eat the muscle that shrank
Which is on the hip socket, the nerve cell
But to God they do thank

Because He touched the socket of Jacob's hip
In the muscle that shrank, during this amazing trip

The struggle of Jacob is our struggle as well
It is one against God until it becomes with Him instead
This is the meaning of the name Israel
We struggle with God, for or against Him until we are dead

But through the marvel of Christ the struggles does end
As God grants us His Spirit when we believe
The enmity is ceased when on Christ we depend
And into our lives, Jesus we receive

Thank You, O God, for our wonderful Lord
And thank You, O God, for Your precious word

Give us wisdom to pursue You alone for all of our days
And fill us with Your glory as we sing to You our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 33:1-17 (JACOB MEETS ESAU)

Introduction: There's a war which wages between the people of the world against the message of God in Christ. There's no doubt about it. Christians are martyred for their faith by the hundreds of thousands and even millions while the world turns a blind eye.

If you have the stomach to read accounts about this type of persecution, there is a website and a magazine called the Voice of the Martyrs which details many instances which continue unabated in the world today. If you need a boost in your faith, it's a great place to go in order to see what others are willing to face for the honor of bearing the title "Christian."

The reason for this enmity is as old as the span of man on earth. Man rebelled against God and was separated from Him. Now there are two paths for Adam's fallen seed to take. One is, as Jesus said, a broad path leading to destruction. This path rejects God's provision and attempts to reconcile with God by man's effort.

The second is the narrow path which leads to life. It acknowledges that there is no *thing* that we can do to be restored to God. Instead, it accepts what God has done as all-sufficient for our healing and our reconciliation. It is Jesus - His life, death, and resurrection. God says it is the only way we can be saved.

Every human must come to Christ individually. We can remain defiant and we can continue to be at war with Him, or we can accept His provision and receive His offering where peace between God and man is restored.

Today's passage shows us pictures of this restoration between God and man in the reconciliation between two brothers who had been separated for such a long time.

Text Verse: ¹¹ *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,* ¹² *teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,* ¹³ *looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,* ¹⁴ *who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. Titus 2:11-14*

Jacob finally appeared to Esau after sending five droves of gifts before their encounter. In the same way, Christ finally appeared to Adam's race after providing five dispensations which each worked to prepare us for the meeting. The Genesis stories shows us time and time again that God has a plan and how it will come about. Each story gives us particular insights into this overall plan and today is no different. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Joyous Reunion

¹ Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and there, Esau was coming, and with him were four hundred men.

We begin chapter 33 with the anticipated meeting between Jacob and Esau finally coming about. After 20 years of separation, the meeting is now moments away. Jacob had deceived Isaac and stolen the blessing from Esau. Esau had threatened to kill him at the death of their father and so Jacob fled.

Now these many years later, still before the death of Isaac, Jacob is returning as directed by God. It's an important encounter, especially considering that Jacob is never mentioned as meeting with Isaac after his return. Therefore, there is a reason why God included these details while not mentioning any reunion with Isaac.

Once again, the specific number of Esau's men is mentioned, 400. This detail is included because God wants us to search out why. Otherwise, it could have just said, "the men who came with Esau."

As noted a few weeks ago, the number 400 is the product of two other numbers - 8 and 50. Eight is the Hebrew word *sh'moneh*, which comes from the root *shah'meyn* which means to "make fat" or cover with "fat." This gives the impression of superabundance. When *shah'meyn* is used as a participle it means "one who abounds in strength." As a noun it is "superabundant fertility," or "oil." So that as a numeral it is the superabundant number.

Fifty is the number of jubilee or deliverance. It points to deliverance and rest following on as the result of the perfect consummation of time. And so 400 is the product of 8 and 50. It is a divinely perfect period resulting in rest.

The number 400 here is pointing to the entire time of man's history as a people, from his time in Eden, all the way through the kingdom age, the millennial reign which is still future to us now. As noted, it is a divinely perfect period resulting in rest.

^{1 (con't)} So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel, and the two maidservants.

In an attempt to break up the family in case things don't go too well, Jacob makes three divisions of the mothers and children. It's good to remember what these picture or we can miss why God is including the detail.

Jacob pictures Christ Jesus, Leah pictures the law, Rachel pictures grace, and the two maidservants picture the two exiles of Israel. The children are the people Israel.

² And he put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last.

Adam Clarke, the great Methodist theologian and commentator says this about verse 2 -

"There is something so artificial in this arrangement of Jacob's family, that it must have had some peculiar design."

The answer is obvious when you know who each pictures. The least favored go first, followed by the most favored. Obviously, captivity or exile, pictured by the maids is least favored, then the law whom Leah pictures comes next, and finally an encounter with God's beautiful grace, pictured by Rachel, comes last.

³ Then he crossed over before them

Jacob, picturing the Lord, went before them. This is beautifully reflected in Micah's words concerning the restoration of Israel -

The one who breaks open will come up before them; They will break out, Pass through the gate, And go out by it; Their king will pass before them, With the LORD at their head." Micah 2:13

^{3 (con't)} and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

The type of bowing, instead of complete prostration on the ground, would be a deep oriental bow, such as the Japanese do. It was a sign of respect to Esau as the elder brother, but it may also have had the purpose of petitioning God for a friendly meeting.

I would suggest to you that these seven bows, which are recorded here for a reason, are the same symbolism as the five gifts he had sent earlier. The five gifts pictured the five dispensations prior to Christ's coming. These seven bows picture all seven dispensations of history, including the two after Christ's first coming.

This story, as you will see, is showing us man's reconciliation to Christ at any point in history. It is when we see Him as individuals and run to him. Therefore, it is a picture of any of us at that moment.

⁴But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.

In an act reminiscent of Jesus' parable about the prodigal son, Esau ran to meet Jacob. Esau represents, as we have continuously seen, Adam - fallen man. This meeting is picturing man's meeting with the Lord, and the peace and restoration found between the two.

In this verse is something very unusual in the original Hebrew text. It is a writing tool called a *puncta extraordinaria*. Above the words "and kissed him" which in Hebrew is *vaiyishshakehu*, there are a series of dots or points which provide emphasis.

It is said that these are placed there to draw the attention of the person reading the account to the change that had taken place in Esau. The change is in Esau, not in Jacob. It is Esau who receives his brother. It's obvious that this is picturing the change in us when we receive and accept Jesus as our Lord. It is our moment of salvation.

Having seen this though, it says that both wept; both Esau and Jacob. This is the heart of God and the glory of the gospel. That the Lord is so moved by a repentant sinner that the same emotion floods Him as floods us.

⁵And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children, and said, "Who *are* these with you?" So he said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant."

This verse pictures the biblical account in a nutshell. Presented to man are the Lord, the people of Israel, the law, the captivity of the Israelites, and the coming of God's grace.

All of this is symbolized, coming in a special order, to be presented before man. It is God's way of dealing with us in a manner which we can understand.

The children were, as Jacob notes, given to "your servant." Jacob subordinates himself to Esau, just as Jesus subordinated Himself to Adam by coming as a descendent of Adam, because the fathers are considered greater than the son. It's all here and noted for us to see what God is doing for us through Jesus.

If you notice, Jacob's reply only mentions the children and not the wives. The reason why is because the children are sons of Adam whom, as it says, God had given to Jacob.

The picture is perfectly clear that these are Israel's redeemed of the ages, from under the law, whether during times of freedom or captivity, and those under grace during the church age. They are Esau's kin by nature, born to Jesus by the workings of God.

⁶Then the maidservants came near, they and their children, and bowed down.

Captivity and captivity's children come first before Adam, just as these maidservants and their sons come first before Esau.

⁷And Leah also came near with her children, and they bowed down. Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near, and they bowed down.

In order then come Leah and her children, picturing the law and those born under the law, and then comes Rachel, picturing grace and those born under the New Testament grace found in Jesus. Of all the children of Israel, only Joseph is mentioned by name in this encounter, and he is mentioned *prior* to Rachel.

If you were here during the sermons on the births of the children, you might remember that Joseph pictured Christ at that time. His name was given in conjunction with two words - *asaph* meaning to "take away" and *yosef* meaning "he shall add."

The mentioning of Joseph and especially before Rachel is to show us Jesus' coming under the law, just prior to the age of grace, the Church Age. He has taken away the reproach of the law and has added to God's fold through Jew and Gentile in the age of grace, pictured by Rachel.

This is the answer that Adam Clarke wondered about concerning the peculiarity of the order in his commentary that I read above.

II. God Has Dealt Graciously With Me

⁸ Then Esau said, “What *do you mean by* all this company which I met?”

Esau is referring to the five droves of gifts which were given to him by Jacob as they neared each other. He already knew what they were because the servants who brought them told him. However, he asks Jacob again directly so that he can have an opportunity to refuse them.

^{8 (con't)} And he said, “*These are to find favor in the sight of my lord.*”

In the same way that Esau can refuse the gifts, Jacob will know he found favor in Esau's eyes if he accepts them. If you were here during that sermon, you know that these five droves of animals picture the five dispensations until the coming of Christ, Innocence, Conscience, Government, Promise, and Law.

These were given by God to work reconciliation between God and man until the point that Christ came. And they were each given by the words of God through God's messengers. Again, there is so much symbolism tied up in this encounter between two brothers.

⁹ But Esau said, “I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself.”

Esau's response is that he already has enough. The word *rav* is used indicating abundance. He has more than enough to satisfy himself. And it is true, man was given abundance on this earth without God adding any extra.

We have food from the earth, animals and sea life to eat, cotton and wool for clothing, we have mountains full of metal, forests full of trees; we have sunshine and lollipops. Man can say to God, I have enough, keep what you have for yourself, but in the end, everything we have is temporary and earthly. What God offers is spiritual and eternal.

¹⁰ And Jacob said, “No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand,

Jacob explains the gift and Esau's *need* to accept it, "If I have found favor in your sight." If he accepts the gift then reconciliation is made between the two and he knows it. And it is the same with what this is picturing. If man accepts God's provision as presented in the work of Christ through each dispensation, then man has favored what God offered.

¹⁰ (con't) **inasmuch as I have seen your face as though I had seen the face of God, and you were pleased with me.**

Jacob uses an idiom found elsewhere in the Bible. Someone's face being compared to seeing the face of God is to say that just as God favors a person when His face shines on them, so it is when a person favors another person. The high priestly blessing of Israel includes this thought - יָאֵר יְהוָה פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ - *ya'er adonai panav eleyekha v'khooonekha*, "The Lord make His face shine upon you."

Matthew Henry explains it this way, "Jacob saw God's favour to him in Esau's: it was a token for good to him that God had accepted his prayers."

Once again, we can see our relationship to Jesus in this verse. If we have received Jesus and His gifts to us, then our receiving of it is a token to **Him** that the Father had accepted **His** work. The premise of Jesus and His work is that it is to bring reconciliation between God and us. Again, all of this is pictured in this beautiful story.

¹¹ Please, take my blessing that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough." So he urged him, and he took it.

In the last verse, Jacob's offering was called a present, *minkhati*. Now it is termed his blessing, *birkhati*. The gifts presented are, in fact, intended as a blessing. This is exactly what has been intended for man during the five dispensations leading up to Christ's arrival. They are blessings of divine favor from the Lord.

Bible translations almost consistently note that Jacob says he has "enough." But this isn't what he says. Instead, only Young's Literal Translation correctly reads, "I have all things." The word is *kol* - all. This is included by God because it's true in what it pictures.

Jesus has all things. He is the possessor of heaven and earth. Jacob had many temporal things, but he also possessed the spiritual blessing and the birthright. God was his covenant God and protector, Christ his Redeemer, and the Spirit was his sanctifier.

We've seen all of this in our past sermons. Jacob has all. And he pictures Jesus beautifully in this respect. To Jesus is all honor and He is the Heir of glory. This is the intent of what we read here.

III. All in God's Timing

¹² Then Esau said, “Let us take our journey; let us go, and I will go before you.”

In a sign of both acceptance of the gift and of a happy relationship restored, Esau offers to travel with Jacob, leading the way and helping him as they traveled. This must surely picture man's willingness to participate in the Lord's work when He came.

But time and again, He had to redirect those around Him to show us that God's way are not man's ways. I'll give you two examples of Jesus following a unique path, which is reflected in Jacob's words to Esau -

¹⁸ And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. ¹⁹ Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.” ²⁰ And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air *have* nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay *His* head.”

-Matthew 8:18-20

Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, “Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!” ²³ But He turned and said to Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.” Matthew 16:22-23

God is working out things in a unique way. Despite Esau offering to lead Jacob, he turned him down. And despite people thinking they have Jesus' path determined for Him, He shows that God alone controls the route.

¹³ But Jacob said to him, “My lord knows that the children *are* weak, and the flocks and herds which are nursing *are* with me. And if the men should drive them hard one day, all the flock will die.

Jacob's response to Esau's offer is in regard to the children and the flocks and herds which were nursing. The obvious thing that would happen if they tried to keep up with Esau would be that they'd fall dead from the trip.

In the same way, it would be beyond reason to ask 400 men to dally along on a journey going at a snail's pace and stopping continuously for one thing after another. Esau's gracious offer, like those made to Jesus, were unreasonable.

Jesus' plan is one of length, preciseness, and which tends to the needs of His people - of both Israel and the church, all pictured in this verse. We are impatient and call out,

"Come soon Jesus," but His plan concerns more than just desirous you and impatient me.

¹⁴ Please let my lord go on ahead before his servant. I will lead on slowly at a pace which the livestock that go before me, and the children, are able to endure, until I come to my lord in Seir."

Here Jacob implores Esau to go at his own pace and he will follow. The term he uses for the pace of the livestock and children is *le'regel*, meaning "at the foot." The speed he will take will be at the pace of the slowest of the bunch. It will be at whatever pace keeps everyone alive. He is in no hurry at all.

At the end of this verse, he says "until I come to my lord in Seir." There is no record of him ever going there, but it doesn't mean he lied or never went there. As I said earlier, there's no record of him having gone to see Isaac, and yet we can be sure that he did.

The Bible isn't recording a detailed life of Jacob, it's recording details *of the life* of Jacob. It's a huge difference and the details are selected to show us small pictures of what is ahead, not broad panoramas of what is behind.

Jesus is leading on, and slowly. He is taking His time as He builds, tends to, and leads His flock. His children are being well cared for and that is all we need to know. He is a wise, careful, and gentle keeper of His sheep. Jacob probably did go visit Esau, but it's not a part of what's important for us to know.

If a second encounter with Esau is expected, as the Bible indicates, we aren't given any clues as to when it will happen. Likewise, Jesus will return on His own schedule and we don't need to worry about the timing. Instead, as He instructed His disciples, we are to go out and be His witnesses until He returns.

¹⁵ And Esau said, "Now let me leave with you *some* of the people who *are* with me." But he said, "What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord."

Because Jacob declined the first offer, Esau offers to leave some of his men with Jacob. This would be as a gesture of protection and help on his journey, but Jacob declines again. He has all the help and servants he needs and the Lord is His protector as well.

The evident picture here, and it should be evident, is that as Jesus and His servants are tending to His flocks, we don't need secular man's help in the process. It is His flock, His people, and His responsibility. If the church can't sustain itself, it needs to close.

If the mission isn't productive, it needs to be ended. There is no reason that we should have to rely on the secular world to have our spiritual business accomplished. This is the Lord's flock and those who aren't a part of it have to understand this, and so do we.

¹⁶ So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.

On the same day they met for the first time in 20 years, Esau departed for home. Both were probably immensely relieved at the reunion and the ended animosity that had driven them apart for so long. And isn't this the same feeling that we have when we finally call on Jesus?

The tension is gone, the past is behind us, and friendship with God is restored. We now have a new hope, a new direction, and a new attitude on life. Esau returned to Seir, the land which means "hairy." As I've noted in several previous sermons, hair in the Bible denotes awareness.

It is man's place to be aware. We are sentient beings, ever in search of more knowledge and experience. Esau returns to the land of awareness, but he has a *new* awareness. He is reconciled to Jacob. Man, likewise, after his meeting with Christ has a new awareness.

We have a new knowledge and a greater experience than we ever could have imagined. We are reconciled to God through this meeting, all divinely orchestrated by the God who sees and knows all things and which directs them for His purposes.

¹⁷ And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock. Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

After the happy reunion and the subsequent departure, it says Jacob journeyed to Succoth. This place gets its name from the account, something often seen in the Bible. Even though the title or name is given first, it is actually a result of the story.

This place is east of the Jordan river. There it says, he "built himself a house." This then is a permanent dwelling, in Hebrew *bayit*. We've seen the five dispensations leading up to the coming of Christ. Then we saw the meeting between Jacob and Esau which pictures Christ coming and meeting with man.

In this verse we're seeing Christ returning and building a house, pictured by Jacob's building of a house. The place Succoth is named in honor of the building of *these tabernacles for his livestock*, not his house! In Leviticus 23, we will see this recorded as an observance for the people of Israel, one of the seven Feasts of the Lord -

“Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘The fifteenth day of this seventh month *shall be* the Feast of Tabernacles *for* seven days to the LORD. (v.34)

The word translated as "Tabernacles" is the word Succoth. This feast of the Lord is picturing the dwelling of God with man; it is the church age. Jesus came and, as John chapter 1 tells us, dwelt, or "tabernacled" among us. He put on a temporary tent of flesh.

He departed, but now His Spirit dwells in our temporary shelter, our *Succoth*. The house Jacob built pictures the church and the shelters, or booths for his flocks, are our residences with Him - our bodies sealed with His Spirit. This is the lesson we're to see in this beautiful account of two brothers being reconciled to each other.

The enmity is over, the past is gone. There is now a peace which is restored between Jacob and Esau, between Jesus and Adam. God is now building a house, as the New Testament tells us, of living stones. We who have called on Christ *are* those living stones. In one verse, we've gone from the law to the next dispensation, the church age.

While we are here on earth, we are dwelling in temporary shelters, or Succoth, but someday, Jesus will return and we will be given eternal bodies, bodies that will never wear out, never tire, never die. We will experience a new type of existence that we cannot yet fathom. All of this is sure, as sure as the sun is in the sky.

Closing Verse: *Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen. 1 Peter 5:14*

Next Week: Genesis 33:18-20 (God, the God of Israel) (83rd Genesis Sermon) - Make sure to read and study those verses.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Jacob Comes to Esau/Jesus Comes to Adam (Man)

Now Jacob lifted his eyes and looked then
And there, Esau was coming
And with him were four hundred men
Will it be peace or war drums drumming?
So he divided the children among Leah, it does tell
And Rachel, and the two maidservants as well
And he put the maidservants and their children in front
Leah and her children behind,
And Rachel and Joseph last in order for Esau to confront
These positions he assigned

Then he crossed over before child and mother
And bowed himself to the ground seven times
Until he came near to his brother
Making it hard for me to make suitable rhymes
But Esau ran to meet him,
And embraced him, yes it is so
And fell on his neck and kissed him,
And they wept, two brothers reconciled, you know
And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and children,
And said, "Who are these with you?"
"The children whom God has graciously, then...
Given your servant, my beautiful family crew

Then the maidservants came near,
They and their children, and bowed down.
And Leah also with her children so dear
And they bowed to Esau, their uncle of renown
Afterward Joseph and Rachel came near,
And they bowed down, who were to Jacob so dear
Then Esau said, "What do you mean
By all this company which I met?"
And he said, "These are to find favor as you have seen
In the sight of my lord whom I once upset
But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother
Keep what you have for yourself, or give it to another
And Jacob said, "No, please

If I have now found favor in your sight
Then receive my present from my hand
Inasmuch as I have seen your face, I am filled with delight

It's as though I had seen God's face
And you were pleased with me here in this place
Please, take my blessing that is brought to you
Because God has dealt graciously with me
And because I have enough, it's true
So he urged him, and he took it, willingly
Then Esau said, "Let us our journey make
Let us go, and I will be before you on the path we take
But Jacob said to him, with these words
"My lord knows that the children are weak
And so it is with the flocks and herds
Which are with me nursing, of them I speak

And if the men should drive them hard one day
All the flock will die, yep, they will pass away
Please let my lord before his servant proceed
I will lead on slowly at a pace
Which the livestock that go before me can heed
And the children, are able to endure, it's not a race
Until I come to my lord in Seir
We'll meet up again sometime, do not fear
And Esau said, "Now let me here leave
With you some of the people who are with me
But he said, "What need is there, none I believe
Let me find favor in the sight of my lord I plea
So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir
And Jacob journeyed to Succoth that day
And built himself a house over there
And made booths for his livestock to stay
Therefore the name of the place is called Succoth
This is the name of the place that the Bible does note
Time and again we see hints in each story
Of the coming of Christ and of His great glory

He has come to bring reconciliation to us

Yes, He has come to meet with Adam's seed
To be born again is now possible through Jesus
And with that gift comes eternal life, indeed
Let us not fail to accept this glorious gift of God
Which will allow us in His presence to trod
For ever will God lavish His grace upon us
A glorious gift made possible through our Lord Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 33:18-20 **(GOD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL)**

Introduction: The life of Jacob has and will continue to picture things ahead in the Bible and in history itself. It was true of the time before he left Canaan and it will be true as we see new things unfold after his return to Canaan.

The time from his departure from home, the events just before leaving the land of Canaan, and all of his time away from there have painted a beautifully detailed panorama of redemptive history - of Israel as a people, of the flock which is the church, and of Jesus as the fulfillment of their hopes and aspirations.

Every story has been selected by God to show us this wondrous display as it works toward a beautiful end - one of peace. We'll see more of this in today's three verses which sum up these things in a short, concise picture of what is coming.

When we finish today, we'll be able to more readily grasp the mission of Christ and how He so beautifully completed it for those whom He has called and whom He so dearly loves. We've talked about the doctrine of dispensationalism. It is a doctrine which many deny, saying that Christ is done with Israel and all prophecy has been fulfilled.

But the Bible doesn't teach this. A time is coming when Christ will return and will rule from Jerusalem for 1000 years. In fact, Revelation 20 says this explicitly six times. One has to deny a literal reading of the Bible to deny this truth - a truth which stems from anti-Semitism. It dismisses the truth which God has revealed concerning Israel's future.

Today's story will confirm what dispensationalism teaches as clearly as anything could. We saw the five dispensations prior to Christ's coming in previous sermons. In last week's sermon we saw the sixth dispensation the church age. Today we will see the seventh and final one as the life of Jacob is used, yet again, to show us this truth.

Text Verse: *Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. Revelation 20:6*

The nations have sought Him and they still seek Him out today. Someday, some glorious day in the future, there will be a time of unmatched peace and blessing on the face of the earth. Jesus will rule from a city of peace and joy. The world will be much different

than it is now as the law proceeds to the nations from His throne. Even the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest are used to display this pattern concerning the seven thousand years of man's time on earth.

The place where we can go to be reminded of these things is to this beautiful treasure that He has given us called the Holy Bible. So let's go there now and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Once again in the Promised Land

¹⁸ Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan Aram;

Just in case you use a different translation of the Bible, I'd like you to see another way this can be translated. Let me read them both -

Then Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan... (NKJV)
//// And Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan... (KJV)

As you can see, there's a difference in how the two read and it's not small. The word *Shalem* implies that he arrived safely, but it can also be the name of a city that's being referred to. The word means, "complete", "safe", "at peace." Together, they imply "wholeness."

In the New Testament, in John chapter 3 we read about a place with a very similar name-

²² After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. ²³ Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near **Salim**, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. (22, 23)

So it could be that the name of the town is correct. Or, this verse could be referring back to chapter 28 where Jacob made his vow to the Lord and which is being confirmed as fulfilled here -

"Then Jacob made a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, ²¹ so that I come back to my father's house **in peace**, then the LORD shall be my God. (20-21)

Or, what is a third possibility is that this is the fulfillment of chapter 28's words, and so the land Jacob is going to buy will be named after what happened. In other words, the fact that he arrived in peace becomes the name of the town.

I prefer this option because it's the one I thought of... and because it shows the fulfillment of what's been. The naming of the city like this is something that happens many times in the Bible. Names are given in conjunction with the actual occurrence. This then is Jacob's "City of Peace" based on his arrival home in peace.

This *Shalem* is called "a city of Shechem." The name Shechem comes from a verb *shakam* which means to "rise early" and the a noun *shekem* which means "shoulder." The two words indicate the wisdom and diligence of a person.

To rise early is indicative of having a good start to the day - as Benjamin Franklin said, "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." Carrying a load on the shoulder also shows wise diligence. In Isaiah chapter 9, we read this about the coming Messiah, pointing to what we're talking about -

For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His **shoulder**.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (6)

So, after giving the name Shechem, this verse says that it is "in the land of Canaan." Canaan means either "merchant" or "servant."

This name, Canaan, is tied to the Hebrew verb *kana* meaning to be humbled or subdued. About this verb, HAW Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament says, "It denoted bringing a proud and recalcitrant people or spirit into subjection." Two examples will help us see the intent. The first is from Leviticus 26 -

"...and *that* I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—⁴² then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember;" Leviticus 26:41, 42

The second example is the famous passage that everyone takes out of context, but citing it makes us feel helpful in a world which is falling apart around us. It's found in 2 Chronicles 7 -

"...if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (14)

In both of these verses, the verb *kana*, the root of Canaan, is used to show that humility is a key condition of God's blessing. Along with these, the Bible notes repeatedly of a peaceful state of humility which is seen in the return of exiles to the land of Canaan. All of these together show that humility is something favored by God. I'll give you an example from each testament -

For thus says the High and Lofty One
Who inhabits eternity, whose name *is* Holy:
"I dwell in the high and holy *place*,
With him *who* has a contrite and humble spirit,
To revive the spirit of the humble,
And to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Isaiah 57:15

Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:4

So far in this one verse, we've looked at the names of three places - Shalem, Shechem, and Canaan. But God included a fourth too. It notes that this is where Jacob came to after he came from Padan Aram. It was many sermons ago that we learned Padan Aram means "elevated ransom."

A ransom is a price paid to redeem something. If something is in a pawn shop, it can be redeemed or ransomed by paying a set price to get it out of hock. The Bible's idea of a ransom is that we are sold under sin and that we must be brought out of that state in order to be reconciled to God.

There was a high cost to redeem fallen man and Jacob's travels to Padan Aram showed that to us. Jacob left his home and went to the place of elevated ransom in order to someday be reconciled to his brother Esau. Jesus left the dwelling of the Lord to come here and pay a high price to redeem fallen man, thus reconciling us to God.

This verse also shows a dual picture concerning the nation of Israel. Jacob was in a type of exile from the Promised Land resulting from his wrong actions in deceiving Isaac, but he is the one who held the birthright, the blessing, and the promises. This picture is seen in Israel as they have twice been sent out of the land for evil-doing despite having the promises and the blessings.

18 (con't) and he pitched his tent before the city.

The last thing noted in verse 18 is that Jacob "pitched his tent" before the city. He probably did this because he had so much livestock and so many people living with him. Cities at that time were walled structures. All of the agricultural work was done in the fields outside the city. Because he is a shepherd, it makes sense that he would stay in the outer areas and not move into the city.

To "pitch one's tent" means to come and reside. Jacob is picturing Jesus. Therefore, this is a picture of Christ's coming again to reside in the city of peace, Shalem. Is anyone seeing it yet?

II. A Purchased Possession

19 And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money.

Because the fields surrounding a city are where the city grows its crops, it was right for Jacob to pay for the land he camped on. If he didn't he might be seen as a freeloader on the people who had built the town in the first place. Although this purchase is made and recorded, it doesn't imply that he wanted to settle down.

Instead, he's simply dealing honestly with the people around him, maintaining peace and harmony with them, and keeping them from making any claim on his flocks and wealth by them later by saying they were derived from them.

This piece of land is where Joseph, Jacob's 11th son and future vice-reagent of Egypt will be buried when he dies many years later. That's recorded in Joshua 24:32 -

The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph. Joshua 24:32

This is also the spot where Jesus will sit by a well in Samaria after a day of traveling and speak to a woman about the living waters which will flow from Him -

⁵ So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶ Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from *His* journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour. ⁷ A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." ⁸ For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. ⁹ Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. ¹⁰ Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." ¹¹ The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? ¹² Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" ¹³ Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4:5-14

This is an important spot in the pages of the Bible and a great deal of our spiritual heritage is derived right from these three verses. It is this spot which Jacob bought from the children of Hamor, Shechem's father. Hamor means "he-ass." A male donkey which is a beast of burden. It gets its name from its reddish color.

It's the same word used to describe the animal the Messiah rode into Jerusalem during His triumphal entry, found in Zechariah 9 -

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your King is coming to you;
He *is* just and having salvation,
Lowly and riding on a **donkey**,
A colt, the foal of a donkey. (9)

So Jacob purchases the field from the children of Hamor for one hundred pieces of money. The word for "money" here is the Hebrew word *qesitah*. It indicates, interestingly, a lamb. This is based on the Greek translation of the Old Testament which translates the word as *amnos* - a lamb which is used in sacrifices.

Some people think one *qesitah* was the value of one lamb and that's why they are called lambs. Rather, a *qesitah* was a coin stamped with a lamb, a very popular motif. The name is given to the coin not because of its value, but because of its marking. We do this with our own money even today.

III. El Elohe Israel

²⁰ Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohe Israel.

All the time that Jacob was out of the Land of Canaan, there is no record of him having built an altar. But his time of exile is over and he has been returned to the land of his fathers just as God promised him. There on the land, he built an altar.

Before he left Canaan 20 years earlier, he made a vow to God that he would do something if God would protect him and return him home safely. In chapter 28 when he erected a pillar to God, he said, "And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You." (22)

The purchase of the land and the building of the altar are tied together by these verses and so the purchase of the land may be a partial fulfillment of the vow. This is an interim step on his way to Bethel. This makes the naming of the place Shalem correct.

He was provided peace and in fulfillment of that, he named the place in honor of the peace that was given. "All is safe, and there is peace - *Shalem*." In honor of this, he names the altar El Elohe Israel - God, the God of Israel. Thus as a fulfillment of the vow, the land on which the altar is built is set apart to God.

The name El Elohe Israel signifies the all-powerful God who fulfilled his word to Jacob and brought him back to the land of promise safely after 20 years of perils. It also acknowledges the new name he was given, Israel.

This new name was given to him during his encounter with the Angel of Lord in the wrestling match by the Jabbok River. In acknowledgment of the name and in honor of this mighty God, he gives the altar its name, El Elohe Israel.

Curiously, this is just the same spot that Abraham came to first after he entered the Promised Land. We saw that way back in Genesis 12 -

⁶ Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites *were* then in the land. ⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

Just like his grandfather more than 250 years earlier, Jacob enters the land and builds an altar. The land is again consecrated to the God of promise and the God who fulfills His promises.

IV. The Millennial Reign of Christ

So here we are with three verses which stand alone after Jacob's encounter with his brother Esau and before a tragic event which is coming in the next chapter. It can't be said that these verses fit with the account of Esau. And they certainly don't fit in with the coming story about his daughter Dinah.

They are set off by themselves and they therefore ask us to reflect on why they were included by God in His word. In order to understand them we have to go back and look at everything that's happened since he left Canaan.

We've traveled through sixteen sermons which encompass 20 years of Jacob's life. He left the land and arrived in Padan Aram where he met Rachel at a well. That account showed us what would occur in the life of Jesus in order to procure people from the world from all groups - Jew, Jew/Gentile mix, and Gentile.

It pictured His work culminating in the resurrection, symbolized by the removing of the stone from the mouth of the well. The next account showed us the work Jacob did for his wives. Seven years of work for Leah and then seven for Rachel. They pictured going from the Old Testament Law to New Testament Grace.

After that we saw the birth of the first four sons to Leah, including the fourth - Judah - through whom would come Christ. After this came the addition of two more wives for Jacob. These two wives pictured, as clearly as could be, the two exiles of the people of Israel. The Babylonian and Roman exiles.

The next account was the birth of two more sons and a daughter to Leah and a son named Joseph to Rachel. Each child reflected the work of Christ culminating in the naming of Joseph. The dual significance of his name showed us the work of Christ. The word *asaph* indicated taking away and the word *yosef* indicated to add.

Jesus took away the reproach of the law and added us to His fold through His grace, symbolized by Rachel. From there came the account of building his flocks. The flocks symbolize the people of the church age during the time of Israel's second dispersion. Then after that we saw the account of how this was done.

Jacob used peeled rods, placing them in a watering trough to grow his flock of specially marked animals. The rods pictured the writings of Paul - the apostle to the gentiles. Through understanding and accepting the work of Christ described by him, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit and set apart as members of Christ's flock.

No sooner was the flock - which pictures the church - built, then Jacob was told by God to return to the land of Canaan. This portion was given to show us the world's treatment of Israel during their exile which occurred during the church age.

Right after this came Jacob's flight. It was at this time that Rachel took her father's idols. This account pictured the preparation of Israel for return to their own land once again. During this story, the stealing of the idols set up the next account where the father, Laban, would finally catch up to them and search their camp.

In that account, Laban came to search for the idols in the tents of the family members. The order of the search confirmed the two exiles of Israel. It also showed that they will someday be found guiltless. They will turn to the Lord completely and no longer be a people disposed to idolatry. As a reminder, all of this is clearly laid out in the rest of the Bible.

These pictures are given in a specific order to show us what will happen and in a manner which will be understood when they occur. Anyway, once the search was over, the next account showed us a picture of the Bible itself. What its structure would be like, how it came about, and that it centers on Christ.

This happened on Mount Gilead, the Perpetual Fountain, showing us that the Bible comes from the throne of God - His fountain. After this was another picture of Israel - the two camps. It pictured the division of Israel and its eventual reuniting as a single group.

The next four verses were Jacob's great prayer which came about before he met up with his brother Esau. Then came the preparation for the encounter - five gifts sent in advance of the meeting which represented the five dispensations leading up to Christ's coming.

After that was the story of Jacob wrestling in the night with the Man. It showed the faithfulness of God and His necessity to preserve Israel based on His own moral character. For Israel to be defeated would mean a defeat for Him. His reliability to perform His word is tied up in Israel as a people and His Son as our Lord.

In the next account, Jacob finally met up with Esau. In this meeting we saw the reconciliation between the Lord and fallen man. God is dwelling *with man* by dwelling *in man*. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit was reflected in the place Jacob moved to and stayed at - Succoth, or tabernacles. God is tabernacling or dwelling with man. This was the sixth dispensation.

After all of this, which is far too brief of a recap, we come to today's three verses and what we are to learn about the glory of the story. It is given to sum up the life of Jacob during these past 20 years and for us to reflect on all that has occurred. In one sense, it pictures God's faithfulness to return Israel to their land after their period of exile. This is true.

They were twice exiled and twice returned to land sworn to their fathers. While out of the land, there have been no sacrifices and no altars. But that changed after the first exile when they built a second temple. It is getting ready to happen again after this second exile. The temple implements are ready for use and a temple will be built - coming soon to a tribulation period near you.

However, despite this minor picture, we have a larger one. Jacob is picturing Christ fulfilling His dispensational timeline. He left the true Promised Land and came to earth to perform His work. During that time, He fulfilled the law and redeemed people from every nation, tribe, and tongue for Himself.

He built a flock and has given us His word to live by. He accomplished everything He set out to do, thus reconciling fallen man to God. His deeds have replaced what Adam did and have brought us new life. The enmity between Esau and Jacob ended and the enmity between Adam and Jesus has ended.

In the three verses today, we see the millennial reign of Christ. The seventh and final dispensation of man's time on earth. Jacob came to Shalem a city of Shechem. Shalem as I said means "complete," "safe," or "at peace" - in essence "wholeness." It is the same word used to describe Jerusalem twice in the Bible -

Then Melchizedek king of **Salem** brought out bread and wine; he *was* the priest of God Most High. Genesis 14:18

In Judah God *is* known;

His name *is* great in Israel.

² In **Salem** also is His tabernacle,

And His dwelling place in Zion.

³ There He broke the arrows of the bow,

The shield and sword of battle. Selah Psalm 76:1-3

If you read this psalm, it is surely speaking of the dwelling of Christ in Jerusalem after the tribulation period. It ties so perfectly with what is being shown in this picture from Jacob's life that the psalm and the account are in essence inseparable. It says, in Salem also is His tabernacle, His sukkow. It is the millennial reign with Christ dwelling in Jerusalem in garment of flesh!

After all of what Jacob has pictured in the work of Christ since he left Canaan, there is a time when the work is done and it is time to rule over His family and flocks in the land of Canaan.

Shalem is said to be a city of Shechem. This city's meaning indicated wisdom and diligence. It is the city where those who are wise and diligent will dwell. It is those who have been redeemed by Christ. They have understood His gospel message and been diligent to receive it. And Shechem is noted as being in Canaan.

We saw that the name Canaan reflects humble ones; those who humbled themselves and have sought the Lord's face and turned from their wicked ways. They are those whom God has heard from heaven and forgiven their sins; He has healed the land. No longer boastful or proud, they are those who have come under His care.

This return to Canaan was noted as after his time in Padan Aram - the place of elevated ransom. Jesus left heaven for the world of fallen people in order to pay a truly high ransom. In Isaiah 51, we read about those who are ransomed to return to Zion for this time of the millennial reign -

So the ransomed of the LORD shall return,
And come to Zion with singing,
With everlasting joy on their heads.

They shall obtain joy and gladness;
Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Isaiah 51:11

It was His life for our sins. He paid that debt, left, and is now returned to the land after His time away - all pictured by Jacob returning to Canaan and dwelling in Shalem - Jerusalem. There in Canaan, he purchased the piece of land. This is a place where his family and his flocks could stay.

These pictured Israel and the church in those past stories and they are with Him now. Jesus has reserved a spot for those He has redeemed. This land was purchased from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem. Hamor is introduced here, but the land wasn't bought from him... The Bible says it was bought from his sons.

His name, meaning Donkey, indicates a beast of burden. One that carries a load. The reason he's introduced this way is to show that he is representing the world at large. He is a picture of those whose burden is heavy and whose life is toil.

The reddish color of the donkey takes us back to Adam. Toiling in soil, eyes downward, working in thorns and thistles. A purchase is made from this group of the sons of the world. And the purchase is for 100 *qesitahs* or "lambs."

One Bible scholar named Parkhurst rightly sees these coins as typifying the Lamb of God, who "in the Divine purpose" as he says, "was considered as slain from the foundation of the world, and who purchased us unto God with his own blood."

Parkhurst's thoughts come from two New Testament verses. The first is Revelation 13:8 which speaks of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. The second is found in Acts 20:28 -

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

This is what is being pictured here. The finished work of Christ; work that was actually finished before the foundation of the world in God's mind, but which was prefigured and pictured by the selected life events of a man named Jacob who left the Promised Land, went to a place of an elevated ransom, and now is returned the City of Peace - Shalem - with his people.

After the payment for the land, both in gratitude to God for the completion of his journey and as an interim fulfillment of his vow, Jacob erected an altar to the mighty God who had watched over him, tended to him, and brought him safely home again.

This altar pictures the temple and worship which will be in Jerusalem during the millennial reign. It is referred to many times in the Old Testament and in the book of Revelation as well.

By proclaiming the name El Elohe Israel, he's acknowledging his understanding that the Man he struggled with *is that God*. He is the one who gave him the new name. He is the Man by the river, He is Lord of the Covenant, and the keeper of promises.

He is the One who stood above the ladder in his dream, the One who is the Ladder, and He is the Rock on which he placed his head. He is the giver of the Spirit, the payer of the ransom, the defender of His people, the One to fulfill the law, and the One to bestow God's grace - He is Jesus.

He is the true Israel, who bestowed upon Jacob that sacred name as an indication that he struggled with God and prevailed. He is Jesus. Everything we've seen in these past many sermons has led to this point today. It has all been laid before us to show us the work of God in Christ as pictured by selected events in the life of Jacob.

Jacob is in Shalem in the land of Canaan with his children and flock. In the Millennial Reign, Christ will be in Jerusalem ruling over His as well. As a testament to this time of peace which is ahead, we read these words from Isaiah 11 which are speaking of the this 1000 year reign -

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
As the waters cover the sea.

¹⁰ "And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
And His resting place shall be glorious."

This is why the name El Elohe Israel is given. It is telling us in this story from almost 4000 years ago, that God, the God of Israel is the Man who will dwell in Jerusalem, the City of Peace in the seventh dispensation of man's time on earth.

Whether you know it or not, you are one of the people pictured in this story. You're a son of Adam, pictured by Hamor, whose life is one which is marked by separation from God, or you are one of the redeemed of God in Christ who has the absolute assurance of eternal life in the heavenly Promised Land.

Closing Verse: ²⁰ *In that day "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. ²¹ Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts. Zechariah 14:20-21*

Two Weeks From Now: Genesis 34:1-12 (For Best Results, Stick to the Blueprint) (84th Genesis Sermon) Make sure to read and study those verses.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

God, the God of Israel

Then Jacob came safely
To the city of Shechem
Which *is* in the land of Canaan, you see
When he came from Padan Aram

And he pitched his tent before the city
His flocks in the fields must have looked so pretty

And he bought the parcel of land without a bother
Where he had pitched his tent
From the children of Hamor, Shechem's father
For one hundred pieces of money, he spent

Then he erected an altar there on the land
And called it El Elohe Israel, let us understand

He is the mighty God, the God of Israel
The One who tends to and watches over us
He is the one of whom all these stories do tell
He is our Lord, our Savior, our God - Jesus

Let us always and forever praise and exalt His holy name
And proclaim His deeds among the world's people
Into the stream of humanity this marvelous One came
Let His praises be proclaimed from every church steeple

Thank You Lord for Your care and tending to us
And receive our praises Lord - our praises for Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 34:1-12

(FOR BEST RESULTS, STICK TO THE BLUEPRINT)

Introduction: The 31 verses of chapter 34 will show us the impetuous nature of a man named Shechem. His actions failed to follow the right blueprint in how to handle his relationship with Jacob's daughter Dinah. In the end, by not following the blueprint, he found only disaster.

The chapter also shows the brutal and unmerciful nature of two of the sons of Jacob. What they did was an offense and can in no way be condoned. I have to be honest though, like many times in the past until I prepared for this sermon, I had no idea why this passage was included.

Yes, it's an interesting story, as they all are, but without having a purpose for its inclusion, it is just that - an interesting story. It doesn't really give us anything to work with other than the story itself. What is God telling us? Why this story?

And the commentaries about this chapter didn't really help with what is being pictured. So as I studied each verse, I was in prayer. Like the story on the two daughters of Lot, I realized that I had completely misunderstood this passage even on a basic level.

Unfortunately for you, until we finish the chapter, you're not going to see the full picture. The reason is, unlike many other chapters which are divided into smaller sections, this story is a complete unit.

So, if you want to have an understanding of the chapter, you'll have to stick it out through all 3 sermons. I will do my best to make it interesting each time, but the overall picture is both fascinating and very saddening at the same time.

What this is showing us became rather clear and it troubled me when I realized what it is. But this is the Lord's word and therefore, I must present what I believe He intends for us to see.

As an advanced clue for you, and maybe to help you think this through as we go, it needs to be noted now that throughout this entire chapter, until the 30th verse, right at the end, Jacob is never quoted as say anything, in any way.

He's mentioned 12 times as Jacob and once as Israel, but it's always speaking about him, not quoting him until that 30th verse.

Jacob, as he has thus far, pictures the Lord. And therefore, the Lord is also certainly silent during the process of what this pictures.

And one more thing which is lacking... The Lord is never mentioned in this passage, nor is he prayed to for guidance. It is a passage devoid of what is needed in many ways. If these verses hurt my heart, how much more His...

Text Verse: *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8, 9*

God has done great things for the people of the world through His Son, our Lord Jesus. What God offers is a gift. It can't be earned nor can it be purchased. It is something that also comes not by man's will but by an act of love from the Creator.

When we get things out of order with God, confusion ensues. Along with confusion comes unhappy results as we find ourselves stuck deeper and deeper in a theological quagmire. God makes it simple for us, but we... we muddy the waters.

In everything, there is to be an order and there is a right way and a wrong way to do things. For example, if we want to marry a lady, there is an order in how we handle the process. When we get those things out of order, only trouble can result. This is the way things are in most avenues we take.

If we want to build a house, we don't build a roof before we lay the foundation. Instead, we lay the foundation, put up the walls, and then put on a roof. During the building, we make sure we've put in the electric wires, the plumbing, and the other necessary things, each in order.

God's gift is just that, it is a gift. We need to make sure we receive it **and then** work on the relationship, not the other way around. In order to be saved, in order to build a house, or in order to marry a beautiful young lady, we need to follow the proper plan and use the right blueprint.

The Bible tells us how to be saved. The Bible shows us about the house that God is building. And the Bible gives us right instruction on how to handle relationships between men and women interested in getting married, or staying married. All of these

are found in God's word and so... May God speak to us *through* His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Shechem's Love for Dinah

The story we're about to look at is not a one-for-one comparison of what is being pictured. These pictures never are or what is told would simply say what is intended. Rather, God is using real events that happened to show us spiritual truths, and so we have to infer things.

When a young girl has physical contact with a man, it obviously doesn't translate directly into the spiritual realm, but the outpouring of the love because of the act does. We need to remind ourselves of this as we go through the verses and when we see the overall picture of what is being presented.

¹ Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to see the daughters of the land.

Dinah is the only recorded daughter of Jacob, but it's an error to say she's the only daughter. Elsewhere, the Bible mentions his daughters in the plural and so it's likely that he had more. The sons are recorded because the name and inheritance travels through the males.

Dinah alone is recorded, certainly because the events of this chapter and what they ultimately picture. Here in the first verse, it notes that she is the daughter of Leah. Leah, as we have seen since her introduction, pictures the Old Testament law. Dinah's name means "Vindicated."

These pictures continue in this passage. In Genesis 30, Leah, who pictures the law, had her final three recorded children. Issachar, Zebulun, and Dinah. Each of them pictured the final workings of Christ as He fulfilled the law for us. Issachar means "He is wages." Zebulun means "Glorious dwelling place." And Dinah as noted means "Vindicated."

Paul tells us the fulfillment of her name in 1 Timothy 3:16 - "Beyond all question, the mystery from which true godliness springs is great: He appeared in the flesh, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory."

Jesus Christ prevailed over the law, He is our wages (Issachar) unto eternal life, He entered the glorious dwelling place (Zebulun) with His own blood, and He was vindicated (Dinah) by the Spirit - the proof is the resurrection.

The law was fulfilled and New Testament grace, pictured by Rachel could now be bestowed upon the people of the world. This is something we need to remember in the chapter ahead.

This girl, Dinah, is probably about 13 right now, and at the most no more than 15. Although this is considered young by our standards, the Jewish commentators of a later period fixed the earliest age of marriage for a female at 12 years and 1 day.

We can figure her age because she was born right around the same time as Joseph. Joseph will be 17 when he is sold by his brothers, which is seen in Genesis 37:2. So that means that Jacob has been living in this area and the place he came from, Sukkoth, for about six or seven years.

Here in this verse, it says that she "went out to see the daughters of the land." The reason isn't given, but the Jewish historian Josephus says that it was because it was a time of festival in the land and so she went out to see the finery of the women of the country.

If it is a festival time, then the ladies would be wearing their best outfits. Being a curious young lady, as most young ladies are, she took the opportunity to see the newest fashions. TV hadn't been invented yet and so she had no choice except to go see for herself.

A lot of commentators find fault here because such a young lady is out alone, but this is no less common in today's world and elsewhere in the Bible as well. After having lived in the area for some amount of time, the family would know the level of safety and would have known how to act concerning this.

We can't find any real fault here. But the Geneva Bible still gives us a good thought on the matter - "This example teaches us that too much liberty is not to be given to youth." I have to agree, having been that age myself and knowing all the things I did then, I think it would be good to keep youth locked up until at least 25 or 30.

²And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the country, saw her, he took her and lay with her, and violated her.

As has happened far too often in human history, what shouldn't have been done has happened. Shechem who is the son of Hamor, the ruler of the surrounding area, saw what wasn't his, took it, and brought about what will be a heap of trouble.

Here in this verse Hamor is identified as a Hivite. Way back in Genesis 10, the Hivite is identified as a son of Canaan, who is the son of Ham. Canaan was the one cursed by Noah when Ham did something perverse to his father Noah. These would be a gentile people as opposed to the Hebrews in Jacob's clan.

I don't want to go too far off base and introduce things that aren't true, but one commentator, Pirke Eliezer says that Dinah in fact got pregnant because of what happened and that child was eventually taken to Egypt and was brought up by Potiphera's wife as her daughter Asenath.

Asenath, eventually will become Joseph's wife and bear two sons - Ephraim and Manasseh who will be included in the sons and tribes of Israel. The name Asenath is Egyptian, but if the story is true, it very well may have been adapted from a Hebrew word - *ason*.

Ason is a word used prior to and after the Egyptian years and it means mischief, evil, or harm. And this is exactly what occurred in order for Dinah to have born a child. Like I said, I don't want you to think this is true, but it does reveal a pattern which makes sense.

Because certain names are given, I will explain their meaning here. We need to understand them to know later what is being pictured. The name Shechem comes from a verb which means to "rise early" and a noun which means "shoulder." The two words indicate the wisdom and diligence of a person.

Shechem's father, Hamor, means "he-ass", a male donkey which is a beast of burden. It gets its name from its reddish color. A donkey is an unclean animal, just as gentiles are considered unclean to the Jews. So maybe this clue will help you think this chapter through.

Donkeys are beasts of burden, they have value, and under mosaic law the firstborn had to be redeemed by a clean animal - a lamb - or they were to have their neck broken. (Exodus 13:13)

Finally, Hamor is noted as a Hivite. The term Hivite probably means "villager." It is related to the noun meaning village and the verb which means to prostrate oneself, or worship. These three names are given to connect us to Dinah and what will happen.

³ His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the young woman and spoke kindly to the young woman.

Shechem was the son of the ruler and probably felt that he had the right to do what he wished. He saw a beautiful young lady and he took her. Whether he felt anything more than a passing fancy is unknown, but *after* he had been with her, he felt a strong attraction.

The Bible notes that he loved her and so he spoke kindly to the young woman. Every commentator of this verse notes the same thing. The original translation says that Shechem spoke to the heart of Dinah - in Hebrew *v'daber al lev*.

In other words, it seems to imply that he truly loved her and wanted her to love him. But it also seems to imply that he needed to do this because what he did to her was forced. He speaking to her heart was intended to get her to love him after the fact, not before the act.

In the fickleness of human relations, these things go wrong more often than they go right. Sometimes we do what's wrong and then work to make it right, and sometimes we do what's right and then turn around and make it wrong. This is because we put emotions above commitment.

Invariably, when we do this, we get it wrong. Emotions are to be a result of commitment, not a basis for it. If we get this wrong, when the emotions change, there is no support for the commitment. This is the case with Shechem and it is seen again later in the Bible as well.

⁴ So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young woman as a wife."

What this is implying is that he was looking to his father to get him out of any mess he'd gotten into and to use his authority to arrange a marriage between them. Several commentators note that this shows that even at early times and among pagans, it was right to get parent's consent before getting married - both sets of parents.

That's a pretty big leap for this one verse and it ignores the pre-marital sex which was forced on Dinah by Shechem. As you can see, if you have something in your head already because of your cultural surroundings, or if you hear something from an authority, then you're more likely to believe it.

But both are, as I tell you every chance I get, the wrong way to approach the Bible. You leave what you already believe behind and you disregard commentaries until you have a reason to accept them. Shechem forced Dinah and now he is trying to get out of it because he has fallen in love with her and doesn't want to lose her.

II. Hamor's Offer

⁵ And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter.

There's no note of how Jacob heard. It could have been from Dinah personally, but later it says that the brothers will come and take her from Shechem's house, so maybe she never left there after she was violated. It could be one of Dinah's friends found out and told him.

Or it could be that Shechem's father came over and told him and waited around for the family to gather together to hold counsel. One way or another he found out and kept calm. Were this me, I would have flown off the handle, but Jacob was restrained.

^{5 (con't)} Now his sons were with his livestock in the field; so Jacob held his peace until they came.

If Dinah is about 13, that would make the oldest son Reuben about 19, give or take. If you go to Israel today, you can see really young children, no more than 15, tending to flocks in the middle of nowhere. They start early and it is as common as cucumbers.

By now all of the boys in the family are old enough to tend to flocks because Joseph is right around Dinah's age. This is their job as shepherds and they are busy in the field's attending to their duties. Jacob isn't recorded as saying a word or showing any anger.

⁶ Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him.

If Hamor was the one to tell Jacob what happened, then Jacob probably told him he'd talk to the boys whenever they came home and then he'd call him. Because Jacob has

four wives, it would be right to call the brothers of Dinah who were born to Leah and at least talk to them.

This would include Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. Probably after such a meeting, then they called Hamor, Shechem's father, to meet again and come to a decision in everyone's presence.

⁷ And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it;

Apparently, there was no need to wait for them to return on their own timing. Someone sent a message to them in the field and as soon as they heard the news, they came in directly, probably stewing all the way home over what happened.

^{7 (con't)} and the men were grieved and very angry, because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, a thing which ought not to be done.

After stewing all the way home, it says they were grieved and very angry. There is a time for anger, but in the process of anger, we need to step back and make sound judgments. It's hard to disconnect the two, but when we let our anger take over, the battle - whatever battle - is already lost. Such will be the case here.

This is the fourth time the name Israel has been mentioned in the Bible, but it is the very first time it's been used in the collective sense of the family of Jacob who is Israel and thus the people of Israel. In Hebrew the term used is *b'Yisrael*. Albert Barnes finds the translation "in Israel" hard to accept. He says -

"The land, afterwards generally called Israel, was not as yet so named; and the sons of Jacob were neither called Israel, Israelites nor Jews, till long after this. How then can it be said that Shechem had wrought folly in Israel?"

In order to resolve this, he says that *b'Yisrael* should be translated "against" Israel, not "in" Israel. Both Israel and Jacob are mentioned in the sentence and so he says it's indicating an offense against God, and so Israel is named, and against Jacob as a father, and so that name is used.

His idea, "against Israel" is possible, but this isn't the intent at all. It is the sons who are angry in this verse. They carry the offense, not for their father, but for themselves. The offense is against the family, not just the man. *b'Yisrael* then is a standing phrase for the whole family, and thus the people, Israel. Albert Barnes, I believe, got this one wrong.

This term *b'Yisrael* will be used from this verse forward in connection with the unity of the people and family who come from Israel. Offenses may come from without or within the family, but the offenses are against the name and integrity of this special and select group of people formed by God for His purposes.

And so the entire term *nebalah asah b'Yisrael* is used here - "a disgraceful thing in Israel." *Nebalah* is the word translated as "disgraceful act." In Deuteronomy 22, it is used to identify a woman who was found to not be a virgin on her wedding night.

In Judges, it's used to describe one of the most noted transgressions in Israel's history when a man named Aachen took an accursed thing into his home that should have been destroyed as an act of devotion to God.

It is also used by Abigail, the future wife of King David, to describe her husband Nabal. She made a play on his name to indicate the type of man he was *Nabal shemo u'nebalah immow* - "Nabal is his name and folly is with him."

When we read Shakespeare, we appreciate it as much for its style as its content. The same is true with Hebrew. It is tragic how much beauty is lost in translations, but believe it or not, I believe some things are actually gained in translation if it is done properly.

This is the wonder of God's word. We can learn from it by understanding it in any of the languages that He created for us. Each will certainly carry something special to give us insights into His precious heart. Keep reading, keep learning, keep loving this precious word.

⁸But Hamor spoke with them, saying, "The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter. Please give her to him as a wife.

This goes back to verse 4 which said, "So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young woman as a wife." He could clearly see that his son was completely smitten with Dinah and so here he is asking in good faith for this to be worked out in a favorable way.

The implication is that even if he did something wrong, he's willing to make it right and he's doing it in love. She won't just be vindicated, as her name Dinah implies, but she will be cared for in the process.

⁹ And make marriages with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters to yourselves.

In order to get the sons of Jacob to become more amenable to the proposal, he brings in a long standing agreement. The first part of which is that marriages would be welcome between them. Most, if not all, of the sons are neither married nor have children.

And yet he says that the giving of daughters between the two parties would be welcome. This tells us that Jacob does in fact have other daughters. As they have children, then their children would inter-marry and become one united group of people.

This might not sit well with Jacob. Abraham ensured that his servant got a bride for Isaac from his home and family, not from Canaan. Isaac and Rebekah in turn were unhappy with Esau's Canaanite wives and Jacob was sent to get a wife from the family tribe as well.

However, there are now 11 sons, daughters, and servants in Jacob's home. Things could no longer progress as they had in the past and all of this would probably be on Jacob's mind. And as a demonstration of this, eventually Canaanites will marry into the family. Two noted Canaanite women - Tamar and Rahab - will both become ancestors of Jesus.

¹⁰ So you shall dwell with us, and the land shall be before you. Dwell and trade in it, and acquire possessions for yourselves in it."

Hamor's talking is the fanciful dream which will never happen, but his intent is good and his desire for his son's happiness is evident. Every word he's spoken has been one which desires peace and harmony between the two parties. He cannot change what has happened, but he can ensure that the future will be different.

He's offered everything as if they were family - daughters, the land, trading, and livelihood. Everything necessary to be established and prosper in a land is made available to Jacob's clan.

III. A Dowry is Offered

¹¹ Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers, "Let me find favor in your eyes, and whatever you say to me I will give.

The father finished his petition and it included everything one would expect between members of a family united. But now the offer of a husband for a wife has been made. Shechem's words are directed to the father who has ultimate say and to the brothers who were both offended by his actions and who have the right of input concerning their sister.

He says, let me find favor, or grace, in your eyes. The word is *khen* and it is the same word, for example, that speaks of God's favor on Noah in Genesis 6:8 - "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." Where there could be wrath, Shechem asks for reconciliation.

He also adds in that he will meet whatever their demand is for a dowry. However, by offering it after the fact, his brothers will take it in a completely different way than he intends. He's violated their sister and he's hoping that payment will appease them.

In essence, and as we'll see in the very last verse of the chapter, to them it would be as if they sold her as a whore. The impetuous act of violating her and the words he has used in an attempt to pacify the brothers will carry a high price. Grace is the last thing he will find. However, the lack of grace by the brothers will cost them too.

Ecclesiastes 7:9 says this - "Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools."

¹² Ask me ever so much dowry and gift, and I will give according to what you say to me; but give me the young woman as a wife."

In his zeal to have Dinah, Shechem tells them that whatever bride-price they asked, he would be willing to pay it. He could probably see on their faces that they were still unhappy, even after the father's offer and he was willing to add any amount to it.

Without going through all the details of what these 12 verses picture, let's review a few things for you to think about. When we go through the next sermons, keep thinking about them and how they all fit into New Testament theology concerning our relationship with Christ.

Dinah, means "vindicated" and was used to picture the power of the Spirit as evidenced by the Lord's resurrection. She is the daughter of Leah who pictures the Law. Hamor and Shechem are gentiles who are looking to become united to the family of Jacob through marriage.

Hamor has offered the two clans be united and Shechem has offered to pay for the girl he has experienced and now wants as his own. Next week we'll continue through this chapter and see new conditions brought in by the sons of Jacob.

Remember as we go on that Jacob has said nothing yet, nor will he until the account is over. Also, the Lord hasn't been invoked by name or in prayer during the account as well. We'll see where it all leads in the sermons ahead.

Closing Verse: ¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:19, 20

Next Week: Genesis 34:13-24 (Blueprint? We Don't Need No Blueprint!) - Make sure to read and study those verses.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and a purpose for you. So call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Not Following the Blueprint

Now Dinah the daughter of Leah
Whom to Jacob she had borne
Went out to see the daughters of the land
Maybe to see the fashions that they had worn

And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite,
Prince of the country, saw her
He took her and lay with her, doing what was not right
He violated her, something that would bring trouble for sure

His soul was strongly attracted to Dinah
For the daughter of Jacob he yearned
And he loved the young woman
And spoke kindly to her, as his love burned

So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying,

"Get me this young woman as a wife." For this I am praying
And Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter
Now his sons were with his livestock in the field
So Jacob held his peace until they came
Then together the matter would be revealed

Then Hamor the father of Shechem
Went out to Jacob to speak with him
And the sons of Jacob came in from the field
When they heard it, their attitude was quite grim
And the men were grieved and very angry
Because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel

By lying with Jacob's daughter
A thing which ought not to be done, as you can tell
But Hamor spoke with them, saying,
"The soul of my son Shechem for your daughter longs
Please give her to him as a wife
Instead of anger, let there be wedding songs

And make marriages with us
Give your daughters to us as well
And take our daughters to yourselves
Let there be not just one wedding bell
So you shall dwell here along with us
And the land shall be open before you

Dwell and trade in it, you shall do thus
And acquire possessions for yourselves - this you can do
Then Shechem said to her father and her brothers
"Let me find favor in your eyes
And whatever you say to me I will give
She to me is the greatest prize

Ask me ever so much dowry and gift
And I will give according to what you say to me
But give me the young woman as a wife
I love her deeply, even more so, as you can plainly see

There are right ways and wrong ways
To do the things we do in life
Following the blueprint all our days
Will keep us from unhappiness and from strife

In our relationship to God we have been given a plan
It is our guide and our help to know Him better
It is the word of God a gift bestowed upon man
So let us cherish its words, and even each letter

The book as a whole tells us about our Lord
There we learn of our Savior, in His holy word

And so let us read it and follow it all of our days
Learning to love Him and to shower Him with all our praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 34:13-24

(BLUEPRINT? WE DON'T NEED NO BLUEPRINT!)

Introduction: If your son or daughter told a friend that they could move into your house, what would be the most common question in the world for that friend to ask? Have you asked your parents if it's ok? Right? It wouldn't make any sense to move your stuff into somebody else's house until you knew if it was ok with the owner.

And if you want to start a business, get married, or make some other major decision in your life, what would be the one thing that is more important than any other to do? Well if you're priorities are straight, it would be to pray. Right? Talk to God about it.

If you're going to testify in court, you need to swear concerning the matter. This only means something if what you are swearing on can affect you if you lie. If you swear on a bag of neon gummy worms, it really makes no difference if you lie or not. The gummy worms can't do anything to you, except make your mouth happy and your teeth rot.

Hebrews 6:16 says, "For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute." This has been the standard since the very beginning. By Jacob's time, vows had been made for over 2000 years. People had invoked God's name, and the elders of a home were checked with concerning great family matters.

But today, we see a passage where all of that is thrown to the wind over deceit and greed. Let's look at today's passage and learn from it. Let's heed the message before us and apply it to our own lives.

Text Verse: *Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? 27 And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? Romans 2:36, 37*

Circumcision is a rite and a distinction of a certain group of people which served a particular purpose. Paul is adamant that the gentiles who come to Christ do not need to be circumcised. In fact, he uses circumcision as a standard by which we can judge the reality of our faith in Christ.

If we trust that Jesus is sufficient and that the law is set aside in Him, then we know that circumcision is unnecessary. But if we attempt to be justified before God by getting

circumcised then he says that we become estranged to Christ and become a debtor to the entire law. It is, in essence, a self-condemning act.

Jesus Christ is all-sufficient for us. His work is accomplished and the proof of it is that He was vindicated by the Spirit - testified by the resurrection. We need add nothing to His work to stand justified before God and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Deceitfulness of Outward Appearance

¹³ But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister.

The sons of Jacob came together to form a plot against Shechem and Hamor. This is pretty clear and plainly evident. The verse says that they spoke deceitfully in the matter. However, Albert Barnes gives his insights into the Hebrew of the verse -

He said, they "Answered - deceitfully - Which nothing could excuse; yet, to show that they had had much provocation, it is immediately subjoined וידברו *vaidabberu*, they spoke thus because he had defiled Dinah their sister; for so this parenthesis should be read."

In other words and not to get too confusing, he is saying that the wording in the Bible is important to show the clear intent. They were provoked and so they acted deceitfully, even if what they did was inexcusable. They acted unjustly, but they did it because they *thought* they were right.

This might seem like trifling, but by the time we finish this chapter, you should see what is being pictured and why it's important. Of all the commentaries on this incident, the one that is most likely to give you an idea of what is being pictured comes from Jamieson Faucett Brown and it's concerning this verse.

Please listen closely and try to think about what they say here. Depending on how well you know the New Testament, you may be able to see the whole picture. If not, I will explain it in next week's sermon. Here's what they say, though they merely state the fact and unfortunately don't go any further with it -

"But that outward rite could not make the Shechemites true Israelites; and yet it does not appear that Jacob's sons required anything more. Nothing is said of their teaching

the people to worship the true God, but only of their insisting on their being circumcised; and it is evident that they did not seek to convert Shechem, but only made a show of religion -a cloak to cover their diabolical design. Hypocrisy and deceit, in all cases vicious, are infinitely more so when accompanied with a show of religion; and here the sons of Jacob, under the pretense of conscientious scruples, conceal a scheme of treachery as cruel and diabolical as was, perhaps, ever perpetrated."

Think about what I just read and try to tie it into what you know about the New Testament. As a hint, I would direct you to Acts 15 and the book of Galatians in particular. As we go on, remember that Jacob, who pictures Jesus, never makes any comments, nor does he intervene.

¹⁴ And they said to them, "We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that *would be* a reproach to us.

This is the beginning of the deceitful speech mentioned in the previous verse. The reason it's deceitful is that there is no such law at this time in history. In addition to that, both Isaac and Jacob married daughters of uncircumcised people.

They are making a law up which doesn't exist and stating it in a way which makes the marriage seem unbecoming and against their supposed religion. The Geneva Bible states it this way, "They used the holy ordinance of God as means to accomplish their wicked purpose." Keep thinking and hopefully you're starting to connect the dots.

¹⁵ But on this *condition* we will consent to you: If you will become as we *are*, if every male of you is circumcised,

The deceit continues... "we will consent." They have absolutely no intent on consenting. They're making a show of their personal standards as superior to those of Shechem and using them as a tool against them by supposedly claiming that they will be joined to them through the sacred rite given to Abraham for his descendants.

The law given to Abraham is recorded in Genesis 17 and it said this -

⁹ And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This *is* My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ¹¹ and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

¹² He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. ¹³ He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

Nothing else is given and they are adding to the law with an invention from their own heads. Again we turn to the Geneva Bible for their insights, "Their fault is even greater since they made religion a disguise for their deceit."

Circumcision was never meant for the gentiles except those who come directly into the home of the line of promise.

¹⁶ then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us; and we will dwell with you, and we will become one people.

This verse is given in response to verses 9 and 10. These are the things Hamor asked for and so they are agreeing to the request which is based on the added terms they just gave. All of this appears to be a bargaining session in order to bring about reconciliation, but instead it is a trap which will end in death.

One of the problems with what is happening here is that nothing has been thought through clearly. If Hamor or Shechem had stopped to think about it, they would have realized that Jacob's wives were from non-circumcised people or they could have at least asked if that were the case.

There is also no record of them giving an explanation for their circumcision. The sons said it would be a reproach to them, but there is no reason as to why. And another hugely large oversight, which I've mentioned already, is that there is no record of them having talked to Jacob.

On the surface, the story seems to be flowing and explanatory for the people of Shechem, but in reality, it is a little bit of light and a whole lot of obfuscation and hidden agenda. And this brings us to an obvious parallel that we should consider.

Just because someone has a particular trait, we tend to take them as authorities in an area they may not be. Actors can act and they may be very good at it, but it makes no

sense for congress to call them in to speak about environmental or political issues, and yet they do.

We also tend to vote actors into political office because we assume they will be good at it. Yes, politics is largely an act, but not all actors in fact make good politicians. Even most politicians don't make good politicians. Notoriety is no indication of ability.

Doctors are highly trained at fixing people but it doesn't mean they'd be any good at fixing our faucet sink. Far too often we tend transfer intelligence or capability of a person in one area into other areas. This leads to all kinds of mistakes. How much worse when it deals with religion.

I can't tell you how many times I've heard someone follow a religious figure for whatever nutty reason. They may be a good speaker with no sound theology at all, but people follow them. They may be charismatic and quick with wit and so they have a large church.

I've seen people follow Jewish Christians, simply because they're Jewish regardless of their rather crazy ideas about Christianity. It's happened with Muslims who have converted to Christianity too. Suddenly, they are held up as specialists because of where they came from.

This is deceptive and dangerous and it ties in directly with the verses we were looking at and the picture that they're making in the New Testament. This incident with Dinah is trying to teach us something; something important and which can affect our walk with the Lord in a deep and eternity-changing way.

¹⁷ But if you will not heed us and be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and be gone."

One commentator says that the family of Hamor and Shechem must have been rather small because they otherwise wouldn't have sought an alliance with the family of Jacob. Comments like that make absolutely no sense, but when someone reads what he says, they will have that stuck in their head forever.

Once again, when you read commentaries, be careful to not accept them at face value. Instead, compare them against the backdrop of the story. Hamor could have had an immense and important family and it wouldn't change the narrative at all. He is the king of the area and Shechem, his son, is in love. Period.

This is what matters to him. It's true that from an earlier sermon, we learned that Jacob is a very wealthy man in his own right, but the size or wealth of Hamor's family is irrelevant. The love of Shechem and possibly the wealth of Jacob is what's highlighted.

II. What a Man Sows, That He Will Also Reap

¹⁸ And their words pleased Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son.

This proposal must have seemed too good to be true. Hamor had offered them to dwell in the land, join them, trade with them, acquire possessions, and the like. And then Shechem had offered any dowry they wanted to name. Instead, all they have asked for is something that Jacob's family had already done - be circumcised.

If this sign is what bound them into such a strong and united force, then it must be a good thing. Right? And once they all had the same sign, then there could be no distinction between them. In essence, they would be one group and what they had would belong to them.

To think this through, it would be like having a US passport. Along with that, you would have all the rights of a citizen of the US. This is what they're thinking. But just as carrying a passport doesn't mean a change in the person - as we've seen in recent terrorist bombings by American muslims, neither does getting circumcised mean anything without the inclusion of what the circumcision means. Paul explains this in Romans 2.

What seems like a great deal, in fact, means nothing - either from a spiritual standpoint, nor as we will see, from the viewpoint of those who bear the sign. This is evidenced in history as well.

The ancient historian Herodotus says that there were other groups, some in Egypt, and some as far away as the Black Sea, that practiced circumcision. And yet, they had no part in the covenant with Abraham.

¹⁹ So the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he delighted in Jacob's daughter. He *was* more honorable than all the household of his father.

Shechem may have taken the wrong steps in his initial dealings with Dinah, but he wanted to make it right and so he immediately went to be circumcised. As it says, "because he delighted in Jacob's daughter." He saw that she was what he wanted and he immediately took steps to get her.

To help you think through what's going on, I want to remind you that the name Dinah means "vindicated." If you remember, her inclusion in the birth record of Jacob's children is tied to the resurrection of Christ. Paul says that Jesus was "vindicated by the Spirit." Dinah pictures that vindication.

Jesus was judged as righteous because of His righteousness, and the Spirit so acknowledged that in the resurrection. I'm telling you this to help you think the story through. Shechem is delighted in what he sees and he is willing to do what he thinks is right in order to receive it.

Once again though, just because we think something is right doesn't mean it is. Muslims really think that blowing themselves up for Allah is right, but it isn't. Mormons really think that the Book of Mormon is right, but that doesn't mean it is. Shechem is making a fatal mistake, even though it is with good intentions.

Unfortunately, Shechem's status as an honorable person makes him, and his argument towards those around him, seem worth pursuing. They will be misdirected by a guy who has been misdirected. When you listen to spiritualists or TV evangelists, their sweet sounding arguments must be based on the Bible or they are no different than Shechem's words to his own people.

²⁰ And Hamor and Shechem his son came to the gate of their city, and spoke with the men of their city, saying:

In the traditional custom of the biblical Middle East, the important affairs of the people are always conducted at the gates of the city. It is the equivalent of the courthouse in America. Anything that needs to be addressed, decided, judged, etc. would be done at the city gates. We've seen this already in Sodom when Lot was there.

We've seen it in Jacob's dream when the Lord appeared above the ladder and Jacob exclaimed that it was the "gate of heaven." We see it again now, and it will be seen time and again throughout the Bible. And so Hamor has gathered the people together there.

In order to get somebody to do something which may not be pleasant, you first have to get them to accept that the benefits will be pleasant. You can't get a person to explode themselves in a shopping mall unless you can tell them that they'll have a reward for doing it - maybe seventy-two perpetual virgins.

It would be much easier to get someone to charge up a hill and into oncoming machine gun fire if you've filled his head with notions of glory, and maybe safety for their family too. Whatever the situation, it's easier to give the negatives after telling the positives or at least giving them both at the same time.

And so this is what Hamor and Shechem do...

²¹ "These men *are* at peace with us. Therefore let them dwell in the land and trade in it. For indeed the land *is* large enough for them. Let us take their daughters to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters.

The good news about Jacob and all of his wealth becoming theirs is given. They are at peace with them and so it would be a great thing for them all to join together and become one group of people, right? And anyway, the land is large enough for them as well.

This sounds like the state of the Syrian refugees right now. America is giving them a blank slate to migrate to America because, of course, the land is large. But there is truly evil intent here. Just because they are refugees doesn't mean they are allies.

They are our enemies who happen to be on the losing end of the battle. There is no reason why the surrounding muslim nations can't take them in and every reason for us to not rush into this. But our administration has evil intent for us. Like those in Shechem, we will face the consequences of the choices we make.

III. Drinking the Kool-Aid

²² Only on this *condition* will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people: if every male among us is circumcised as they *are* circumcised.

"See all of these great things will be ours and all we need to do is just be circumcised. It's a small thing, right? Just think of all the great stuff that will go along with it though."

Once again, the Geneva Bible is very insightful about the situation, "Thus many pretend to speak for a public profit, when in reality they are only speaking for their own private gain and convenience."

Hamor and Shechem have been duped and they in turn now pass this on to the people of the city. This is what Jesus would call the blind leading the blind. A person is never

more unwilling to see the truth than when he follows someone who is already deceived. Think of any cult, and the people in it, and you will see the pattern perfectly presented.

²³ Will not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs *be* ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us."

Shechem wants Dinah and he is willing to do anything to get her. He has failed to do his due diligence in the matter and his desire for her has even led his father to not see the matter clearly. And in order to make it come about, they together plan to entice the entire city to follow them in their misguided intent.

In the customary way of bad governments, hoodlum gangs, and disreputable business takeovers, the prospect of easy, unearned wealth is portrayed to the residents. We see this in commercials all the time and we hear it from our politicians every day.

It's the same type of thing that got Eve duped in the Garden of Eden. The three evils which are mentioned from the beginning, right to the end of the Bible - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

The lust of the flesh is seen in the mentioning of the daughters for the men. The lust of the eyes is seen in Jacob's wealth, and the pride of life is seen in the boasting in the flesh - the circumcision. "We will be circumcised and we will be a part of the covenant people because of it."

The same pattern caused Eve to fall, it has brought down kingdoms, and it is the thing that John warns against in his first letter to us -

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

-1 John 2:15-16

It's also the way that Jesus was tempted by the devil at the beginning of His ministry. However, He prevailed over the temptation. Now He offers to us His victory apart from these things. I hope you're continuing to see this story opened up as a picture of what lies ahead in the New Testament.

The lesson learned in this story about Dinah is a lesson which will hopefully serve as a reminder to all people about how to properly conduct our affairs around those who

would wish to deceive us and steal us away for themselves and for their own boasting and not for the glory of the Lord.

²⁴ And all who went out of the gate of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem his son; every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.

Who is it that's doomed to destruction? If good intent got us to heaven, we wouldn't need Jesus. Because we often believe that listening to a fine sounding argument can supposedly keep us out of trouble, Hitler was able to dupe Neville Chamberlain.

In the same way people keep believing our politicians who tell us that taxing the rich and spending what we don't have will lead to economic prosperity. When in fact, we are heading down the path to financial ruin and economic collapse.

It's so sad, but if anyone in the city had stopped to ask Jacob what he thought, things probably would have gone differently. But Jacob's sons - the children of Israel - made all of the proposals and promises, and they had obviously left dad out of the picture. As I've noted several times already. Not a single word spoken by Jacob has been recorded during the entire incident.

Jacob pictures Jesus and so maybe it's clearing up for you now. No one has asked what the significance of circumcision is. No one has asked why they should be circumcised, only that it was what they needed to do in order to get what they want. And no one has prayed to the Lord nor have they invoked him in a vow.

What circumcision signifies, what it entails, has been completely left out of the discussion. No explanation from the most important person in the house has been asked for. And once again I'll note that God is never mentioned in this chapter - not God in general, not the Lord in particular. He has been ignored by everyone.

You may wonder why we use the term sheeple... it's because for the most part we just follow along without questioning. We're silent as we get sheared and we're silent as we go to the slaughterhouse. We trust even where trust isn't due and we obey those who deserve no allegiance.

A whole town follows the good, but misguided intentions of a man who is in love with a girl, but who has been misdirected concerning how to get her. And many, many people throughout the ages have been misdirected by those who are in love with an idea, but who are misguided about how to receive it.

I started my walk in the Jehovah's Witnesses and I can testify first hand that they really think they are following the truth, but they're not willing to ask the hard questions of those who lead them. And the leaders have been misdirected by others who have misled them.

Every person who buys a BBQ grill is responsible to pick up the instruction manual and check the instructions before turning on the grill. If they explode themselves because they didn't put the thing together properly, they can't blame the manual unless they used a faulty manual.

And every person who calls on God is responsible to pick up His instruction manual and check the instructions before committing to their call. If they wind up in the wrong place at life's end, they can't blame the instruction manual unless they used a faulty manual.

And even if they have the right manual, they need to make sure that if they don't understand the instructions, that they check with the One who wrote them. This is what prayer is for. "O God, I don't understand." Please open my eyes to see the wondrous things in Your word. Guide me, teach me, and give me honorable teachers.

Relying on someone who isn't qualified to interpret the instructions and handle them properly is as useful as drinking sand on a hot day.

This is where we have to stop today, but it's not the end of the incident with Dinah. Next week we'll see the tragic consequences of not following the blueprint of life.

But there is a blueprint... and it's available to everyone here today. It's the Bible. In it is wisdom, love, grace, and mercy. In it also is sadness and woe for those who don't follow it properly. There is one key point of this book which is a necessary starting point for anyone who wishes to be pleasing to God. That point is Jesus.

Closing Verse: *Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. Proverbs 4:7*

Next Week: Genesis 34:25-31 (The Gentiles Who are Turning to God) (86th Genesis Sermon) Make sure to read and study those verses.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and a purpose for you. So call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

We Don't Need No Blueprint!

The sons of Jacob answered Shechem
And Hamor his father they answered too
And spoke deceitfully to them
Since he had defiled their sister Dinah; their anger grew

And they said to them, "We cannot do this
To give our sister to one who is uncircumcised
For that would be a reproach to us, it's something amiss
The situation is uncomfortable as you've realized

But on this condition we will consent to you:
If you will become as we are in this way
If every male of you is circumcised, then it's true
We will give our daughters to you without delay

And we will take your daughters to us
And we will dwell with you as well
And we will become one people without a fuss
Can't you almost hear the wedding bell?

But if you will not heed us and be circumcised
We will take our daughter and your dreams won't be realized

And their words pleased Hamor the king
And Shechem, Hamor's son was pleased also
So the young man did not delay to do the thing
Because he delighted in Jacob's daughter, as you know

He was more honorable than any other
Yes, than all the household of his father

And Hamor and Shechem his son
Came right away to the city's gate
And spoke with the men there, everyone
Saying: "These men are at peace with us, so we state

Let them therefore dwell in the land and in it trade

Indeed the land is large enough for this deal to be made

Let us take their daughters to us as wives
And let us give them our daughters, thus joining in their lives

Only on this condition will the men consent
To dwell with us, to be one community
If every male among us will in agreement
Be circumcised as they are circumcised, showing unity

Will not their livestock, their property...
And every animal of theirs belong to us?
Only let us consent to them, openly
And they will dwell here without a fuss

And all who went out of the gate
Of his city heeded Hamor and Shechem his son
Every male was circumcised on that date
All who went out of the gate of his city, yes every one

This story is showing us that we should heed with care
The things that we are told and to follow up with prayer

We need to use our minds to think
And to ponder life's problems with care
And to make sure that the Kool-Aid we drink
Isn't laced with something that shouldn't be there

There is a way that seems right to a man
But the end is death, unfortunate but true
So we need to check with Author for His plan
We will be saved alive in glory when we do

The proper plan is given in the pages of God's word
And so we should consult it for safety's sake
It is a treasured gift from our precious Lord
And following it will keep us from mistake

Yes Lord, guide us and keep us on the right way

As we pursue You and Your word each and every day

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 34:25-31 **(THE GENTILES WHO ARE TURNING TO GOD)**

Introduction: God chose Abraham and through him Isaac and then Jacob. Jacob became Israel and his family became the covenant people of God. However, throughout their history, gentiles joined to them and became a part of this unfolding story.

Abraham was given directions for circumcision for anyone who would join them in the family, but in due time Christ came and fulfilled the law, which included circumcision - a rite which pictured His coming and His work.

Circumcision as a rite is fulfilled in Him and this truth is seen in the story about Dinah. Although a tragic story, it is one which was included to show us pictures of things to come. I hope what you hear today will help you to understand a little more fully the truth that the work of Jesus is all sufficient for our salvation. Nothing else is needed and nothing is to be added to it.

Text Verse: *But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? Galatians 4:8, 9*

Paul calls the requirements of the law "beggarly elements" and "bondage." Is that what Christ came to do - to give us things which are unsound and which will imprison us? No, He came to free us from the law and its weakness. Our faith in Him and His work is all-sufficient for us as we'll see in today's story and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Cursed Be Their Anger

²⁵ Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males.

This is now the fourth time the term "third day" is mentioned in the Bible. It's a very common theme and it carries through with the resurrection of Christ which came, as the Bible tells us numerous times, "on the third day."

The third day after a bodily trauma is when inflammation is at its height and fever is often set in. This past week, I had a swollen finger from a splinter... this came on the third day.

It is at this time that two of the sons of Leah and Jacob, making them whole brothers of Dinah, killed all the males of the city. These two are Simeon and Levi. At this point, they would have been about 17 to 20 years old. They're at the prime of their life and at the point where males are often the most violent.

This deception and violent outburst will have a lasting effect on their lives and will cost them favor with their father and the loss of the preeminent position in the family. Reuben is the oldest son of Jacob, but he will lose his position when he sleeps with his father's wife Bilhah.

Simeon and Levi will also be passed over for the honored status because of what they have done here. Before his death, Jacob blessed the sons of Israel. When he did, he pronounced these words over Simeon and Levi -

"Simeon and Levi *are* brothers; Instruments of cruelty *are in* their dwelling place.
⁶ Let not my soul enter their council; Let not my honor be united to their assembly; For in their anger they slew a man, And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox. ⁷ Cursed *be* their anger, for *it is* fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel! I will divide them in Jacob And scatter them in Israel." Genesis 49:5-7

In fact, they *were* divided in Jacob *and* scattered in Israel. Levi, as the priestly tribe never had a land inheritance as the other tribes did. They were dispersed among the tribes. Simeon likewise was allocated to live within the borders of the land given to Judah and they became scattered among the tribe of Judah.

As a further testament to the sad consequences of their actions, Simeon is the only tribe who received no blessing from Moses when he blessed the tribes before his death. What they did, even if it was with the intent of protecting the name and honor of Dinah, is implicitly noted in the Bible as a cursed offense and one which lacks honor.

²⁶ And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword,

Under the law, we read these words in Deuteronomy 24 -

Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* children, nor shall children be put to death for *their* fathers; a person shall be put to death for his own sin. (16)

Although what happened here was before the time of the law, the concept of what is morally right and wrong stands within the precept. Not only did they kill all the males of the land, but they killed Hamor for what Shechem did.

We can make suppositions and guesses about the nature of Hamor, and how he dealt with what Shechem did, and we can make suppositions and guesses about what Shechem himself did or didn't deserve. However, there was no trial, there was no leniency, and there was no granting of mercy apart from these things.

The actions of Simeon and Levi are highlighted as without approval throughout the chapter. Neither Jacob nor God was consulted, there was lying and deception, and there was the intentional murder of innocent people in violation of God's ruling that was given to Noah after the flood.

As a little side note to this verse and a squiggle for your brain if you like these types of things, the translation which says they killed with the "edge of the sword" comes from the Hebrew words *l'pi khareb* - "the mouth of the sword."

With the exception of Young's Literal Translation, even the other most literal translations fail to convey the concept of the sword found which is found in the Bible. It is a devouring instrument. The edge, or mouth, of the sword is what steals away the soul of man, thus consuming it. The imagery in the Hebrew is outstanding.

²⁶ (con't) **and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out.**

They took Dinah from Shechem's house. Do you remember what Dinah means? Do you remember what Shechem means? Do you remember that Shechem thought what he was doing was right? If you can piece those together, then you may have an idea what this story is detailing.

God doesn't waste words, and He pulls snippets of true life out for His word when it will show us an important truth or a coming picture. This chapter is no different.

²⁷ **The sons of Jacob came upon the slain, and plundered the city, because their sister had been defiled.**

Simeon and Levi did the killing, but now it says that the sons of Jacob joined in the aftermath. With all the people dead, they strip the bodies bare. This was done "because their sister had been defiled." The price was high for the passionate lusts of one man who then fell in love with the object of his lust.

²⁸ They took their sheep, their oxen, and their donkeys, what was in the city and what was in the field,

I want to take you back to verse 23 and the words of Hamor and Shechem - "*Will* not their livestock (meaning Jacob's), their property, and every animal of theirs *be* ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us."

The very thing that they bribed the townspeople with is the thing that this verse describes as having been taken after they were killed. Their agreement to the circumcision was a hypocritical profession for the sake of worldly advantage and the pleasing of their own prince.

What has come upon them, although undeserved from the hands of man, is a just and appropriate retaliation from the hand of Providence. Everything they desired and lusted after from Jacob has become a prey to the house of Jacob from them.

²⁹ and all their wealth. All their little ones and their wives they took captive; and they plundered even all that was in the houses.

All the wealth of the town was assimilated into the people and family of Israel through this incident. The word here for wealth is the Hebrew word *khelam*. It indicates more than just possessions, but that which makes one powerful.

This would have included the gold, jewels, and weapons. All of this is now added to the wealth of Israel. Jacob was already wealthy on his own accord, but now more so. Eventually, he will also receive all the wealth of Isaac too.

And so when Jacob moves to Egypt in his later years, although it only records the immediate family members, along with them will go all of these people and possessions. Amazingly and as is often overlooked in our evaluation of the wars and captivities of the Old Testament, the people who are subdued by Israel often actually become a part of *the people* of Israel.

What seems a catastrophe, and which indeed it was in the killing of these people, is also a point of grace. The women and children and their children after them will be assimilated into God's covenant people. Out of strife comes peace; out of death comes salvation. It is a picture of God's election in a way. Great stuff that's often overlooked.

II. Cursed Among the Gentiles

³⁰ Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “You have troubled me by making me obnoxious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and since I *am* few in number, they will gather themselves together against me and kill me. I shall be destroyed, my household and I.”

Jacob directs his anger and disappointment at the two original perpetrators. It was these two who killed without cause and it was they who deceived before doing so. His words to them now will only be reinforced on his deathbed when he gives his final words to them.

In this verse, he uses a term that says he will stink like a bad odor to the Canaanites and Perizzites. This can only lead to trouble and it has been caused by these two sons. And what is troubling him is that because of his small numbers, the local residents will be able to overcome and kill him.

This is the first time that Jacob has spoken in the entire chapter and his words truly are words lacking faith. God has promised his protection and continuance, but he has forgotten this. It may be that he believes God will abandon him because of what has happened.

Whatever he is thinking, it is lacking any faith in the greater promises which were handed down through Abraham and Isaac. And also it is ignoring the promises at both Bethel and Mahanaim. It is, in a way, a picture of Israel as they were scattered among the nations and even now that they are returned to the land, not trusting in God for their protection.

³¹ But they said, “Should he treat our sister like a harlot?”

In an attempt to justify the unjustifiable, they introduce their defense. "If we hadn't acted, it would be as if we had sold Dinah as a whore." This mindset may come from Shechem's offer of any sized dowry for Dinah, but it would be twisting even that.

He was offering the dowry for her as a wife, not payment for a whore. On top of that were the lies and the wholesale slaughter of those not even involved in the incident. From the human perspective, the entire situation is wrecked with wrongdoing.

But now we need to step back and look at this chapter as a whole and see why it's included at all. If it's not telling us a spiritual truth, then it is no different than a Shakespearian tragedy. There must be, and there are truths for us to find if we look closely.

III. Explaining the Dinah Incident

This story is showing us about those who are willing to follow wrong avenues to be a part of God's kingdom. Several are noted, such as being circumcised and trying to buy entrance into the kingdom - something which is offered without cost.

The actors need to be listed once again. Dinah, means "vindicated" and is a picture of the resurrection found in Christ. She is the daughter of Leah who pictures the law. Shechem comes from words which indicate the wisdom and diligence of a person.

His father Hamor means "he-ass", a male donkey which is a beast of burden. It gets its name from its reddish color. A donkey is an unclean animal, just as gentiles are considered unclean to the Jews.

They are from the group of people known as Hivites.

This name Hivite may mean "Villagers" but it also could come from a verb which means to prostrate as in worship. In Hebrew it bears an amazing resemblance to the name Eve. It was Eve who was deceived in the Garden of Eden; it is the Hivites who are deceived in this chapter.

The inclusion of their name is certainly tying the two together. In the Garden, the serpent deceived Eve resulting in death, in this account these two sons of Leah do the same, they deceive the Hivites which results in death. The two sons by name are Simeon which means "He who hears" and Levi which means "attached."

In one way, this chapter's explanation is that it pictures rejecting the gospel for the sake of legalism. Dinah, picturing the resurrection, which is Christ's vindication by the Spirit, goes out into the land.

Shechem sees Dinah and takes her. He falls in love with who she is and wants to be united to her in marriage. In order to woo her, it says he "spoke to her heart." In other words, he intended to get her to love him after the fact, not before the act.

This is the person who gets their faith out of order and suffers for it. Emotions are to be a result of commitment, not a basis for it. If we get this wrong, when the emotions change, there is no support for the commitment. This is the case with Shechem and it is seen again later in the Bible as well.

This is the type of person who sets his emotions on salvation and tries to have a meaningful relationship based on that, but without correct knowledge concerning the matter. When this happens in a person, he invariably does things incorrectly to get what he wants.

Shechem is a son of Hamor the Hivite, a gentile. He wants to be united with Dinah, and so the first thing he does is go to his father and ask him to get her for him. He erred first by sleeping with her before proposing. He now errs by expecting someone else to make the relationship happen.

This is the person who is confused about religion and thinks that it is something which is obtained through family or through some type of deeds. This will lead to others falling into the same pit.

The sons of Jacob picture the people of Israel as they have in previous stories. It's important to remember here that this story actually happened and rape was involved. This is not, just like all the other pictures, a 1 for 1 account. It is showing a panorama of a spiritual truth realized in the work of Christ.

The overall message is what we're to see and God is using the real story to show us a spiritual truth. We see several times in the New Testament that when the Jewish people hear that gentiles want to participate in this new life, which came through Jesus' work, they become upset.

I told you a week ago to read Acts 15 and the book of Galatians and it would help you understand what is going on. Remember, that in the entire account until the end, Jacob never speaks, nor is he consulted. Neither is God mentioned - all the way through.

Shechem wants Dinah in the story; the gentiles want to participate in Christ in the New Testament. The sons of Israel are upset about gentiles wanting what they feel they

alone should have. Dinah is theirs to wield as they wish. In the same way, the Jews felt that the resurrection and the vindication is theirs, not for the gentiles.

This attitude is seen in Acts when Peter went to Caesarea to speak to the house of Cornelius. After he did, we read this -

"Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. ² And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, ³ saying, 'You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!'" Acts 11:1-3

Hamor the father of Shechem spoke on behalf of his son for Dinah. He offered peace between the two clans and a sharing of all the wealth. After this, Shechem offered a dowry of any size in order to get Dinah. This is a marvelous picture of a man named Simon who is found in Acts 8:18-21 -

¹⁸And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." ²⁰ But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! ²¹ You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.

Hamor and Shechem are trying to deal with the sons of Israel for Dinah when they should have dealt directly with Jacob. They are offering to buy her through dowry. In the same way, Simon thought he could buy the gift of the Spirit from Peter, a son of Israel, rather than going directly to the Lord.

Are you seeing the parallel? Dinah pictures Christ's vindication in the Spirit. Shechem asked for grace in conjunction with the dowry, but the two are mutually exclusive. One cannot buy grace.

After the offers, came the deceit. Just as Eve was deceived, the Hivites will now be deceived. As it says, "... the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully." Their deception was that they said wanted these gentiles to be circumcised as they were.

The pattern is seen in the Jewish people known as Judaizers. They are those who

demand that one must obey the Law of Moses and be circumcised in order to be saved. In Acts 15:1, we read this -

"And certain *men* came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'"

They held salvation up as a carrot in order to deceive them. It is the misuse of the gift of grace in order to bring about the very bondage that they were freed from in the cross of Jesus. It is the greed of religion rather than the gift of life.

This isn't just a message for the first century only. There are groups to this day by the bowlful who still teach this. Many Messianic groups do so as do many cults and sects. They add in legalism to the grace which is found in Christ - apart from the law.

I know. I encounter them continuously on my videos and posts. They are deceivers and are exactly who is being pictured here in this incident. They promise life and dwelling in harmony, but they only bring strife and death with them.

After the proposal, Shechem went right out and got himself circumcised because he was, as the Bible says, "more honorable that all of the household of his father." He naively believed that he would get what he wanted. He thought he was pursuing Christ, but instead he was destined for death.

The next thing we saw was Hamor and Shechem meeting with the townspeople at the gates of the city. This is the spot where legal matters and important business is transacted. They, having been deceived, now turned to deceive the rest.

At the gates, the people were told, "Let us take their daughters to us as wives, and let us give them our daughters. ²² Only on this *condition* will the men consent to dwell with us, to be one people: if every male among us is circumcised as they *are* circumcised. ²³ *Will* not their livestock, their property, and every animal of theirs *be* ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will dwell with us."

As I said at that time, "A person is never more unwilling to see the truth than when he follows someone who is already deceived." This is the cult mindset, this is religion without reason, and faith without direction. It is trusting *that* which should never be trusted.

Their deception came in the exact same way that Eve's deception came - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

The lust of the flesh was seen in the mentioning of the daughters for the men. The lust of the eyes was seen in Jacob's wealth, and the pride of life was seen in the boasting in the flesh - the circumcision. "We will be circumcised and we will be a part of the covenant people because of it."

It caused Eve to fall and it brought low the Hivites as well. They decided to be circumcised because they didn't check. Abraham's circumcision wasn't meant for them then, and it isn't meant for us now. It was a particular sign for a particular reason which was fulfilled in Christ.

You can almost hear it though - "See all of these great things will be ours and all we need to do is just be circumcised. Such a small thing, right? Just think of all the great stuff that will go along with it though." But Paul warns us against this in Galatians 6:12, 13 -

¹² As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these *would* compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. ¹³ For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh.

As you can see both sides are wrong in what happens here. The sons of Israel are wrong in their deception, and the Hivites are wrong in not doing their due diligence. There is no record of speaking to Jacob, nor is there a record of God being asked.

They have failed to follow the blueprint, just as far too many fail to follow the record given in the Bible. They fail to seek Jesus personally. It is the standard operating procedures of cults, charismatic churches, legalistic groups, and even entire societies.

Once the deceit took root
The people partook of the forbidden fruit

And the record states, "Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males. And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out."

The third day is when Christ was resurrected. They thought they would obtain Dinah, the vindication of the Spirit, as Jesus did, but instead, while Christ was being resurrected on the third day, they were going to their deaths. They inserted the law where the law was fulfilled. They had rejected Christ.

As Paul writes in Romans,

"I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. ¹⁰ And the commandment, which *was to bring* life, I found to *bring* death." Romans 7:9, 10

Interestingly, Hamor, is mentioned 10 times in this story and his name means, "he-ass" a male donkey. He pictures the gentiles. Under the law, the firstborn donkey was to be redeemed by a lamb or it was to have its neck broken. It was the first for all. Hamor, instead of being redeemed by the Lamb, Jesus, went to his death and all of his followed after him.

You see, every name that's given, especially one mentioned 10 times in a story - like Hamor, is given to show us the work of Christ and what will result if it is accepted or rejected. Hamor rejected it and received his just due.

Once the slaughter was complete, the other sons of Israel joined in the plunder. The wives and children who should have been united to Christ, were stolen away from Him. This is the state of countless women and children throughout the ages who have followed the head of their family into captivity.

The man is the spiritual head of the family. When he misdirects them, they normally follow him into the same trap of bondage. This is the sadness of not checking what one is told and not verifying the message that is given. Far too often, it affects more than just the one soul.

After the plunder and the spoil taking, Jacob, picturing Jesus, who has allowed man to make his own free will choices without interference, speaks directly to Simeon and Levi - the perpetrators of the crimes. Unlike any of the other sons of Israel, they are both mentioned by name, and they are mentioned twice.

Simeon means, "He who hears." His name is given because he pictures what is said by Paul in Romans 2 -

"For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law 13 (for not **the hearers of the law** are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified."

Simeon, "He who hears" was just that, one who heard but did not do. Levi means "Attached." The sons of Levi were the administrators of law. They were attached to it. Of all the people who should have known the freedom from the law found in Christ, it should have been them. But Levi pictures those who would impose the law on the people seeking grace.

This is the reason why neither was given an inheritance in the land of Canaan, but instead were dispersed in Israel. It is also the reason why Simeon wasn't blessed by Moses before his death. They are a picture of those who, even to this day, attempt to insert the law where the law doesn't belong. "You have no inheritance among Me."

They picture works-based salvation, reintroducing the law, which can only lead to condemnation. To introduce works beyond the work of Christ is to say that the work of Christ isn't good enough. It is a repeated warning in the New Testament.

Just as they killed the people with their swords, Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 3:6 that the law brings the same effect -

"who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."

It couldn't be clearer and yet we muddy the waters. Paul is adamant, and time and time again he tells us the same thing -

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. ² Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. ³ And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. ⁴ You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by law; you have fallen from grace." Galatians 5:1-4

This is the rebuke of Jacob to Simeon and Levi. It is the dishonoring of God by imposing the law by those who, in fact, break the law which they are imposing. Again, to Romans 2 -

You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? ²⁴ For “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,” as it is written. Romans 2:24

These are the things being pictured in this tragic story. It really did happen to Dinah, but God has used the details to show us what is even more tragic. Dinah was violated physically, but her life went on. Others are violated spiritually and, like the Hivites of Shechem, they die eternally.

The outward rite could never make the Hivites Israelites, nor can it bring you any closer to Christ. Circumcision means nothing, nor does any other observance of the law - be it a Sabbath day or abstaining from pork. In Christ, the law is fulfilled.

Without the reality of worshipping God in Spirit and in truth, all our external rites mean diddly-doo. Don't let those, who under the pretense of meticulous scruples, lead you down a path of treachery which is as malicious and as diabolical as any that could be perpetrated against you.

Rest in Christ, trust in Christ, live for Christ and be consumed in your thoughts, life, and actions for Christ. This is the place where heaven's rewards are to be found. In our Lord, Jesus the Christ. Either His cross was sufficient or we are all doomed. As Paul says,

But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ¹⁵ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

-Galatians 6:14, 15

Our walk is all about grace. Just go to the last sentence of the Bible and you'll see this.

Closing Verse: ¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. Ephesians 2:14-16

Next Week: Genesis 35:1-8 (Arise, Go Up to Bethel) (87th Genesis Sermon) Make sure to read and study those verses.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and a purpose for you. So call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Dying By the Law or Living in Christ

Now it came to pass on the third day
When they were in pain
That two of the sons of Jacob came their way
Simeon and Levi, their wrath they did not contain

Dinah's brothers, each took his sword
And came boldly upon the city
And killed all the males, the entire hoard
They killed them all, showing no pity

And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son
With the edge of the sword, in this brutal way
And took Dinah from Shechem's house when they were done
And went out on that very same day

The sons of Jacob came upon the slain
And plundered there the entire city
Because their sister had been defiled
They took everything, showing no pity

They took the animals, every sheep, ox, and donkey
What was in the city and what was in the field
And all their wealth their actions quite wonky
The wrongness of their ways couldn't be concealed

All their little ones and their wives they took captive;
And plundered all that was in the houses, really quite adaptive

Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi
"You have troubled me by making me to stink
Among the inhabitants of the land, yes even I
The Canaanites and the Perizzites, will hate me I think
And since I am few in number as you already know
They will gather together against me and kill me as their foe

I shall be destroyed, my household and I, we are at death's door
But they said, "Should he treat our sister like a whore?"

This story though brutal and filled with deceit
Contains a lesson to which we should pay heed
The work of Jesus is sufficient and complete
So to it we need not add any other deed

He has accomplished all for us, nothing is left undone
By our glorious Lord Jesus, God's own Son

And so Lord help us to trust in and rest in Him alone
Give us wisdom to pursue Him all of our days
And remind us that His shed blood does for our sin atone
And as we remember we will give you all of our praise

Yes Lord, all majesty and honor belong to You
And so we offer you our praises, only to You they are due

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 35:1-8 **(ARISE, GO UP TO BETHEL)**

Introduction: Today's sermon actually got started over six months ago. My friend Sergio who used to attend here, now living in Israel, had some questions about this passage as it was part of his daily reading. We talked about it, as we often do and came to some conclusions. Afterward, he looked into it a little more and I did as well. He sent me an email with his thoughts which I saved.

Here is the opening greeting in the email, reflecting the kind of guy he is - "Charlie - Today's conversation was probably the best conversation I ever had, simply because we were working together towards solving a question in the Bible."

- 1) Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Psalm 133)
- 2) Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to test him with hard questions. 1 Kings 10:1
- 3) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly (Col 3:16)

Sergio continues, "I am excited to write down these thoughts." Then he wrote them down and they have been incorporated into the sermon in large part.

As Sergio reads and studies, he writes down questions and then purposes to find answers to those questions. This is what all of us should do as we read the Bible. We learn more by teaching than sitting in class listening because the questions force us to think. This is often what I'll do when typing. I keep asking "why Lord?"

I'll give you an example from his notes which are a part of today's passage - "The word used in Hebrew for terebinth tree in verse 4 is not the same word as in verse 8 - in verse 4 it says Terebinth tree in female form, in verse 8, terebinth tree is in male form. Interesting - why is this so? and why are these two mentioned?"

I didn't find an answer to this question, but it did challenge me. Nothing is ever wasted when we ask questions of the Bible and of the Lord also. This is what I recommend to you as you read. Note: I said "as" you read, not "if" you read.

Text verse: *I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go into the house of the LORD." Psalm 122:1*

Jacob is going to Bethel, the House of God, in today's verses. Everything we've seen thus far in Jacob's life has been directed to this picture of the work of God in Christ and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Go Up to the House of God

¹ Then God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother."

"Then God said" which opens this chapter tells us that this is following chronologically after the incident of chapter 34 where Jacob's sons killed all the males at Shechem and took all the females and the plunder captive.

It is God directing Jacob specifically. The last time we saw this happen was in Genesis 31:3 and 13, which was six or seven years earlier. He was living in Padan Aram when we read this -

"Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you." ... "I *am* the God of Bethel, where you anointed the pillar *and* where you made a vow to Me. Now arise, get out of this land, and return to the land of your family."

Since that time, Jacob returned and lived first in Succoth and then in Shechem - picturing the church age and the millennial reign from Jerusalem. Now, at God's divine direction, he's instructed to once again move to a specific location and for a specific purpose. He is told to "go up to Bethel and dwell there."

Bethel was the second stopping place for his grandfather Abraham when he lived in the land and it's about 28 miles south of Shechem, so it's not that far - it would be like God telling you to move to from Sarasota to Punta Gorda. It's also the last recorded place he was at before he left the land of Canaan well over 20 years earlier.

When he was there, the Lord appeared to him and said "I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants." Now only the term El is used - "Mighty One." This is probably because of the location's name - Bethel or "the house of El."

He is told to dwell there and to make an altar there. And God gives him the reason. He says to make the altar "to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother." This was back in Genesis 28. After his vision in the night, Jacob woke up and made this vow -

²⁰"If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, ²¹ so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. ²² And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

Although Jacob built an altar in Shechem, it is now time to build one in Bethel, the House of God. This would be in fulfillment of his vow to the Lord before he left.

² And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments.

The standard thought is that this is speaking about the idols that Rachel had stolen from her father before they left Mesopotamia and fled. These may have been in the camp, but even if they were, that isn't the whole scope of what Jacob is talking about.

In just a few verses, it'll mention other things that were included. Jacob had many servants from Mesopotamia as we've already seen. They probably had their own idols that they brought along. He also acquired all the women and booty from Shechem and that would have included many more.

But now, moving at God's direction and to the House of God, they are told to "put away the foreign gods." The term is *elohey hannechar* which can also be translated, the gods of the foreigners. Everything that had been brought into his camp which could defile the worship of the true God was to be disposed of.

After this, they were to purify themselves and change their garments. Washing and changing of garments is something that is seen throughout the Bible in anticipation of meeting with God. In Exodus 19:10 & 14, it was seen at the giving of the law -

¹⁰ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. ... ¹⁴ So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes.

The same concept is seen in the 24th Psalm in preparation for a meeting with the Lord -

³ Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD?
Or who may stand in His holy place?

⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
Who has not lifted up his soul to an idol,
Nor sworn deceitfully.

⁵ He shall receive blessing from the LORD,
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.

⁶ This *is* Jacob, the generation of those who seek Him,
Who seek Your face. Selah

And as a third example, almost the exact same words were spoken by Joshua to Israel concerning their obligation to the Lord -

²³ “Now therefore,” *he said*, “put away the foreign gods which *are* among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel.” ²⁴ And the people said to Joshua, “The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!” Joshua 24:23-24

³ Then let us arise and go up to Bethel;

After the rite of purification, only then will they arise and go up to the House of God. They have now purged themselves of what is impure, both physically and spiritually, and have changed into clean garments which are an outward reflection of the inward purity they were to possess.

This is actually something that we see in its truest sense as revealed in the New Testament faith found in Christ -

¹⁹ Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, ²¹ and having a High Priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Hebrews 10:19-22

^{3 (con't)} and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.”

This is Jacob's statement acknowledging the vow which was reminded to him by God in verse 1. He was in distress as he departed his home after being threatened by Esau. And he was in distress many times in the ensuing years.

Time and again we've seen Jacob face a challenge and the Lord there with him in his trial. The altar is a demonstration of gratitude to Him as much as anything else. "You have provided as You promised and here is this altar of my thanks and devotion to you."

⁴So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which *were* in their hands, and the earrings which *were* in their ears;

In obedience to the patriarch, the people of the camp gave everything which was an idol or a talisman to Jacob. This included even the earrings which were used in this manner, just as many people use necklaces today. Adam Clarke in his writings describes one he owned personally -

"Ear-rings were certainly worn as amulets and charms, first consecrated to some god, or formed under some constellation, on which magical characters and images were drawn. A very ancient and beautiful one of this kind brought from Egypt, cut out of a solid piece of cornelian, now lies before me. ... it is engraved all over with strange characters and images, which prove that it was intended for a talisman or amulet."

^{4 (con't)} and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which *was* by Shechem.

The terebinth tree here is surely the same one which was mentioned back in grandfather Abraham's time in Genesis 12:6, just as Abraham entered the land of Canaan we read these words -

"Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites *were* then in the land."

What may seem like a diversion, but which isn't, is to explain what the name of the tree, Moreh, means. It means early rain as used in Joel 2:23 when speaking of the future millennial kingdom -

Be glad then, you children of Zion, And rejoice in the LORD your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, And He will cause the rain to come down for you—The former rain, And the latter rain in the first *month*.

This same word *Moreh* also means "teacher." Both words come from the verb *yarah* which means to throw or shoot. Another derivation of the root is the word *Torah*, meaning Law. The name "Jerusalem" also may have reminded the people of this verb too. This tree is being tied to what has happened and what is coming.

II. God of the House of God

⁵ And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that *were* all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.

The sons of Jacob had just killed all the men of the town of Shechem and taken captive all the women and goods. Following directly after this, God spoke to him about moving on.

Not only would the people of Canaan have friends in Shechem, but many would have family members that married into their town - daughters as wives and sons as husbands. The natural thing would be for them to pursue and kill Jacob and his clan for what they did.

Instead though, it says that *khitat elohim*, a "terror from God" came upon the surrounding cities. Whatever this was, through nature or the superstitious beliefs of the people, God ensured that Jacob wouldn't be pursued as he traveled south to Bethel.

As a bonus to Jacob, we'll see that he retains possession of the land. Genesis 37, tells us that his sons went up to Shechem to attend to his flocks. Later in Genesis 48, as he settles his estate before he dies, he disposes of it in his meeting with Joseph.

And as a final note on this land, it still contained a well known as "Jacob's well" almost 2000 years later when a Man named Jesus sat with a woman and talked with her in the area. The sites where all of these things took place are all still there today for anyone looking for a nice historic vacation in Israel.

⁶ So Jacob came to Luz (that *is*, Bethel), which *is* in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who *were* with him.

Now after these many long years, close to thirty, Jacob is finally returning to Bethel, the place where he lay sleeping with his head on a stone as a pillow and had a vision of the Lord. He was all but alone when he was there the last time. Now he has four wives, at least 12 children, servants, flocks of animals, and wealth.

Everything that he had been promised was granted by the Lord above the ladder. The angels who ascended and descended had attended to him all along, and he was divinely protected throughout it all. This must be the reason for the inclusion of the name of the city - Luz - and the term "in the land of Canaan."

In other words, when the promise was made the town's name was Luz and he was in the land of promise, now he is again at this spot in the land of promise and the promise is fulfilled. And so it is time for him to fulfill his promise. The area which is named Luz, indicating a corrupt and perverse people, is to now be formally renamed, Bethel, The House of God.

⁷ And he built an altar there and called the place El Bethel,

By building the altar to God, he is establishing it as God's House. This is what was done by David when he bought the property for the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. He built an altar and sacrificed to the Lord there.

It is also the *first thing* the Babylonian exiles did, even before laying the foundation of the temple. We read it in Ezra 3:2, 3 -

² Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as *it is* written in the Law of Moses the man of God.

³ Though fear *had come* upon them because of the people of those countries, they set the altar on its bases; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, *both* the morning and evening burnt offerings.

The spot of land is dedicated by the altar. The pillar of promise set so long ago has become an altar of fulfillment to the promise. And as an acknowledgment of it, he calls the place El Bethel - God of the House of God. All those years earlier, when he named the place Bethel, he said that God *would be* his God if he took care of him and brought him back safely.

Now he is back and God is his God. As Matthew Henry says, "The comfort the saints have in holy ordinances, is not so much from Beth-el, the house of God, as from El-beth-el, the God of the house. The ordinances are empty things, if we do not meet with God in them."

Worship isn't for us. It is for God.

^{7 (con't)} **because there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother.**

This verse, which Sergio and I talked about, is one of only a handful, literally five times, in the OT, where the term "God" is used with a plural verb. In Hebrew it says, *ki sham*

niglu elav ha'elohim, "there the gods were (?)"... It doesn't say God appeared to him; your Bible is mistranslated. Why would they do this?

This verse causes all kinds of problems with scholars because there is obviously only one God, not many. But translators don't want to translate this as it appears because then it seems to make no sense. And so your translation, whether you realize it or not, doesn't reflect what the Hebrew text says. This includes ye olde KJV.

I say that the plural is correct. It's not talking about God appearing here at all. Rather, the building of the altar and the naming of the place is to affirm that there is only one God. This is why he names the place El Bethel - *God* of the House of God. He is now fulfilling the very vow which was made so many years earlier.

"If God will be with me, ..., then the Lord shall be my God."

In other words, by proving yourself faithful to me I will be faithful to you. All other gods will be removed from me. And this is what the verb *niglu*, which he uses, means. It's used only one other time in the Bible in this form, in Jeremiah 13:12. There it says in the NASB, "Your skirts have been removed." This plural verb, *niglu*, comes from the root *galah* which means "to cover" or "remove."

If it was that God that "appeared" as your Bible says, then a different word *yera* should have been used just as it is with any divine appearance. In Exodus 3:2, it says *way-ye-ra mal-ak*, "the angel appeared." In Genesis 12:7, *way-ye-ra Yah-weh el abram*, "the Lord appeared to Abram."

In fact, this word, *yera*, is used even in this chapter, in verse 1 and then again in verse 9. This shows us that it certainly isn't speaking about God appearing at all.

People have claimed the Hebrew is wrong (that's convenient!), it's a scribal error, or they've made up numerous other excuses as to why the plural verb is used, but the plain sense of it is that your Bible is mistranslated. Rather, Jacob was probably as confused about God as most people.

Thus there was the need for the Lord to appear to him at Bethel and there was the need for the Lord to prove Himself faithful to the request. The gods were removed from Jacob *potentially* at that time - "If you will do these things, you will be my God."

The gods were removed *actually* when God appeared to him in Shechem in verse 1 and reminded him of his vow. Thus we have the purification of the people in preparation for the divine meeting in verse 2, and the burying of the false gods in verse 3.

This is what is being relayed here. The Lord *is* the true God and Jacob now has acknowledged that by removing the false gods. They *were* removed from Jacob at Bethel when he fled from the face of his brother in *hope*, and they *were* removed from Jacob as he left Shechem in *home*.

This is an explanation which completely covers the use of the plural verb. You see, we need to let the chips fall where they fall and not try to hide otherwise difficult verses that may not fit with what we think we know. Having said that, I have found not one other commentator on this anywhere, so you'll either have to stick with your translation or seek to find out if I'm correct or not.

There is nothing wrong with either the Hebrew text or a proper translation of it which says. "The gods were removed..." This is what happens. They were removed from the house and covered with dirt.

III. Deborah, The Honey and the Milk

⁸ Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the terebinth tree. So the name of it was called Allon Bachuth.

This person, only mentioned here by name, is the same person mentioned in Genesis 24:59 - "So they sent away Rebekah their sister and **her nurse**, and Abraham's servant and his men."

If you missed that sermon, and several others, you missed the reason for her inclusion in God's word. It is extremely rare to be included in the Bible. Of the billions and billions of people who have ever lived, only a few are mentioned.

And even fewer are given such incredible note. Very few people's death and burial are recorded and yet hers is. Even the place is noted and it is named based on her burial. Never have I read a commentary explaining why she is included at all. Commentators go no further than explain who she is, but not her importance nor the reason why God included this one verse about her.

Today you will see why. As I showed when she was introduced, she pictures the Word of God, the Bible. Her name means "Bee." A bee produces honey. But she is also described as a wet nurse (*yanaq*) - a woman who suckles children, thus giving milk. Both of these are used to symbolize the Word of God in the Bible. A few of many examples of note are as follows –

Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the land which You have given us, just as You swore to our fathers, “a land flowing with milk and honey.” Deuteronomy 26:15

God's land is the land of the Bible - of milk and honey. It is called this numerous times. And Peter says this in his second letter -

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord *is* gracious. 1 Peter 2:2, 3

And John speaks also of the sweetness of God's word -

So I went to the angel and said to him, “Give me the little book.” And he said to me, “Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth.” Revelation 9:9

Deborah was the one to have suckled Rebekah when she was born, but one might question, why would they send her wet nurse with her when she went to meet Isaac? She was all grown up. The reason is that she performed this function as her lifetime role.

People think a wet-nurse must have recently undergone childbirth. This isn't true. Suckling itself elicits lactation in a woman. The account of one wet-nurse, Judith Waterford, comes from 1831. "On her 81st birthday, she could still produce breast milk. In her prime she unfailingly produced two quarts of breast milk a day."

My grandmother was raised in China in the early 1900s and she said this was a common job for some women. Their profession was to be a wet nurse their whole life. And so, based on this, and that we previously saw that Deborah went to Padan Aram with Jacob, she probably suckled every person born into this family, from Rebekah, to Jacob and Esau, and all the way to Joseph and Dinah.

This is why she went with Jacob when he went to Mesopotamia - because it was her duty to the family who came from Rebekah. And thus, under this tree named *Allon Baccuth* - the Oak of Weeping, below Bethel, the entire family who had been suckled by this woman of note **wept** as the source of their own developing lives, was laid to rest. What do you think that's picturing?

Now that we've looked at the surface details of this story, the cultural and historical aspects of it, we need to ask ourselves, why? Why has God included these details? They're interesting, yes, but God must be showing us something... and here is the Light -

Since Jacob was introduced, we've seen stories continuously unfolding, showing us the broad panorama of what God is doing in history and how it all centers on, and points to, Jesus. Jacob has left Shechem in the Land of Canaan where an altar had been built.

This was, as we saw, a picture of the Millennial reign of Christ, the final dispensation the Bible notes - Man under the personal reign of Christ. After that was the insert story concerning Dinah. A three part series which pointed to the need to avoid legalism and works-based salvation, but to rely solely on the grace of Christ. This is something needed throughout all ages, even in the millennium.

What comes after the millennial reign? The eternal state - we call it heaven. God directs Jacob to leave where he is, Shechem in the Land of Canaan, picturing Jerusalem in the Land of Canaan and to go to Bethel. In chapter 28 it was a picture of heaven; it is again now.

Jacob left his home, Jesus left His home. Jacob went to Padan Aram - the place of elevated ransom. Jesus came to earth and paid an elevated ransom. Jacob acquired Leah and Rachel. Jesus fulfilled the law and brought us grace. Jacob had his children, picturing the people of Israel and the work of Jesus.

The story continued steadily through all of the pictures of these last 25 sermons, each detailing portions of Jacob's life, and each pictured the steady unfolding work of Jesus. Now that the millennium has come and gone, there are final words of glory in the last two chapters of Revelation, pictured in these eight verses.

Jacob instructs his *household* (meaning every picture we've seen - the law, grace, the church age, the time of Israel, the captivities of Israel, the millennium, and everything else) to put away the foreign gods, purify yourself, and change your garments. All of this is to be found in the Bible pointing to the work of Christ in our lives. In Daniel 12:10 we read this -

Many shall be **purified, made white, and refined**, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.

In Revelation 3 we read this -

He who overcomes **shall be clothed in white garments**, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

This process has been going on since the beginning and it will continue to the last moment. People abandoning their idols and being purified and clothed in the righteousness of Christ. This is all pictured by this one verse. Only after this occurs will we travel to Bethel - the House of God, heaven. As it says in Revelation 21 -

And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. ²⁷ But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie (26, 27)

There at the terebinth tree of Moreh where the promise was made to Abraham, the people buried their idols. Moreh, as noted, indicates the early rains which fill the valley of Baca, the valley of weeping - which is our lives. It also means Teacher. The tree of the Teacher who instructs us on who God is.

The idols of the people of all ages are buried there right up until the ending of the millennium, pictured by Jacob's time in the city of Shalem reflecting Jesus' reign in Jerusalem.

Only after the people are purified, made spotless, and wearing the whitened garments of Christ are they ready for the final stage of their journey. Along the way, God divinely protects his people, pictured by the terror of God upon the people as they traveled.

Finally Jacob comes to Luz, that is Bethel. Both names are given and so we have to go back to our last visit here and remind you of their meaning and significance.

Luz comes from a verb which means "to turn aside" in a negative way - such as turning away from wisdom or being a twisted person. Luz is named after a "crooked and perverse generation" that lived there. It is the world of fallen man but the Lord came to the twisted and crooked earth, leaving the glory of the House of God - Bethel, to redeem his people.

Luz is a fruit similar to the almond but which matures differently. Luz starts off sweet and becomes bitter, in contrast to the almond which starts bitter and becomes sweet. Man corrupted the sweet paradise created by God and it became bitter - *Luz*. The Lord has come to restore what was made bitter by restoring to us access to the House of God - *Bethel*. This is why both names are given.

There in Bethel, picturing the New Heavens and the New Earth, it says Jacob built an altar and called the place El Bethel. Yes, there is an altar in heaven, Revelation tells us so. Jacob calls his altar El Bethel - God, of the House of God; the God of Heaven. Notice the difference between this altar and the one he built in Shechem -

El Elohe Israel, God, the God of Israel - in Shechem (Millennial reign in Israel)
El Bethel, God of the House of God - in Bethel (Heaven)

The God of Israel is Jesus (El Elohe Israel). He is no less God in Heaven, but in eternity we will see the fullness of the Godhead (El Bethel). When going over the verses with my friend Sergio more than half a year ago, he wrote asking -

"Why would Jacob name the place again? He already named it in Chapter 28. And, he was reminded of the name in verses 1-2? Obviously Jacob did not try to name the place with the same name again, but rather was pointing out that there is only one God?"
That was very astute of Sergio.

Can you see why asking the Bible questions as you study is so helpful? Questions help to provide the answers. The reason for the name being given again, after being given so many times, is because of what it pictures - the procession of the Godhead in eternity, something we will experience personally. Paul tells us -

²⁷ For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under *Him*," *it is* evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. ²⁸ Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

-1 Corinthians 15:27, 28

Finally, after this glorious picture of heaven and us in the presence of God of the House of God, we read this verse which seems almost like an unnecessary insert. Why is it included?

⁸ Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the terebinth tree. So the name of it was called Allon Bachuth.

Think... why. Why is this there? Deborah, the instruction of God which has been with man all along, feeding us with delight like honey, and sustenance like milk, will no longer be needed. The Bible is complete with the word "Amen" at the end of Revelation. The pictures are complete and the story is behind us.

Now only eternity awaits - a ceaseless, endless journey into the mind of God and the Light of His glory, unwritten and ready for eternal exploration. Deborah is behind us; the Bible is done. The tree was called Allon Bachuth - the Oak of Weeping. This treasure, the glorious, marvelous gift from God, the Holy Bible, will be behind us and buried under the ancient tree of time. I will shed two tears that day.

The first will be a tear of sadness at the passing of one portion of our existence. The second will be for the joy of what lies ahead as we walk in the presence of God and in the splendor of His glory and that of the Lamb of God for all eternity. The Bible never says there will be no tears in heaven. It says He will wipe away all tears.

In the sermons ahead, more pictures are coming - more accounts of God's love for the people of the world, but in the erecting and naming of this altar, we can look back on past history seeing all that has been accomplished and into the future with certainty about what lies ahead.

We can see the greatness of the plan God has laid out for His people - Jew and Gentile alike and we can hail Him for His marvelous deeds. Hallelujah! Mission Accomplished.

Closing Verses (3): *But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

-Hebrews 11:16

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. Revelation 21:3

How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!

-Psalm 119:103

Next Week: Genesis 35:9-15 (Israel's Land Promise) (88th Genesis Sermon) Make sure to read and study those verses.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

God of the House of God (The Burial of Deborah)

Then God said to Jacob, with confirming nod
"Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there too
And make an altar there, make it to God
Yes to God who appeared to you

When you fled from the face of Esau your brother.
From the face of him and not another

And Jacob said to his household, not just a few
And to all who were with him, all of those
"Put away the foreign gods that are among you
Purify yourselves, and change your clothes

Then let us arise and go up to Bethel
And I will make an altar there to God,
Who answered in the day of my distress, so well
And has been with me in the way which I have trod

So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods acquired over the years
Which were in their hands
And the earrings which were in their ears
Idols procured from foreign peoples and foreign lands

And Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree there
Which was by Shechem, their power he did foreswear

And they journeyed, and the terror of God
Was upon the cities that were all around
And they did not pursue the sons of Jacob as he trod
On his journey to Bethel, to that sacred spot of ground
So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel)
Which is in the land of Canaan
He and all the people who were with him as well
They arrived at the place to which they had been aimin'

And he built an altar there

And called the place El Bethel
Because there God appeared to him
When from his brother he fled like a gazelle

Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse died
And she was buried below Bethel
Under the terebinth tree, her graveside
So it was named Allon Bachuth, as the account does tell

The ordinary life of a man chosen by God
Has been used to tell us of glories ahead
And of wonders in which we gaze upon, awed
Stories of Jesus, our God, our King, our Head

At the fall of man in the Garden of Eden and all ages ahead
The plan has been known to our glorious Lord
In another garden we were restored when Jesus bled
The story is told to us in His precious word

It reveals heavens riches awaiting each of us
Who put our trust in God's glorious provision
Trusting alone in the work of Jesus
Will carry us to the place of the beatific vision

And so to our King we sing Hallelujah and praise
As we live out our lives for Him all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 35:9-15 (ISRAEL'S LAND PROMISE)

Introduction: If you've read the book of Genesis just once, you know that Jacob has already been named Israel. In fact, what happens in today's seven verses is more often than not claimed by scholars to simply be a legendary repetition of the same account.

Unless you know that God has a purpose for every word in His Word, there often seems to be no sense in why things get repeated and patterns keep showing up in the Bible. And so scholars make up things like, "Oh that was inserted many years later by a scribe."

Or you may hear, "This is the same story, just being told differently and they don't know which one actually happened, so they kept both in the Bible."

Too often, incompetence, carelessness, or willful manipulation of the text is used to explain away why things are the way they are. Is that it? Is this a book of error and haphazard compilation, or is it the carefully recorded work of a methodical and infinitely wise Creator? I would lean heavily on the latter.

In chapter 32, Jacob was told his name would no longer be Jacob but Israel and yet the Bible never records him actually being called Israel until many years later. Here in Chapter 35, it still hasn't happened. And yet, in today's passage, he is *named* Israel again.

Is there a reason for these things or are they really just legendary repetitions which partially match what happened? Well, let's see what God has for us today as we peer deeply into this story.

Text Verse: *Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever.*

-Ezekiel 37:25

In the church, we read verses like this one and try to find a reason why forever means something other than forever, or why what is promised to one group of people actually belongs to another group of people. When this happens, it's usually because we already believe something different than what the verse actually says.

The promise spoken to Ezekiel by the Lord is one which was long before spoken to Jacob. The land of Canaan belongs to God and God has granted it to one group of people. If we can simply accept that at face value, then we will more readily be able to understand the other things that God is doing in history as well.

Let's do our best to accept that God's promises stand and that He didn't err in returning a nation of disobedient people back to the land He long ago kicked them out of. Instead, He has a reason for them being there. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. God Appears to Jacob

⁹Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him.

There's an amazing set of parallels between the life of Jacob and the life of Abraham. Many of them are actually highlighted in these verses in an interesting way. Jacob has returned from being out of the land of Canaan and he now returns to Bethel where he had his vision before he left.

In that vision the Lord promised him that, "the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants." Likewise, Abraham entered Canaan and was given a promise in the same area, just east of Bethel. It said, "To your descendants I will give this land."

After receiving the promise, Abraham left Canaan for Egypt and Jacob left Canaan for Padan Aram. After returning from Egypt Abraham eventually journeyed to the same spot between Bethel and Ai. Jacob returned from Padan Aram and eventually has journeyed back to Bethel as well.

Here in this verse, it says that God appeared to Jacob "again" when he came from Padan Aram. "Again" is referring back to when He appeared to him before He left almost 30 years earlier. This is why Padan Aram is mentioned. He appeared to him there at Bethel before He left, and now He appears again after his return.

The altar was built and the name El Bethel was given in fulfillment of the promise made so long ago. After the building of the altar, God now appears to him. Unlike last time, which was in a vision at night, this time He appears in visible form. The last time, before he left, Jacob said these words -

"If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, ²¹ so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God."

Now that the promise is fulfilled, the Lord is his God. This is why the term "God" is used ten times in this chapter, but the term "Lord" never is, even though it was used four times in his vision 30 years earlier.

The Lord, Jehovah, who stood above the ladder proved Himself faithful to Jacob, and therefore the Lord is now his God. I hope you're understanding what I'm trying to say.

This is the same thing as calling on Jesus as Lord, and why the resurrection is tied into our call. Remember in Romans 10:9 it says, "...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."

Jesus showed Himself faithful and the resurrection is proof of this. Therefore He is our God - we acknowledge that in our confession. In the same way, the Lord Jehovah above the ladder proved Himself faithful to Jacob. Now He is Jacob's God. Be sure, there is only one God, but who is that God?

Is it Krishna, Allah, or Buddha? Can they prove they are God? No! But Jehovah can and He did. Likewise, Jesus did and He is God. When we know it, then we need to acknowledge it. Jacob knew and he acknowledged.

This is why it's so important to understand what was mentioned about the use of the plural term "gods" from last week in Genesis 35:7. All gods are to be removed from our lives, leaving only the true God as our God.

One final thing from this verse is that it says that God "blessed Jacob." The Lord has been faithful to him, he has called on him as God, and so God blesses him. Far too often, people expect the blessing without the commitment. This isn't how things work. God's blessing is bestowed upon the committed soul.

¹⁰ And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name."

To tie all of the things which have occurred together, we come to this verse. It starts with, "And God said to him." This is God speaking, not a god, but Jacob's God, the true

God. And God says to him, "Your name is Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name."

The Lord above the ladder is the same One who wrestled with him at night. He knows this because He is giving him the same name as he was given that night. But what was it that he prayed just before the wrestling match?

He said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you'" He was Abraham's God, He was Isaac's God, and now He is Jacob's God. He is El Elohe Israel - God, the God of Israel. The Lord is God.

This changing of the name of Jacob to Israel is done by Jacob's God, but when Abraham's name was changed it says it was done by the Lord, Jehovah. In Genesis 17:5, it says, "No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you a father of many nations."

Again and again, the connection is being made between Jehovah and God. They are one in the same. Bestowing of a name indicates the ownership. In Revelation 2:17, Jesus promises His faithful a new name, thus implying He is their Master and their God.

¹⁰ (con't) **So He called his name Israel.**

What may seem even more curious than anything else we've come across, is that God just changed Jacob's name to Israel, saying, "...your name shall not be called Jacob anymore" and yet he will be called Jacob three more times in this chapter before he is called Israel for the very first time in the Bible.

After that, which is verse 21, he will be called Jacob three more times before the chapter ends. And this chapter is 6 to 10 years after the wrestling match where he was told the exact same thing, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel."

As was explained then, for the rest of the Bible both names - Jacob and Israel - are used commonly and interchangeably, sometimes even in the same sentence. Jacob is the flesh and blood man who still walks in a fallen world. Israel is the hope and promise of the life in Messiah.

Paul speaks about this in 1 Corinthians 15. He tells us there that the natural, or earthly, comes first and then the spiritual. This is true with Adam coming before Jesus and it is

true in each believer. We are born carnally, in bodies of flesh, and then we are born again spiritually.

This explains the reason why there are two stories which both claim to change Jacob's name to Israel, and it is the reason for both stories being so similar. They are similar and yet they are different. They contrast and yet they confirm.

Just as happens time and time again in the Bible, when two things are noted, they are done to show the contrast and yet the confirmation. There are two testaments in the Bible, they contrast - Old and New, the Law and Grace. And yet they confirm the Bible.

In one day there is darkness and there is light. They contrast and yet they confirm a day's duration. Jesus is Man, but Jesus is God. The two contrast, and yet they confirm His incarnation. There is heaven and there is earth. They contrast and yet they confirm the universal domain - the spiritual and the material.

In order for you to hopefully get this, I did a comparison of the two accounts where Jacob's name is changed. Here are the results and they will show you exactly what I'm talking about. I was thoroughly surprised when I lined the two up. You're the first people to hear these comparisons -

God's camp - Mahanaim (earthly)

God's house - Bethel (heavenly)

Jacob petitions the Lord in prayer (asking from God)

Jacob honors the Lord building an altar (offering to God)

O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac (earthly)

El Bethel - God of the House of God (divine)

Fear of man (his brother Esau) was in Jacob

Fear of God was on people around Jacob

Jacob is outside Canaan

Jacob is inside Canaan

Jacob is alone

Jacob is with family

Jacob wrestles with Man
Jacob fellowships with God

Jacob's body is weakened in the hollow of the thigh (groin area weakness)
Told that nations and kings will issue from his body (groin area strength)

The Man he wrestles with doesn't give Jacob His name
God gives Jacob His name - El Shaddai
The Man blesses Jacob
God blesses Jacob

The Man names Jacob Israel
God names Jacob Israel

The name and blessing of Israel applies to Jacob the man
The name and blessing of Israel applies to Jacob the people

Jacob limped in weakness
Jacob set up pillar in strength

He names location Peniel - Face of God
He names location Bethel - House of God

We are in this physical life, struggling with God and seeking His face. At the same time, we are fellowshiping with God and are living stones in His house. Israel here isn't just a picture of the people of the nation, he is a picture of the spiritual life of one who walks in the world while being seated in heaven as the Bible describes us.

¹¹ **Also God said to him: "I *am* God Almighty.**

Here we have another connection tying all the visions together. God says to him, "I am God Almighty" - *ani El Shaddai*. This is the exact same words that the Lord spoke to Abraham when his name was changed and the promise of the covenant was repeated, *ani El Shaddai*.

God is the Lord; the Lord is El Shaddai - the Almighty; and the Almighty is God. The terms are being repeated and used interchangeably for our benefit, learning, and belief. This is exactly what the New Testament does with Jesus, God, the Spirit, and etc.

Again and again. All are tied together and are used interchangeably to keep us from erring, and yet we err. Thus we deny Jesus His glory and we condemn ourselves for not paying attention.

¹¹(con't) Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body.

The Almighty God, the Lord, now repeats the promises made to Abraham eons ago. In Genesis 17, He said this to him -

And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly ... I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. (2,6)

Jacob will refer to this verse when adopting as his own his two grandsons, Ephraim and Manasseh, before he dies in Genesis 48 -

"Then Jacob said to Joseph: "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me, ⁴and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you *as* an everlasting possession.'" (3, 4)

Israel's blessing is the same blessing passed down from Abraham to Isaac, but it is a blessing which then goes to all of the sons of Israel. Instead of the son of the covenant, it becomes the sons of the covenant.

II. The Land Promise

¹² The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land."

This verse is of singular importance in understanding the role of Israel in the history of redemption. When Paul speaks of Israel, he is speaking of the people who physically descend from Israel. He *never* calls Israel the church and he never calls the church Israel.

There are those in Israel who are in the church and there are those of the church who are the Israel of God, but Israel and the church are distinct entities. If the promise of land which was made to Abraham was never mentioned again, then the church could

lay claim to the land promise, because we in the church are called Abraham's descendants by faith.

But the land promise was repeated later to Isaac and then to Jacob. Because this is so, the land promise is a promise to the physical descendants of Israel only. When they are obedient to the covenant, the land is theirs and they may use it.

When they are disobedient, the land is theirs and they may not use it. Either way, the land is God's and he has given it to them. And the duration of the gift is forever. El Shaddai said so to Abraham -

"Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." Genesis 17:8

From Abraham, the promise was given to Isaac in Genesis 26 -

³"Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. ⁴And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; ⁵because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." (3-5)

From Isaac it was passed down to Jacob in his blessing upon him -

"May God Almighty bless you,
And make you fruitful and multiply you,
That you may be an assembly of peoples;
⁴And give you the blessing of Abraham,
To you and your descendants with you,
That you may inherit the land
In which you are a stranger,
Which God gave to Abraham." Genesis 28:3, 4

Now here in Genesis 35, God confirmed Isaac's blessing with His own, restating it to Jacob - the land I give to you and your descendants.

III. The House of God

13 Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him.

We've seen parallel after parallel between God's words to Abraham and His words to Jacob. Now that He has finished speaking to Jacob, it says "God went up from him." This is the same thing that happened to Abraham in Genesis 17:22. It says, "...and God went up from Abraham."

In both instances God appeared visibly and left visibly. As God is Spirit, this must have been a physical manifestation of the Lord. It is the eternal Christ who has appeared time and time again in the pages of Scripture - making promises and returning upon the fulfillment of them. He is the covenant-keeping Lord - visible, tangible, wonderful. He is Jesus.

If nothing else shows us that Jesus is returning to Israel in the future, this concept of keeping promises will certainly do. In Matthew 23 we read this -

³⁷ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! ³⁸ See! Your house is left to you desolate; ³⁹ for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!'"

The fact that He said this demonstrates that He is really returning to them. He is the one who makes, and then fulfills, His promises, even to those who have rejected Him for so very long.

The life of Jacob, as we've seen so many times in the past sermons, has been one picturing Jesus and His work. However, the life of Jacob is also one which is instrumental to God's work in and through the line of the Messiah.

Select portions of Jacob's life have been used to picture the Lord in what is yet *Jacob's future*. Likewise, select portions of his life have also been used to picture the Lord's work in *Jacob's present*. In both ways, they reveal the hand of the Lord as He directs the plan of redemption in human history.

This is what makes stories like this so astonishing. They are real stories of real people *leading to* the Messiah, filled with moral lessons, interesting patterns, and verifiable

truths. And yet the same stories *are pictures of* the Messiah which provide theological lessons, more patterns, and more verifiable truths.

If you were in control of all things and possessed infinite knowledge, the way you could prove it would be to tell about the things you have done, and at the same time tell the things you were going to do - both in the same story. And when the stories span thousands and thousands of years, you would then add in another level of validation.

This word has been studied by wise men, scholars, scientists, mathematicians, historians, philosophers, and theologians for eons and yet new insights are peeled out of its many levels daily. It is an inexhaustible resource of the wisdom of God and a demonstration of His love for us.

¹⁴ So Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it.

With the exception of adding a drink offering, this repeats what he did after his vision in the past. There it said, "Then Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on top of it." Genesis 28:18

Is this the same stone he set up 30 years earlier? Some scholars say "Yes" and state it in the past tense, "Jacob had set up a pillar in the place where He talked with him..."

This is possible and would make sense. Either way though, the pillar is erected. Before he left on his way to Mesopotamia, he poured oil on it and made his promise-

"If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, ²¹ so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. ²² And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You."

-Genesis 28:20-22

Now, he pours a drink offering and oil on it again. The first time was a promise, this time it is an acknowledgement. And so, for the first time in the Bible, a drink offering is made. A drink offering accompanies a sacrifice which is something he would have made on the altar mentioned in verse 7 during last week's sermon.

The pouring out of a drink offering pictures the pouring out of Jesus' life on the cross. This is noted several times, such as in the 22nd Psalm which is specifically a psalm about the cross -

I am poured out like water,
And all My bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It has melted within Me. Psalm 22:14

Pouring something out means that it is entirely gone. This is the symbolism of a drink offering. Everything is given to God, just as Jesus' life was entirely poured out until the clay vessel was empty.

The oil poured on the pillar in the past was a picture of the Spirit resting upon Jesus in preparation for His work. All of that work was pictured by the events of Jacob's life since that time. Each of the stories we've looked at have detailed His work and His life.

Now Jacob pours both a drink offering and then oil on the pillar. This then is a picture His death on the cross and His resurrection by the return of the Spirit to Him. All the work has been fulfilled and we can see the circle is complete in this act.

¹⁵ And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel.

In fulfillment of Jacob's words in chapter 28, the place is formally called Bethel, the House of God. If you can see how it all fits, the Lord was above the Ladder and Jacob was on the earth. He called the name of the place Bethel in *anticipation* of the fulfilled promise.

In the interim chapters, there have been all of the stories which show the actual work of the Lord in redemptive history - through the dispensations of time and in all ages. Now Jacob is again in the same place, but God isn't above the ladder, God is there with him. Bethel has now become an actual spot where God's people reside.

Because of the work of Jesus, the hope of Revelation 21 is seen anticipated in today's verses. There it says -

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." ¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high

mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, ¹¹ having the glory of God. (9-11)

The place where Jesus, the Stone the builders rejected, now reigns is Bethel, the House of God. Because of Jesus, it will come down from heaven to dwell with men. But earlier He entered humanity through the people who will issue from Jacob. Again, we're seeing Jacob's life being used in several ways at one time.

His actions are picturing the Lord and yet his life is being dedicated to the coming of the Lord. To see this more clearly we can do another comparison like the one earlier. This is the account from chapter 28 when he was in Bethel the first time and also the verses we've looked at today -

Jacob has a vision in a dream
God appears to Jacob

Lord is in heaven above the ladder
God is there with Jacob

I am the Lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac
I am El Shaddai (the omnipotent God)

The land I will give to you and your descendants
The land I give to you and to your descendants

Then Jacob awoke from his sleep
Then God went up from him

Jacob... took the stone that he had put at his head, set it up as a pillar
Jacob set up a pillar of stone in the place where He talked with him

And poured oil on top of it
And he poured a drink offering on it, and he poured oil on it

He called the name of that place Bethel (a vision of the House of God)
He called the name of the place where God spoke with him, Bethel (the place where God resides)

Although passages like the six verses we've looked at may not have a lot that we can apply to our lives directly, there is an abundance that we can apply indirectly. They haven't told us how to live our lives or how to treat our children, but they tell us that God is in complete control of what is going on.

From the distant past in a little piece of land in the Middle East come stories which tell us of heaven's glory, God's wisdom, and the Lord's concern for even the smallest details of how things work in both the earthly and the spiritual realms. If He cares this much about such details, then how much more does He care about the other things, like your marriage and your health.

Sometimes, the Bible might seem too deep or it may have so much detail that it can be overwhelming, but the detail has been given by God to clarify and expand upon a very simple message. It is a message of hope and reconciliation. It is a message of glory **to** God and glory **for** us and it all centers on Jesus.

He is the point and purpose of everything God is doing in history to bring us back to Himself.

Closing Verse: *"I am the Lord. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name Lord I was not known to them. 4 I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, in which they were strangers. Exodus 6:2-4*

Next Week: Genesis 35:16-27 (The Circle of Life) (89th Genesis Sermon) - Make sure to read and study those verses.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The House of God

Then God appeared to Jacob again
When from Padan Aram he came
And blessed him right there and then
And God said to him, "Jacob, about your name..."

"Your name is Jacob, as you know
Your name shall not be called Jacob anymore

But Israel shall be your name, this I bestow
So He called his name Israel, a name of good report

Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty
Be fruitful and multiply as I have now said
A nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you
And kings shall come from your body in the years ahead

The land which to Abraham and Isaac I gave
I give to you, it is your inherited right
And to your descendants after you, this road I pave
I give this land, and I do so with delight

Then God went up from him in the place
Where He talked with him, there to his face

So Jacob set up a pillar in the place
Where He talked with him, there at Bethel
A pillar of stone; and he poured upon its face
A drink offering, and he poured oil on it as well

And Jacob called the place there by the name
Where God spoke with him, Bethel, this he did proclaim

God's house is His heavenly throne
And from it He is the ruler of all things
Someday it will be our eternal home
It is for this future glory, that the hopeful soul sings

This hope we have because of the Lord Jesus
His heavenly home He left to come to earth
While here he fulfilled the law and died for us
In order to give us the chance at new birth

And He prevailed over the grave
Rising from the dead to justify us
And the repentant sinner He will save
Such is the grace of the Lord Jesus

All glory to the Lamb who died for you and me
And who has secured for us the promise of life eternally

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 35:16-29 **(THE CIRCLE OF LIFE)**

Introduction: The verses for our sermon today include both joy at new life and sadness at the death of a still young woman and wife. They also include the death of one of the patriarchs after a long and full life. The details are no different, in and of themselves, than those of billions of people who have lived since then.

And yet God has chosen these specific details because they provide us with moral lessons and helpful insights into the establishment of His covenant people. But more than this, they provide pictures of what is ahead, of the marvel of His entrance into the stream of humanity in order to redeem us from our fallen state.

The Bible demonstrates such wisdom and that it could only have come from the hand of the Creator who is outside of time and sees the end from the beginning. Let's explore today's passage and see the intricacy of what these verses are telling us.

Text Verse: *"A voice was heard in Ramah,
Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children,
Refusing to be comforted,
Because they are no more." Matthew 2:18*

Rachel died in giving birth and yet more than 1700 years later, she is said to mourn for her children - as if rising from the grave to weep for them. The Bible is a collection of stories which share the details of the lives of many people.

They are brought to remembrance, even after their deaths as if they were alive because to God they are alive. The Bible teaches that the soul of man is eternal and it will spend its eternity in one of only two places. And as incredible as it may seem, God allows us to choose our destiny.

Let's make sure we choose wisely. It is the word which shows us the path we need to take and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. One Son, Two Names

¹⁶ Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel labored *in childbirth*, and she had hard labor.

As occurs throughout Genesis, we come across stories which are interesting, maybe sad, or maybe uncomfortable, but they are just stories which in and of themselves don't really teach us anything other than a bit of history. We may wonder why the details are mentioned at all, but there is always a purpose.

This story about Rachel has the *immediate* purpose of telling us about the birth of the 12th son of Israel, Benjamin. But the details about Rachel are seemingly otherwise unnecessary unless they are showing us a picture of something else. No mention of Rebekah's death is given, and of all of the sons of Israel, only Joseph's death has any details recorded.

Why Rachel? Why the details? These are questions we need to ask as we read the Bible. ***Never*** stop asking questions as you read. Let's read it again - ¹⁶ Then they 1) journeyed 2) from Bethel. "And when there was but a little distance to go to 3) Ephrath, 4) Rachel 5) labored in childbirth, and she had 6) hard labor."

Why is Bethel mentioned? Bethel means "House of God." They are on a journey from one place to another. They are headed to where Isaac is. Jacob is now going to assume his role as the patriarch of the family and his authority over Isaac's camp.

On the way there, Rachel has labor and gives birth. The verse says it is on the way to Ephrath. Why is that mentioned? Ephrath means "Fruitful." Rachel is mentioned. Her name means "Ewe lamb." She is in labor and the labor is hard.

Who is it that directs the womb? God does. He is in charge of all things and He is directing them for His purposes. In the case of Rachel, He is directing this to show us other things - using her life, even her difficult childbirth and death, for our learning.

Before we go on, let's go back and read Genesis 30:1 -

"Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die!"

Rachel wanted to either have children or die. She had one son, Joseph and lived, but now that another is coming, the consequences of her words are coming true. She will have children and she will die. This isn't meant to say that every idle word we say will

come about as we say them, but it is meant to show that God does, in fact, remember every idle word. Jesus tells us this in Matthew 12 -

"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. ³⁷ For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." (36, 37)

If for no other reason than knowing that our words are recorded, we should be careful of how we speak them in the Lord's presence. It is quite possible that, like Rachel, he may bring them to account even before the day of judgment.

As a little squiggle for your brain, the word translated as "a little distance" is the Hebrew word *kivrat*. It's only used three times in the Bible, twice about this story and once in 2 Kings 5:19. Nobody is sure exactly what it means. We can only speculate. It is a word which perplexes scholars.

¹⁷ Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, "Do not fear; you will have this son also."

From the previous verse, we know that Rachel's labor was hard. From the words of the midwife, we can be certain that Rachel was in real anguish and probably knew she might die.

The midwife sees that the baby is finally coming and so she says, "Do not fear." And then she adds the good news, "You will have this son also." The child will be a boy and he will live. Deborah, Rebekah's wet nurse, has died and so this is the first recorded child in two generations to be born and raised without her.

¹⁸ And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin.

Here in verse 18 of Genesis 35, we have a true indication of the eternality of the human soul. In Hebrew it says, *v'hi beset napshah ki metah*, "And so it was, as her soul was departing, for she died." The verse shows us that the body and the soul are separate entities. If it was merely her breath, a different word would have been used.

The New Testament teaches this as well. In the opening verses of 2 Corinthians chapter 5, Paul shows us that a soul without a body is naked. Jesus' parables show us this too.

The two are joined during life, but the soul continues on after death, in an unintended state.

God, who is directing both the means and the timing of Rachel's death, allows her to live long enough after the child's birth to give him a name. And so she calls him Ben-Oni, "Son of my suffering." And God, who knew this name was unsuitable to Jacob, shows us that he changed the name from the grief of suffering to the bond of absolute closeness. And so Jacob renames him Benjamin, "Son of my right hand."

¹⁹ So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

Once again, the very rare occurrence of the death and burial of a woman is noted in the Bible. Not only is her name given, but a general location as well - it is on the way to Ephrath. And then, as an explanation of the name, the Bible adds "that is, Bethlehem."

This was necessary to avoid confusing Ephrath with any other location of that name, and Bethlehem with any other location with that name. There is only one Bethlehem Ephrata and God wants us to be sure and not miss the significance of it.

²⁰ And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.

Just six verses earlier, in verse 14, Jacob had set up a pillar in honor of his meeting with God at Bethel. It was a time of joy and fellowship *with* God. Now in verse 20, he erects another pillar in a time of sadness and hope *in* God.

The pillar has since been a monument of faith in the resurrection of the dead. Jacob anticipates this during his time of sadness. The pillar's location was still known at the time of Moses when he wrote the book of Genesis, and it was still known at the time of Samuel about 400 years later as it is recorded in 1 Samuel 10:2.

²¹ Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

This is the very first time that the name Israel is applied to the person Jacob in the Bible. In just the last verse, it said that Jacob set a pillar on Rachel's grave. But now Israel is formally introduced with the name he was given by God. I would suggest two reasons for this.

The first is that Benjamin was just born, thereby completing the family who is known by

his name, Israel. And the second is because of who and what he is picturing in this verse. Now let's shed some light on why such detail is recorded in what we've looked at so far.

The journey of these six verses began in Bethel, the House of God. As before, this represents heaven, where God dwells. A journey is made from there toward Mamre, which is also called Kirath Arba and Hebron. *Mamre* means "bitter" or "strong." The idea of bitterness being a strong taste or experience.

Kirjath Arba means "City of the Four." Mamre represents the bitter, fallen world which Jesus is coming to reclaim. Kirjath Arba, also represents the earth. The number four consistently designates the earth in the Bible – four corners or directions of the earth – "north, south, east, west;" the four elements – "earth, air, fire, water;" the four seasons – "spring, summer, autumn, winter;" etc.

The place is also called *Hebron*. This means "conjunction" or "joining" and is telling us that what Christ will do will be for both Jew and Gentile. There will be joining of the two into one. Something which Paul explains in Ephesians chapter 2 -

¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. (14-16)

In order for Jesus to reclaim the earth, He must participate in it. And so He leaves Bethel, the House of God, or heaven. In John 3:13, we see this mission mentioned by Jesus -

"No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven."

Jesus came down from heaven (Bethel) and was born in Bethlehem Ephrata as is recorded in both testaments of the Bible. In Micah, His coming was prophesied -

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,

Whose goings forth *are* from of old,
From everlasting." Micah 5:2

In Matthew His coming is realized. When Herod the king asked where the Messiah would be born, they went directly to that verse and quoted it to him.

Bethlehem means, "House of Bread." This house pictures Jesus. In John 6:48, He said "I am the bread of life." Later in the same chapter, He even more clearly explains Himself -

"This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." (58)

He is heaven's Bread, having come from the House of God (Bethel) to the House of Bread (Bethlehem). But Bethlehem is given another name, Ephrath, meaning "Fruitful." This pictures Jesus' work in the saving of men. He explains it in John 15:5 -

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing."

It is Rachel who bears the son. Rachel means "Ewe Lamb." The child of a lamb is a lamb. This is fulfilled in John the Baptist's exclamation recorded in John 1:29, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

John prophesied concerning Jesus' work. It would be one of substitutionary death - a sacrifice - for the people of the world. The word he used for "lamb" was *amnos*, a sacrificial lamb. It is the same word that was used speaking of the coming Christ in the *Greek* translation of Isaiah 53:7. There it says,

"He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth."

However, this same word for "lamb" in the original *Hebrew* was *rachel* - the name of Rachel. Rachel's death is recorded to show us that the Messiah will also die, as a sacrificial lamb. This is confirmed by John the Baptist's words in the New Testament. Her death and the birth of Benjamin produces a dual picture - from the death of the lamb, Rachel, comes the birth of the son, Benjamin. But also from the death of the Lamb, Jesus, comes the birth of the son - each of us. Thus it is a picture of life from death.

Next it said that Rachel labored in childbirth, and she had hard labor. This is the expectancy of the completed work of the Messiah which Paul writes about in Romans 8:21-22 -

"...because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now."

And as she lay dying, the maidservant tending to the mother spoke these words, "Do not be afraid." (NLT) It is the same thing the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary at the announcement of the coming Redeemer -

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS."

-Luke 1:30, 31

Next the story tells us that as she was dying she called her son "Ben-Oni" - "Son of My Suffering." This is a picture of Jesus, the Son of man and the Son of God, the suffering Servant prophesied in Isaiah and noted in Hebrews 5:8 - "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

And so it says that Rachel died, repeating the fact again, Rachel pictures the Age of Grace, she pictures those who have come to Christ and through His cross of suffering. Paul explains it in Romans 6:6 -

"...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin."

After Rachel's death, it says "his father" called him Benjamin. It leaves the name of the father out so that we have a clear picture of the Father of the Son - God the Father. Because of the suffering and death, the Son is exalted to be called Benjamin, Son of the Right Hand."

Of course this is Jesus after His resurrection as He is noted time and again in the New Testament, such as in Mark 16:19 -

"So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God."

And to get a clearer picture of this, we can remember what happened at Bethel when Jacob was first there. He saw a ladder stretching to heaven with angels ascending and descending on it. This ladder is pictured by the journey from Bethel to Bethlehem from Jesus' heavenly home to the place of His earthly birth. Jesus says in John 1:51-

"Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

He is the Ladder.

The pillar which was set up on Rachel's grave is the promise of eternal life for those in Christ - those who have received His offer of grace, pictured by Rachel. The pillar is the hope of Christ and our promise of the resurrection. After erecting it we read that Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

As I said, this is the very first time that the name Israel is applied to the person Jacob in the Bible. I said one of the reasons is because of who and what he is picturing in this verse. He pictures Jesus traveling from heaven to the earth. And it says, he journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

To "pitch one's tent" means to come and reside. Jesus is said to have pitched His tent by coming to earth because he put on a tent of flesh. Jacob pictures Jesus who pitched his tent "beyond the tower of Eder" - in Hebrew *Migdal Eder*. This means, "The Tower of the Flock." It is the same term used to describe where the Messiah would be hailed in Micah 4:8 –

"And you, O tower of the flock, (*Migdal Eder*)
The stronghold of the daughter of Zion,
To you shall it come,
Even the former dominion shall come,
The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem."

This tower of the flock would have been the place where the shepherds were first told of the coming of the Lord, as noted in Luke 2:8 -

"Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night."

Imagine being one of those shepherds on that cold autumn night when the sky light up and the glory of the Lord shone around them in heavenly splendor - there at Migdal Eder, the tower of the flock. Every word used is pointing to Jesus.

II. The Sons of Israel

²² And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard *about it*.

Although this verse is intriguing and gives us ample opportunity for life applications of what not to do, there is a straightforward reason why it's included and why it is included right here. We have just seen the work of Messiah recorded. In this same verse it will begin to list the 12 sons of Israel.

Although all 12 sons are inheritors of the land blessing, and though Joseph will be given the birthright, only one son can have the pre-eminence leading to the Messiah. We've already seen that the second and third sons, Simeon and Levi, would be excluded - they, with malice, killed an entire town of people.

Up until this point, the first son, Reuben, hasn't been excluded. However, that wouldn't allow for God's plans to happen in the way that would lead correctly to Jesus. And so, in a moment of human weakness reminiscent of the Garden of Eden where man fell through the devil's use of the woman, Reuben also falls through a bad decision concerning Jacob's concubine Bilhah, Rachel's maid.

As I'm sure you remember from the Genesis 29 sermon, Bilhah means "foolish." The only New Testament connection with Bilhah is in 2 Corinthians 6, where it says -

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

The name Belial is connected to the name Bilhah. It means "beyond purpose;" something that is useless. Interestingly, in 1 Corinthians 5:1, Paul writing to the *same group of people*, highlights an identical situation which had occurred there -

"It is actually reported *that there is* sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife!"

The sin of sexual immorality caused Reuben to lose the right to be the bearer of the Messiah. Instead, as a tribe he faded into obscurity. And the same sin caused a member of the church in Corinth to be excommunicated for his actions. Such is the nature of temptation leading to fornication.

And so, to show the transfer of the Messianic blessing from Reuben, Simeon, and Levi to Judah, I'd like to take a moment and read you Israel's blessings upon these sons before his death -

³"Reuben, you are my firstborn,
My might and the beginning of my strength,
The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power.

⁴Unstable as water, you shall not excel,
Because you went up to your father's bed;
Then you defiled *it*—
He went up to my couch.

⁵"Simeon and Levi *are* brothers;
Instruments of cruelty *are in* their dwelling place.

⁶Let not my soul enter their council;
Let not my honor be united to their assembly;
For in their anger they slew a man,
And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox.

⁷Cursed *be* their anger, for *it is* fierce;
And their wrath, for it is cruel!
I will divide them in Jacob
And scatter them in Israel.

⁸"Judah, you *are he* whom your brothers shall praise;
Your hand *shall be* on the neck of your enemies;
Your father's children shall bow down before you.

⁹Judah *is* a lion's whelp;
From the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He bows down, he lies down as a lion;
And as a lion, who shall rouse him?

¹⁰The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,

Until Shiloh comes;
And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people.

¹¹ Binding his donkey to the vine,
And his donkey's colt to the choice vine,
He washed his garments in wine,
And his clothes in the blood of grapes.

¹² His eyes *are* darker than wine,
And his teeth whiter than milk.

²² (con't) **Now the sons of Jacob were twelve:**

Right here, in the middle of the same verse where Reuben is demonstrated to be unworthy of the Messianic blessing, there is a pause in the original Hebrew text. It ends what is called a *parashah* or a "portion." There is a ton of speculation by scholars, Jewish and Christian alike, *why* the division appears right here.

None of them that I found give the reason that I think is right. Why would a pause come after Jacob hearing about what Reuben did and before it saying, "Now the sons of Jacob were twelve?" The reason is because the line to the Messiah was decided here in this verse. It is the obvious conclusion.

Before naming the sons of Israel, the decision has been made so that when we read their names, we will be able to determine where this Messiah, that has been pictured dozens of times in this chapter, will come from. And so now the list is given -

²³ **the sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun;**

²⁴ **the sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin;**

²⁵ **the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, were Dan and Naphtali;**

²⁶ **and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, were Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Padan Aram.**

The order of the sons is given not by birth, but by mother and then by birth. Leah is mentioned first. She pictures the law and so her sons are given. Christ will come under the law. And from her sons, the first three have been excluded, therefore, we can see that Judah will be the one to bear the Messianic line.

Then the sons of Rachel, who pictures grace, are named. And then the two maidservants are listed with their sons, Rachel's maid first and then Leah's. But two more questions arise, "Why are the sons listed at all?" And, "Why are they listed here?"

The answer is that all of the sons of Israel are now born with the coming of Benjamin. In this chapter, we saw the renaming of Jacob to Israel for the second time. The first time he was renamed on the night he wrestled with the unnamed Man, and the name and blessing of Israel applied to Jacob the man.

In this chapter, the name and blessing of Israel applies to Jacob the people. Unlike Isaac and Jacob who alone held the blessing, Israel is now a collective group of people, all sharing in the covenant blessings. And the reason for the naming of them here is because of what we will see next, in our final thought of the day...

III. The Death of Isaac

²⁷ Then Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre, or Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt.

Jacob now comes to the home of his father because he will assume the role as leader of the clan which has gone from Abraham through Isaac. The sons of Israel were listed by name to indicate that all of them will participate in the inheritance of the clan, not just one of them. They will be a united group of people.

Hebron is the third major place of note that Abraham took up residence, and it is where both he and Sarah died and were buried. Isaac has resided there all along, blind and waiting for his time to end. When Jacob left there many long years before, he left with his staff and this blessing of his father -

³"May God Almighty bless you,
And make you fruitful and multiply you,
That you may be an assembly of peoples;
⁴And give you the blessing of Abraham,
To you and your descendants with you,
That you may inherit the land
In which you are a stranger,
Which God gave to Abraham." Genesis 28:3-4

The blessing has been fulfilled. God Almighty, El Shaddai, has blessed him (Gen 35:11). He has been fruitful and multiplied. He has become an assembly of people. He has received the blessing of Abraham. He and his descendants are now the inheritors of the land in which he is a stranger and which God gave to Abraham.

This then is the second reason for the listing of the sons of Israel in this place and at this time. The word of God is very precise in how it is detailed and why it is in the order it follows. It is an amazing record of the wisdom of God in His unfolding plan of redemption.

Every part of the blessing given by Isaac was fulfilled literally and completely. The names of the sons are given before Jacob's meeting with Isaac to show this. But guess what, Isaac won't die for another 12 years after Jacob's move to Haran.

It's a complicated calculation which I won't bother you with, but we can tell that Isaac will be alive when Joseph is sold by his brothers and he will actually live until 10 years before Jacob and his family move to Egypt. Why is it important to know this? The answer is because of the next verses.

²⁸ Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years.

Isaac outlived his father Abraham by 5 years, but he was blind for many of them. Thus the *quantity* of his years was exceeded by the *quality* of Abraham's. The year of his birth was 2109 Anno Mundi. After a long and blessed life, Isaac will die in the year 2289 AM.

However, during the twelve years from Jacob's arrival until Isaac's death, nothing is mentioned. Understanding this makes what the Bible *does record* much more important to know. God isn't recording the detailed life of these people. He is recording details of their lives. And the reason is because He is trying to wake us up and to search out His Son Jesus in the details.

²⁹ So Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, *being old and full of days*.

The last time Isaac was mentioned directly was approximately 40 years earlier. In those years, nothing of his life is recorded. God gave him life and used that life, including his prolonged blindness, to tell us about Himself. One might say that it wasn't fair that God allowed him to be blind just to show us pictures about Jesus.

But God is the Potter and we are the clay. How He uses us is up to Him. As Paul asks -

"But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" 21 Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?" Romans 8:20-21

When we read and understand the details of these stories, we find the sovereignty of God, but also His great grace. Why else would He show us these things, all telling about Jesus, unless He wanted us to focus on Jesus. And why would He send Jesus to die, unless He wanted us to receive that offering?

The complexity of this book is a demonstration of the love of God for each one of us. Every person recorded is there in an attempt to get us to wake up and see that God has done all of this... for us. How can we turn our back on such a gift? How can we not accept it when we see men such as Isaac used as he was so that we are the recipient of the vision that he lacked.

And Isaac, Isaac of all people will someday stand before his Redeemer and say, "Surely, once I was blind, but now I see."

²⁹ (con't) **And his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.**

The chapter ends with this final thought. The struggle between two boys that began in their mother's womb and which was a source of grief to their parents is now behind them. Together they lay their father to rest in the dust from which he came.

Esau - picturing fallen man, and Jacob, picturing the risen Christ, together bury the enmity between each other and they bury the man whose name means "Laughter" - both rejoicing at a life well lived and in the hope of the resurrection of the righteous, among whom their father is counted.

A final thought for us is that when we too are resurrected because of the merits of Christ, Laughter will be there with us.

Closing Verse: *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.*

-Hebrews 11:20

Next Week: Genesis 36:1-14 (The Generations of Esau) (90th Genesis Sermon). Make sure to read and study those verses.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Circle of Life

Then they journeyed from Bethel
And when there was but a little distance to go
To Ephrath, Rachel labored in childbirth as well
And she had hard labor in a painful throe

Now it came to pass and it did appear
When she was in hard labor, a painful throe
That the midwife said to her, "Do not fear
You will have this son, yes, this one also

And so it was, as her soul was departing
(for she died)
That she called his name Ben-Oni
But his father called him Benjamin
He is the one at his right side

So Rachel died, her life they couldn't save
Near to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), she was buried on the way
And Jacob set a pillar there on her grave
Which is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day

Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent
Beyond the tower of Eder is where he went

And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land
That Reuben went and with Bilhah lay
His father's concubine, this was out of hand
And Israel heard about it, bringing him dismay

Now the sons of Jacob twelve they were:

The sons of Leah were Reuben, born to Jacob first
And Simeon, Levi, Judah, these through her
Also Issachar and Zebulun by Leah they were nursed

The sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin
Surely these two boys often made Jacob grin

The sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant
Were two - Dan and Naphtali
And the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant
Were Gad and Asher - that rounds out the 12 you see

These were the sons of Jacob a very fruitful man
They were those born to him in Padan Aram

Then Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre
Or Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron)
Where Abraham and Isaac had dwelt
He would now settle in and not move on

Now one hundred and eighty years were Isaac's days
So Isaac breathed his last and died
And was gathered to his people, being old and full of days
His sons Esau and Jacob buried him, it was by Rebekah's side

There is a time for all of us when our life will end
A time when we will be buried in the grave
How will each of us our short lives spend?
Will we trust in Jesus, or continue to misbehave?

God has done all the work to reconcile us
All that is needed is to call out and receive Jesus

When we do, the deal is done, once for all time
Eternal life is offered to each, so don't let a moment pass
And at our end we will receive the reward sublime
Together we can walk on streets of gold, clear as glass

Accept the pardon, the offering of grace
And for eternal days behold the splendor...
The majestic splendor of God's glorious face

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 36:1-14 **(THE GENERATIONS OF ESAU)**

Introduction: Chapter 36 of Genesis is one which is almost completely disregarded by people when they read the Bible. Name after name is given and there is seemingly nothing which is attractive or new to keep one's attention. If it is read at all, instead of being skipped over, it tends to be read without any thought or reflection.

Not since chapter 25 in the genealogy of Ishmael has there been such a long list of names which seem to have no purpose. Before that, one has to go back to chapter 10, the Table of Nations, in order to find such a long and difficult to comprehend list.

This chapter is broken down into six sections which seemingly repeat or overlap each other. They don't really though. Instead they show the sequence of time and rulers throughout the history of Edom. In order, the sections are as follows:

1-8 - The genealogy of Esau, who is Edom and the wives and children he had while living in Canaan.

9-14 - The genealogy of Esau, the father of the Edomites after his move to Mount Seir.

15-19 - The chiefs of the sons of Esau.

20-30 - The sons of Seir the Horite who inhabited the land.

31-39 - The kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel.

40-43 A different set of the chiefs of Esau.

Passages like chapter 36 don't lend themselves to exciting sermons, but they are a part of God's word and are important in understanding what lies ahead for God's people, so they need to be looked at and not simply passed over.

Text Verse: *"Will I not in that day," says the Lord,*

"Even destroy the wise men from Edom,

And understanding from the mountains of Esau?

9 Then your mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed,

To the end that everyone from the mountains of Esau

May be cut off by slaughter. Obadiah 1:8, 9

The Bible showed that there would be an end to the people of Edom at some point. If we keep reminding ourselves of who Esau represents, we can see more clearly the end

of all fallen men. A time is coming when the line of Adam will disappear as it is either destroyed or assimilated into the line of Jesus.

This is found pictured in the people of Edom who were either destroyed or assimilated into the nation of Israel. The Bible shows us these things both as an advanced warning and as an advanced way of understanding what choices we should make. It's all to be found in God's word and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Generations of Esau

¹ Now this *is* the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom.

We now come to the ninth set of “generations” listed in the Bible. The last set of generations was that of Isaac, way back in chapter 25. Esau's genealogy is a branch off the main line which leads to the Messiah.

This is something which is common in the Bible. The last branch off the main line was that of the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's oldest son, born to him by Sarah's maid Hagar. Only after he was listed came the generations of Isaac. The eight previous generations the Bible has noted were:

The generations of the heavens and the earth (2:4); the generations of Adam (5:1); the generations of Noah (6:9); the generations of the sons of Noah (10:1); the generations of Shem (11:10); the generations of Terah (11:27); the generations of Ishmael (25:12), and the generations of Isaac (25:19).

For context of where we are, we should note that this listing of Esau's family is given immediately after the record of Isaac's death in the last verse of the last chapter. It's also recorded just prior to the generations of Jacob which will come at the beginning of the next chapter.

The listing of these sons is given in order of birth just as Ishmael and Isaac were in Genesis 25. There is a harmony and an elegance in how the Bible is structured which is precise, intent, and which shows great care and affection for what is being relayed to us.

The word which is translated as "genealogy" is the word *toledot*. Toledot can be spelled a variety of ways depending on the sentence structure, but the important point about it

is the inclusion or lack of a particular letter known as "vav" - the 6th letter in the aleph-bet.

Depending on whether there is one vav, two vavs, or no vavs, we can see hints about the plan of redemption that is being worked out in the people groups listed. To understand this better, and if you're curious about this, you can go back to the sermon on Genesis 5.

The spelling of *toledot* here is identical to the spelling of the *toledot* for Jacob at the beginning of the next chapter. That is good news for Esau as far as I see it.

Esau is the older brother of Jacob and the firstborn to Isaac and Rebekah. His name was given based on his appearance at birth. The name Esau means "covered with hair" or "hairy." However, his name is also similar to the word *asah* meaning "to do." In the first chapter of Genesis, when God made man, the word used was a form of *asah*.

There is a connection between these which can be made. Hair in the Bible is used to denote awareness. Man, of all the creatures made by God, is an aware being. Esau, during all of the preceding sermons, has pictured man of the earth. Man was created and he is an aware being.

We need to go back to Genesis 25 to see the story of Esau's birth in order to see how he received his name –

²¹ Now Isaac pleaded with the LORD for his wife, because she *was* barren; and the LORD granted his plea, and Rebekah his wife conceived. ²² But the children struggled together within her; and she said, "If *all is well*, why *am I like this*?" So she went to inquire of the LORD.

²³ And the LORD said to her:

"Two nations *are* in your womb,
Two peoples shall be separated from your body;
One people shall be stronger than the other,
And the older shall serve the younger."

²⁴ So when her days were fulfilled *for her* to give birth, indeed *there were* twins in her womb. ²⁵ And the first came out red. *He was* like a hairy garment all over; so they called his name Esau. ²⁶ Afterward his brother came out, and his hand took hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac *was* sixty years old when she bore them.

Esau was red and he was hairy like a garment and so the immediate association with his name is being hairy. But another connection needs to be remembered too. Because he was hairy, he would have had the appearance of a man, rather than a baby. He is the "made-man" picturing Adam, the man who was made.

However, Esau has another name, Edom. This name means "red." Here is where that name came from, also in Genesis 25 -

²⁹ Now Jacob cooked a stew; and Esau came in from the field, and he *was* weary.

³⁰ And Esau said to Jacob, "Please feed me with that same red *stew*, for I *am* weary." Therefore his name was called Edom.

³¹ But Jacob said, "Sell me your birthright as of this day."

³² And Esau said, "Look, I *am* about to die; so what *is* this birthright to me?"

³³ Then Jacob said, "Swear to me as of this day."

So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴ And Jacob gave Esau bread and stew of lentils; then he ate and drank, arose, and went his way. Thus Esau despised *his* birthright. Genesis 25:22-33

Esau was already red, but when he asked for the red stew, the name stuck. And so now he is Esau and he is Edom. But again, the name Edom has a connection to the man who was made. Man was named Adam by God. The name Adam means man; the earthly or physical being. But it has the same origin as the name Edom - the color red. Adam was taken from the ruddy, red soil of the earth.

And so here we have the three connections for you to remember once again. First, Esau is like *asah*. Man was made and Esau appeared as if fully made when born. Secondly, Esau was hairy and the concept of hair relates to awareness, as in a sentient being. And third, Edom is red which is tied to Adam who is the physical being made from the reddish soil of the earth.

All of this was explained in earlier sermons, but now Esau's generations are being listed and it's asking us to remember this and think on why he is considered so important as to have his genealogies listed in the Bible the way they are. In fact, here we have an entire chapter comprising 43 verses which is dedicated to him and those connected to him.

If Jacob is the inheritor of that which is spiritual, then Esau is the inheritor of that which is worldly. Jacob has the birthright and the spiritual blessing, but Esau also received a blessing after Jacob was given his. Esau's blessing from his father Isaac said this -

³⁹ "Behold, your dwelling shall be of the fatness of the earth,
And of the dew of heaven from above.

⁴⁰ By your sword you shall live,
And you shall serve your brother;
And it shall come to pass, when you become restless,
That you shall break his yoke from your neck." Genesis 27:39, 40

As you can see, the reason for the genealogy listed here is because of Esau's worldly blessing. We are shown that the blessing took place in the reception of worldly things. By including this genealogy with its minuteness of detail, we see that the prophecies were fulfilled by God exactly as they were made to him - both before his birth when the Lord spoke to Rebekah, and again when his father blessed him.

² Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan: Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite; Aholibamah the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite;

The names and places listed in this chapter surely all have importance and relevance, especially because some of these people are listed under different names at other times. However, if we were to analyze every name that is listed, it would take us about 2 or 3 months of sermons to get through this chapter.

Instead, I'll list just the prominent names and what they mean. The first is Esau's wife Adah. Her name means "Ornament." It is the same name as the second woman named in the Bible. She was one of two wives married to Lamech, a descendant of Cain.

Esau's second listed wife is Aholibamah. Her name means, "Tent of the high places." Both Adah and Aholibamah were daughters of Canaan, meaning they were descendants of Canaan, the cursed grandson of Noah. One is a Hittite and the other is a Hivite.

³ and Basemath, Ishmael's daughter, sister of Nebajoth.

In chapter 27, we read this -

⁶ Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Padan Aram to take himself a wife from there, *and that* as he blessed him he gave him a charge, saying, "You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan," ⁷ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Padan Aram. ⁸ Also Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan did not please his father Isaac. ⁹ So Esau went

to Ishmael and took Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebajoth, to be his wife in addition to the wives he had.

This girl named Mahalath in chapter 27 is called Basemath here. Her name means "Sweet fragrances." Esau married her because she was a daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael. His parents didn't like his first two wives and he was hoping that by marrying her, they would be happy with him.

⁴ Now Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau,

Eliphaz means, "God of strength."

^{4 (con't)} and Basemath bore Reuel.

Reuel means "Friend of God." In Exodus 2, Moses' father in law has the same name, but he is called a Midianite. Once again, it could be the same person, but he is called a Midianite because of where he lives and not who his father is. Or it could be a different person with the same name - scholars debate this.

⁵ And Aholibamah bore Jeush, Jaalam, and Korah. These were the sons of Esau who were born to him in the land of Canaan.

Three sons are born to this wife of Esau. Jeush means, "Haste." Jaalam means "Hiding." And Korah means "Ice" or "Baldness." Together five sons were born to Esau while he lived in Canaan.

II. Esau's Move to Seir

⁶ Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters, and all the persons of his household, his cattle and all his animals, and all his goods which he had gained in the land of Canaan, and went to a country away from the presence of his brother Jacob.

Here's what the Geneva Bible says about this verse, "In this, God's providence appears, which causes the wicked to give place to the godly, that Jacob might enjoy Canaan according to God's promise."

Very rarely do I disagree with the commentaries of the Geneva Bible. They are usually short, concise, and spot on, but this time they blew it. Calling Esau "wicked" simply because he wasn't the son of promise is really stretching it.

Esau was just a guy and the people who come from him will often be at odds with Israel, but they will also eventually become a part of the Israelite people. The reason for the move is explained in the next verse and it is the same reason as was given for the move of Lot away from Abraham.

⁷ For their possessions were too great for them to dwell together, and the land where they were strangers could not support them because of their livestock.

When Abraham and Lot lived together, eventually their livestock grew to the point that there were problems. Here is what it says in Genesis 13 -

"Now the land was not able to support them, that they might dwell together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. ⁷ And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock." (6, 7)

Lot moved south toward Sodom, Esau is moving south and east to the land of Seir. Lot's line includes ancestors of Jesus through both of his daughters. The move was one of necessity, but it was also one directed by God to fulfill His plans.

The same is true here with Esau. This will be seen time and time again as Israel and Edom interact throughout the rest of the Bible.

⁸ So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir. Esau is Edom.

The name Esau is mentioned 25 times in this chapter. The name Edom is mentioned 11 times. In 5 of those times, it is explicitly said that Esau is Edom or that Esau is the father of the Edomites. This is the second time this has happened.

This is obviously important to God, and He wants us to know it. What is it about Esau being Edom which is so significant that we are repeatedly told this. The answer goes right back to what the names mean.

If we understand that Esau and the Edomites are picturing Adam and his seed, and they have moved out of Canaan, then we can more clearly see what is going on. Jacob is renamed Israel and is the son of promise. Throughout the sermons detailing his life, he has pictured Jesus. We can look at Canaan as representative of perhaps the Garden of Eden.

Esau who is Edom was in Canaan just as Adam was in Eden. Adam, the earthly man, disobeyed God and was cast out of Eden - he in essence traded his birthright for soup. But in his disobeying God, he also gained something. He gained conscience and awareness as we note in Genesis 3:22 -

"Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil."

And in the same pattern, here in verse 8, it notes that "Esau dwelt in Seir." Adam went into the world of awareness and Esau has gone to the land of Seir - meaning "hairy." I've already explained several times that hair in the Bible denotes "awareness."

None of this is arbitrary and none of it should be quickly dismissed. The struggle which will continue between the descendents of Israel and the descendents of Edom is reflective of the spiritual struggle noted throughout the Bible. We are in Adam, or we are in Jesus.

This land that Esau moves to now is the same land he was living in at the time of Jacob's return from Mesopotamia, the mountain of Seir. The name Seir probably comes from a person that will be mentioned in verse 20. He is named Seir the Horite.

Or it could be that Seir's name came from the mountain because of it's hairy appearance. It probably had low bramble bushes on it which made it look hairy. Another nearby mountain is called Khalak, which means "smooth." And so this could be the case.

This makes sense because when Esau moved there, the name Seir was retained. Once again, hair is the connection between Esau and Seir - the hairy man living on the hairy mountain. The name of the land is Seir, but it will also be called Edom from now on out.

It is an area which is south of the land of Judah and it extends from the area of the Dead Sea all the way to the Gulf of Aqaba. It is in the modern land of Jordan and includes the ruins of Petra, the city carved from the sandstone used in the Indiana Jones movie.

III. The Genealogy of Esau in Mount Seir

⁹ And this *is* the genealogy of Esau the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir.

For a second time in the chapter, the genealogy of Esau is mentioned. Some scholars try to pick apart the Bible because of these type of repetitions. They will claim that this is a later insert by a different author. But this isn't at all what's happening.

Instead, as I said earlier, the listing here is all his genealogy after moving to Seir. The first only includes those born in Canaan. The Bible is being extremely precise about this group of people, where they were born, and who they were born to.

What may seem long and tedious is actually a careful record and account of a people picturing the trek of man, from his time in Eden and throughout his generations.

¹⁰ These were the names of Esau's sons: Eliphaz the son of Adah the wife of Esau, and Reuel the son of Basemath the wife of Esau.

This verse repeats what was said in verses 4 & 5.

¹¹ And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz.

Eliphaz, Esau's firstborn, has five sons. One of them is called Teman. In the book of Job, one of the three people that comes to comfort him is named Eliphaz the Temanite. Because of this, it is either the same person and he is living in the land named after his son, which seems likely, or it is his grandson who is called a Temanite after his father.

Either way, either he or one of his grandsons shows up again in Job. In that book, Eliphaz and his two friends speak wrongly about God and God chastises them for it. Here is what that account says -

⁷ And so it was, after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is aroused against you and your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me *what is* right, as My servant Job *has*." ⁸ Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you *according to your* folly; because you have not spoken of Me *what is* right, as My servant Job *has*." ⁹ So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite *and* Zophar the Naamathite went and did as the LORD commanded them; for the LORD had accepted Job. Job 42:7-9

As you can see, this line of people, descending from Esau, has incorrect concepts of God, just as men around the world who descend from Adam do. However, God in His mercy corrects them and gives them an opportunity to be forgiven.

These are the lessons we should be seeing as we travel through such seemingly difficult verses. There is nothing boring about them, but instead, there is the richness of God's

love for the people of the world - all of Adam's fallen children, symbolized by the descendants of Edom.

¹² Now Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These *were* the sons of Adah, Esau's wife.

Here in this verse, we have the introduction of a group of people who will continue to afflict Israel for many generations and almost bring them to ruin. Timna is the daughter of Seir and is noted as the sister of Lotan in next week's verses. She became the concubine of Eliphaz, the son of Esau.

Because she becomes the concubine of Eliphaz, it gave the descendants of Esau the chance to intermix with the people of Seir and eventually take over the land and expel the Horites. We find this noted in Deuteronomy 2:12 –

The Horites formerly dwelt in Seir, but the descendants of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them, and dwelt in their place, just as Israel did to the land of their possession which the LORD gave them.

The Edomites will gain ascendancy in the land and this will continue for many generations. Eventually, Herod - Israel's king at the time of Jesus, will be from the Edomite people. As you can see, every detail eventually looks forward to the coming of Jesus.

But the reason why Timna is mentioned is because of the son she will bear, Amalek. The group of people who will descend from him will be great and long-standing enemies of Israel. After the exodus from Egypt, this group will attack the Israelites. The story is memorable and a favorite of God's people even to this day -

⁸ Now Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim. ⁹ And Moses said to Joshua, "Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand." ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹ And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands *became* heavy; so they took a stone and put *it* under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. ¹³ So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. ¹⁴ Then the LORD said

to Moses, "Write this *for* a memorial in the book and recount *it* in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." ¹⁵ And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-LORD-Is-My-Banner; ¹⁶ for he said, "Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD *will have* war with Amalek from generation to generation." Exodus 17:8-16

This same group of people continued to afflict Israel throughout the time of the Judges and when the kingdom was established, their presence brought about the downfall of Israel's first king. When God commanded King Saul to destroy the Amalekites completely, he failed to do it. We read this in 1 Samuel 15 -

⁷And Saul attacked the Amalekites, from Havilah all the way to Shur, which is east of Egypt. ⁸ He also took Agag king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. ⁹ But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all *that was* good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.

Because of his failure, Samuel spoke this to King Saul, -

"For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft,
And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the LORD,
He also has rejected you from *being* king." 1 Samuel 15:23

This king of the Amalekites, Agag, was ancestor to Haman, the great enemy of the Jews who were in exile as recorded in the book of Esther. Saul's failures to do as he was instructed continued as a thorn to Israel which almost caused their extinction.

***One error leads to another until things can finally boil over.

¹³ These were the sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. These were the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife.

Reuel, Esau's son and the grandson of Ishmael, had these four sons. There is nothing further of note about any of them in the rest of the Bible.

¹⁴ These were the sons of Aholibamah, Esau's wife, the daughter of Anah, the daughter of Zibeon. And she bore to Esau: Jeush, Jaalam, and Korah.

This is basically a repeat of verse 5. Unlike the other sons of Esau, there is no mention of their grandsons. Once again, only what is needed for God to instruct us is given. Each name here certainly has special significance and purpose, but the inclusion of grandsons born to these sons holds none.

Today we've looked at 14 of the 40 verses of chapter 36. In them are concepts of hope for fallen man, lessons of the disobedience of descendants which will come against God's people, and even how God uses places and locations to make spiritual applications as He works out His marvelous plan.

Nothing is superfluous, nothing is arbitrary, and nothing is missing in God's word. And throughout it all, one continuous theme is displayed - God's love for you, and how He is working out His love through the giving of His Son to reconcile us, fallen sons of Adam, pictured by Edom, to His Father.

The plan has been going on since before creation and it is going on in each of you as well. As you learn His word, He is revealing His Son to you.

Closing Verse: *The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, It is made overflowing with fatness, With the blood of lambs and goats, With the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah, And a great slaughter in the land of Edom. Isaiah 34:6*

Next Week: Genesis 36:15-43 (An Awareness in the Sons of Adam) (91st Genesis Sermon) - Make sure to read and study those verses.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Generations of Esau

Now this *is* the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom
Maybe one name came from his dad and the other from his mom

Esau took his wives from the daughters of Canaan:
Adah the daughter of Elon the Hittite
Aholibamah the daughter of Anah, and then...
She is the daughter of Zibeon the Hivite
And Basemath, Ishmael's daughter
She is the sister of Nebajoth, having the same father

Now Adah bore Eliphaz to Esau
And Basemath bore Reuel
And Aholibamah bore Jeush, Jaalam, and Korah
Lots of names in this story to tell

These *were* the sons of Esau, so grand
Who were born to him in Canaan the land
Then Esau took his wives, his sons, his daughters
And all the persons of his household also
His cattle and all his animals, maybe some otters
And all his goods, and he was set to go

All which he had gained in the land of Canaan
And went to a country some distance away
From the presence of his brother Jacob, and then
He left the land as the Bible does say

For their possessions were too great bringing dangers
For them to dwell together as one flock
And the land where they were strangers
Could not support them because of their livestock
So Esau dwelt in Mount Seir
Esau *is* Edom, the Bible makes this clear

And this *is* the genealogy of Esau listed here
He is the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir
These *were* the names of Esau's sons:
Eliphaz the son of Adah Esau's wife
And Reuel the son of Basemath
The wife of Esau, she always brought a smile to his life

And the sons of Eliphaz were Teman, the first one
Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz too
Now Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau's son
And she bore Amalek to Eliphaz, and so his family grew
These *were* the sons of Adah, Esau's wife
Lots of sons to bring joy to his life
These *were* the sons of Reuel:
Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah

These were the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife, oh well
To feed them all would take a lot of pizza
These all were Aholibamah's sons
Esau's wife, the daughter of Anah
The daughter of Zibeon, these are the ones
And she bore to Esau: Jeush, Jaalam, and Korah

Lots of a names and plenty of rhymes
And some are repeated several times
But they are given to establish God's word
And lead us to insights about Jesus His Son
They show us the glory of our dear Lord
Who through His shed blood the victory is won

Adam's seed, reflected in Esau's generations
Is reconciled and restored through Jesus' blood that was shed
God has done it for people in all nations
A vast multitude marching with Christ as its Head

Let us sing greatly and magnify our glorious Lord
As we wait for the treasures which for us in heaven are stored

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 36:15-43 **(AN AWARENESS IN THE SONS OF ADAM)**

Introduction: Today's sermon will complete Chapter 36. We'll look at 29 verses which are mostly names of people and a few locations. Very little else is noted here. But because it has been given by God, it would be negligent to simply read the verses and then give a sermon about how to build a bicycle.

Instead, it would be more honoring and fitting to the Creator to at least go through these verses with an eye which is open to some of the multitude of details and seek out the reason for why they're there. As we'll discover today, conscience is something given to us by God and which is immensely important to our relationship with Him.

We were created in innocence, not bearing the knowledge of good and evil. Although it was we who strayed from God, He knew that we would and He didn't stop us from doing so. Why? In order to have creatures who can truly praise Him, they must have an awareness of who they are in relation to Him.

There was much lost at the fall of man, but in the long run, there is much that will be gained *because* of the fall of man. It is all a part of God's plan and a portion of that can be seen in today's lengthy list of names.

Text Verse: *...for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) ¹⁶ in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel. Romans 2:14-16*

It's true, we have a law written on our hearts which bears witness through our conscience. It works to either accuse us or to excuse us before God. This conscience can become seared, or it can be kept tender and willing to comply.

However we use it, it will be a source of God's judgment upon us and it will be done by the One who is qualified to accomplish the task - Jesus Christ. His word is what reveals Him to us and His word is what gives us guidance for our life so that our conscience will be free from stain. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Chiefs of the Sons of Esau

¹⁵ **These were the chiefs of the sons of Esau. The sons of Eliphaz, the firstborn son of Esau, were Chief Teman, Chief Omar, Chief Zepho, Chief Kenaz,**

¹⁶ **Chief Korah, Chief Gatam, and Chief Amalek. These were the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom. They were the sons of Adah.**

This listing here is known as the "chiefs" of Esau. Older translations use the term "duke." The word is equivalent to the "princes" or "leaders" of Israel. The difference between these people and a king is that a king has been crowned, while the leader or chief hasn't been.

The reason why the older translations use "duke" is because it comes from a Latin word, *dux*. This means "leader." The word here is translated from the Hebrew, *alluphay*. It has the same meaning, but it also means a thousand in number.

The title "chief" here then is probably something like "the leader of a thousand" or "the leader of a large group." In Greek this person would be called a *chiliarch* and in Latin we'd call him something like a *centurion*, even though a centurion would lead a hundred, not a thousand.

What we see here are the prominent descendants of Esau. The people of their tribes would be called after their name. This first list contains those who descend from Esau's firstborn son Eliphaz by his wife Adah.

¹⁷ **These were the sons of Reuel, Esau's son: Chief Nahath, Chief Zerah, Chief Shammah, and Chief Mizzah. These were the chiefs of Reuel in the land of Edom. These were the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife.**

This second list is given to show the link of Esau's son Reuel by his wife Basemath.

¹⁸ **And these were the sons of Aholibamah, Esau's wife: Chief Jeush, Chief Jaalam, and Chief Korah. These were the chiefs who descended from Aholibamah, Esau's wife, the daughter of Anah.**

¹⁹ **These were the sons of Esau, who is Edom, and these were their chiefs.**

And this third list is given for the chiefs who came from Esau's wife Aholibamah.

Interestingly, God had these names recorded and preserved not through Esau and his descendants, but through the people of Israel. In other words, God felt the list was so important that He had it kept by His chosen and specially loved people.

If you're following my drift here, the Bible is a book which, among other things, details the redemption of man. This seemingly tedious and often overlooked list is a part of that process.

If you'll allow it, God is willing to reach into your heart through such lists to tell you, "I care enough about these long dead people to record their names. And so I also care about you. Your name is recorded and you are a part of my plan. Come to me, learn from me, and be reconciled to me, my precious descendant of Adam."

Now let's think about this a little more. Israel maintained these records of the Edomites. They also kept the records of their own genealogies. And some of these are recorded in Bible. In AD70, the Temple where all of their genealogies were kept was destroyed, meaning that the only place where they can be found is the Bible.

And there is only one genealogy of the Jewish people which is intact from Adam on - Jesus' genealogy. The Jewish people are still waiting on their Messiah, when in fact, there is only one Person who can substantially prove that He is of the line of David and thus the Messiah - Jesus.

This shows us the marvelous wonder of God's wisdom. The most published book on the face of the earth, bears witness to what God has planned and protected - the record of Jesus. If we can simply look at the bigger picture and see this, then this historical play, with so many little stories which don't seem to tie together or make sense, actually makes all the sense in the world. How interesting is this book! And yet we stay home to sleep in and then watch TV.

II. The Sons of Seir

²⁰ These were the sons of Seir the Horite who inhabited the land:

Suddenly, in this chapter of the genealogy of Esau, there is the seemingly unrelated genealogy of the sons of Seir. Seir comes from a root word which isn't used. But there are derivatives of it which combine to give a picture of this people and a picture of us.

Although I'm not actually quoting their work, the study for this name came from Abarim, and I want to note that their work here, and in many of my other sermons, has opened up pictures which otherwise would have remained concealed. They are great resource concerning Hebrew names and concepts.

The name Seir is related to *se'ar* which means hair, *sa'ara* which means a single hair, and *sa'ir* which means hairy. Then there is a verb *sa'ar* which means to be "very afraid." When you're very afraid, your hair stands up - you "bristle with terror."

Then the noun *sa'ir* means a he-goat, a bristly haired animal, and the noun *se'ora* speaks of barley. Barley is the a crop with a hairy, or bristly appearance. Then there is another verb *sa'ar* meaning to sweep away - something you would do with a hairy broom. From this word comes *sa'ar* and *se'ara* which mean "storm" - something that both causes one to bristle with fear and which sweeps away things in its path.

It's a lot of words, but in the end, the concept of hair and all of these related words tie back to the thought of awareness and a consciousness. This group of people, the sons of Seir, is surely being introduced for three reasons. The first is to show who the land belonged to prior to Esau taking it over, and thus where the name came from.

Secondly, it's used to show the merging of the Edomites with these people. They intermarried to some extent and eventually, the Edomites dispossessed and destroyed the Horite people.

And finally, they are detailed to show us the state of man and his circumstances in a world where we have a conscience about God. The man named Seir is said to be a Horite. The Horite was first introduced in chapter 14 at the times that the kings of the east came and attacked the land of Canaan.

The name "Horite" means a troglodyte; a cave dweller. There in the land of awareness, they lived in caves. Throughout the Bible, caves are places where people go to hide away or to secret something away. Lot was afraid of living in Zoar and so he and his daughters moved to a cave.

Abraham wanted to bury his dead wife Sarah, and so he bought a cave to secret her away. Hiding away in caves is seen again and again in the Bible. It is a place where one can go because of fear, such as when the kings who fought against Joshua hid from him and his army. They bristled with fear as they hid in their cave.

As you can see, these many related words all suddenly tie together in the introduction of this guy Seir the Horite and his descendants. He is the hairy man dwelling in caves; Adam is the conscious man hiding from God. And so we continue with the list of sons...

²¹ (con't) **Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah,**

²¹ **Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. These were the chiefs of the Horites, the sons of Seir, in the land of Edom.**

In Genesis 32:3 we read this, "Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom."

If you noticed, it said Esau was living in the land Seir in that verse, but now it says the sons of Seir are living in the land of Edom. There is a purpose and a point to this. Seir and Edom are being tied together so that when one is mentioned, both are understood.

The Edomites represent the people of the world descended from Adam. They have a conscience and they live in fear. Hebrews tells us about that -

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:14, 15

Here we are, living in fear and hiding in caves, waiting for the coming of the One who will destroy him who has the power of death, our old adversary, the devil. God kept these records of names, and the Hebrews who quietly copied them for many long centuries must have wondered why. Only in Messiah is the reason for their inclusion truly understood.

Stated a different way, these verses and names are ultimately given, if for no other reason, than to establish a baseline concerning the state of the people of the world as reflected in the struggle of man before the coming of Messiah. God's eyes and His thoughts may have seem to be directed only to the people Israel, but in fact, they are squarely on all of His creatures.

If you sometimes feel as if God is unconcerned about you, all you need to do is come to a long and meticulous list like Genesis 36 to see that He really, really cares for you and He willing to go to extraordinary steps to once again call you His own.

²² And the sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam. Lotan's sister was Timna.

Lotan is the first son of Seir. His name means "covering." Although I'm not going to give the meaning of the names of all the sons and grandsons, they are listed for us to see the work of Christ. In the case of Lotan, his name means "covering." Lotan is derived from the word "lowt" which is used exactly one time in the Bible. It's speaking of the end of death on earth. This is from Isaiah 25 -

⁶And in this mountain
The LORD of hosts will make for all people
A feast of choice pieces,
A feast of wines on the lees,
Of fat things full of marrow,
Of well-refined wines on the lees.
⁷And He will destroy on this mountain
The surface of the **covering** cast over all people,
And the veil that is spread over all nations.
⁸He will swallow up death forever,
And the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces;
The rebuke of His people
He will take away from all the earth;
For the LORD has spoken.

If Seir is the conscious man who fears death, then Lotan is that covering. He is the pall of death which has been cast over all people and which affects and torments every nation. In Christ, that pall is destroyed and death is swallowed up in victory. Great stuff.

In addition to naming Lotan and his two sons, it then says, "Lotan's sister was Timna." Once again, a girl's name is mentioned out of the blue in a list of genealogies which is almost entirely centered on men. Seir certainly had lots of daughters, but only she is mentioned. Her name means "restraint."

Because she becomes the concubine of Eliphaz, the son of Esau, it gave the descendents of Esau the chance to intermix with the people of Seir and eventually take over the land and expel them from it. I read you a quote about that last week from Deuteronomy 2. Eventually, the Horites, Seir's people, disappear.

So, if I were an evolutionist, I'd use Timna's introduction here to show how through evolution, the sons of Adam beat out the Neanderthal cavemen who lived in caves to become the dominant race. But that's not what is happening here at all.

There are two reasons for including her name. The first is that she becomes the mother of Amalek, the great foe of Israel throughout the Old Testament. We read all about that last week. But secondly, she is named because Timna, or restraint, comes from a verb *mena* which means to hold back. It's used in Psalm 84:11 this way -

For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield;
The LORD will give grace and glory;
No good *thing* will He **withhold**
From those who walk uprightly.

Despite being the mother of the wicked group known as the Amalekites, I'm sure she's named here to show us God's mercy in both withholding His wrath on the Adam's seed, and demonstrating grace in not withholding any good thing from them when they seek His face.

Despite not being the covenant people, God allowed them to continue throughout the centuries until Christ finally came and opened the path for all. Isn't that a God of restraint, grace, and mercy! And that same restraint is seen today as the world continues to reject what has already happened.

Even after sending us His Son, He continues to patiently wait and tug at our hearts until the day we wake up from our slumber and call on Him. I can only be grateful that He waited so long for me...

²³ **These were the sons of Shobal: Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam.**

²⁴ **These were the sons of Zibeon: both Ajah and Anah. This was *the* Anah who found the water in the wilderness as he pastured the donkeys of his father Zibeon.**

If you want to pursue a real rabbit's tale, this is a fun verse to do it. Here it says Anah "found the water in the wilderness." Nobody is sure what this means. Some translators say he found mules, some say he found a race of giants called the Emmim, some say hot springs, some warm springs, and the NKJV simply says water.

One thing is sure, he found something there in the wilderness as he pastured his father's donkeys. Adam Clarke said that, "From the above opinions and versions the reader may

choose which he likes best, or invent one for himself." Ok Adam... He found a five pound bag of super sour neon goomy worms. Anyway,,, there's one of those little mysteries found in the Bible.

In the next six verses, 25 different names or places are mentioned. If you really want to know what every one of them means, email me and I'll send you the information. Otherwise, I'll just quote the verses for you to keep our stream of Genesis going uninterrupted.

²⁵ These were the children of Anah: Dishon and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah.

²⁶ These were the sons of Dishon: Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. ²⁷ These were the sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan.

²⁸ These were the sons of Dishan: Uz and Aran.

²⁹ These were the chiefs of the Horites: Chief Lotan, Chief Shobal, Chief Zibeon, Chief Anah,

³⁰ Chief Dishon, Chief Ezer, and Chief Dishan. These were the chiefs of the Horites, according to their chiefs in the land of Seir.

And so thus ends the list of the people of Seir...

III. The Kings of Edom

³¹ Now these were the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the children of Israel:

After the diversion into the people and places of Seir before and during the time of the Edomites, the genealogy now returns to Edom and those who reigned as king over the land. But it says that they are those who reigned "before any king reigned over the children of Israel."

The question that must arise here is, "How could this have been written by Moses (Genesis is in Moses' five books) if it speaks of kings reigning over Israel, which didn't happen until long after the time of Moses?" In fact, it was about 400 years later. The answer is that Moses wrote in a future sense. The promise by God was already made to Abraham that kings would come from him.

Moses also spoke about the establishment of a kingship in Deuteronomy 17. Here is the passage in its entirety -

¹⁴ “When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations that *are* around me,’ ¹⁵ you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; *one* from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who *is* not your brother. ¹⁶ But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall not return that way again.’ ¹⁷ Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. ¹⁸ “Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from *the one* before the priests, the Levites. ¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, ²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment *to* the right hand or *to* the left, and that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

So no problem here. People do attempt to find fault in the Bible over things like this, but there is always an answer to the doubter of God's word.

³² **Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom, and the name of his city was Dinhabah.**

³³ **And when Bela died, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his place.**

³⁴ **When Jobab died, Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place.**

³⁵ **And when Husham died, Hadad the son of Bedad, who attacked Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his place. And the name of his city was Avith.**

³⁶ **When Hadad died, Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place.**

³⁷ **And when Samlah died, Saul of Rehoboth-*by*-the-River reigned in his place.**

³⁸ **When Saul died, Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor reigned in his place. ³⁹ And when Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor died, Hadar reigned in his place; and the name of his city was Pau. His wife's name was Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab.**

One more thing about this list of names. None of them have to be names of the descendants of Esau. Instead, they could be kings who reigned in the land of Edom even before it became Edom. We can't be certain of who these people are or when they actually reigned. After this list, comes the last list in the chapter. Three verses for us to read...

⁴⁰ **And these *were* the names of the chiefs of Esau, according to their families and their places, by their names: Chief Timnah, Chief Alvah, Chief Jetheth,**
⁴¹ **Chief Aholibamah, Chief Elah, Chief Pinon,**
⁴² **Chief Kenaz, Chief Teman, Chief Mibzar,**
⁴³ **Chief Magdiel, and Chief Iram. These *were* the chiefs of Edom, according to their dwelling places in the land of their possession. Esau *was* the father of the Edomites.**

This last list of three verses is believed to be the chiefs of Esau who reigned after the convergence of the people of Seir and Edom. In other words, the joint influence of both groups is highlighted, thus showing the transition from the people of Seir to the people of Edom who will eventually completely replace them.

So here we have the 43 verses of chapter 36 with all of this detail. Name after name has been given and they have been interspersed with just a little bit of historical or geographical information.

One lesson that we can take home from all of this is that although the line of promise, from Adam, through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is highlighted, God has still watched over the other people of the world in the process. None are lost to Him.

Every son of Adam, pictured by the people of Edom, is named and remembered. The details of their lives are known to God. These lists are written and recorded to show that the promises that were made to Esau were fulfilled exactly as they were given.

The people of Seir have been added to the list to show how Seir and Edom united and became one people, but they are also given to show us that in Adam there is an awareness of conscience which permeates all men. It is a conscious knowledge of God.

The Horites were cave dwellers who hid from God's presence, just as Adam and Eve hid from the Lord when He came to them in the Garden. The awareness of their sin and their fallen nature caused them to draw back from the One they had only a short time earlier beheld face to face.

In the loss of the friendship and intimacy came something new though, actually two things. The first was death. Death came in two forms. The first was spiritual. This was something promised would happen and it was immediate. Before he ate of the fruit the Lord told the man that on the day he ate of it, he would die.

The second form of death was physical. This type of death is less severe than the other,

but often more feared. The reason is that if the first type of death isn't corrected before the second type comes, then the first type will last for all eternity. The horrifying inevitability of physical death was announced to Adam -

¹⁷“Cursed *is* the ground for your sake;
In toil you shall eat *of* it
All the days of your life.
¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,
And you shall eat the herb of the field.
¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
Till you return to the ground,
For out of it you were taken;
For dust you *are*,
And to dust you shall return.”

Death, both types of death, came through man's rebellion and since that time, man has been secreted away in the caves of the earth, *hiding from God*, and also being *hidden in death*.

The second thing which came about in the garden was an awareness, a consciousness that man didn't previously have. Here is how Genesis describes it -

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. Genesis 3:22

Just as Adam moved into a new realm and a new dispensation - that of Conscience, Esau moved into a new area and a new home - that of Seir. After the move, yes, there was an ongoing struggle between the sons of Israel and the sons of Edom. The struggle continued right into the times just before Christ.

In 129 BC, the people of Edom were assimilated into the people of Israel and they became one people. Not long after this, Jesus came and walked among us. He, the true Israel, made it possible for all of the hairy sons of Adam to be united into the covenant people.

There is now no distinction between people groups in Christ. All are one in Messiah. But there are still distinctions in peoples. In everything, there are always two categories. As a wise man once said, "There are only two groups of people. There are those who put everything into two categories... and there is everyone else."

Though cute, he's right you know. Concerning us, there are those who are in Adam and those who are in Christ. There are those who are a part of the commonwealth of Israel and entitled to eternal blessings, and there are those who are outside the promises and who remain spiritually dead.

There are those whose father is the devil and there are those who, because of Jesus, have God as their Father. And these are the only two categories the Bible reveals. The little book of 1 John, back towards the end of the Bible tells us it is so -

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8

Such is the nature of the work of Christ. It is an all or nothing deal. Who then, is your father?

Closing Verse: *There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a **good conscience** toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him. 1 Peter 3:21, 22*

Next Week: - Genesis 37:1-11 (Sheaves of the Field and Stars of the Sky) (92nd Genesis Sermon) - Make sure to read and study those verses.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Esau and Seir (A Lot of Names for One Poem)

These were the chiefs of the sons of Esau
The sons of Eliphaz, Esau's firstborn son
Were Chief Teman, Chief Omar, Chief Zepho, Chief Kenaz,
Chief Korah, Chief Gatam, and Chief Amalek, he was the last one

These were the chiefs of Eliphaz in the land of Edom
They were the sons of Adah, and she was their mom
These were the sons of Reuel, Esau's son:
Chief Nahath, Chief Zerah, and more to tell
Chief Shammah, and Chief Mizzah

These were the chiefs of Reuel

In the land of Edom where they lived their life
These were the sons of Basemath, Esau's wife
And these were the sons of Aholibamah, Esau's wife:
Chief Jeush, Chief Jaalam, and Chief Korah
These were the chiefs who from Aholibamah descended
Esau's wife, the daughter of Anah, zippity doo dah

These were the sons of Esau, who is Edom
And these were their chiefs, and the name of each mom
These were the sons of Seir the Horite
Who inhabited the land:
Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, yes that's right
Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan - making quite a clan

These were the chiefs of the Horites, not folks in Vietnam
They, the sons of Seir, in the land of Edom
And the sons of Lotan were Hori and Hemam
Lotan's sister was Timna, would you remember in an exam?

These were the sons of Shobal, we have five names
Alvan, Manahath, Ebal, Shepho, and Onam
To remember them all, make up some word games...
These were the sons of Zibeon, I hope you remember well
Both Ajah and Anah, their names as the Bible does tell

This was the Anah who found the water
In the wilderness as he roamed around
As he pastured the donkeys of Zibeon his father
The find brought him a name widely renowned

These were the children of Anah
The names they were given
Dishon and Aholibamah the daughter of Anah
Recorded in the land of the livin'
These were the sons of Dishon, here we have four
Hemdan, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran, names we shouldn't ignore
These were the sons of Ezer:

Bilhan, Zaavan, and Akan, just these three
These were the sons of Dishan:
Uz and Aran, that's only two - as you can see

These were the chiefs of the Horites:
Chief Lotan, Chief Shobal, Chief Zibeon, Chief Anah too
Chief Dishon, Chief Ezer, and Chief Dishan all with the rights
To be called Horite chiefs, a pretty big to-do!

These were the chiefs of the Horites, all listed here
According to their chiefs in the land of Seir
Now these were the kings who reigned
In the land of Edom before any
King reigned over the children of Israel:
And yes, yes there were many

Bela the son of Beor in Edom reigned
And the name of his city was Dinhabah a nice space
And when Bela died, the Bible explained
Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his place

When Jobab died the account we can retrace
Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his place
And when Husham died, Hadad the son of Bedad
Who attacked Midian in Moab's field
Reigned in his place, making proud his dad
And the name of his city was Avith as is revealed

When Hadad died, as we all do
Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his place
And when Samlah died making his friends go "boo hoo"
Saul of Rehoboth-by-the-River reigned, Samlah he did replace
When Saul died, Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor
Reigned in his place
And when Baal-Hanan the son of Achbor died
Hadar, then Baal-Hanan, did replace

And the name of his city was Pau
His wife's name was Mehetabel

The daughter of Matred who you know now
Was the daughter of Mezahab, as you can tell

And these were the names of the chiefs of Esau
According to their families and their places
By their names, we're almost done - hurrah!
Chief Timnah, Chief Alvah, Chief Jetheth - so many faces

And Chief Aholibamah, Chief Elah, Chief Pinon,
Chief Kenaz, Chief Teman, Chief Mibzar
Chief Magdiel, and Chief Iram, now the list is gone
Almost long enough to reach to Myanmar!

These were the chiefs of Edom we see
According to their dwelling places
In the land of their possession, by divine decree
Esau was the father of the Edomites and all these named faces

This account has been long, but necessary too
God detailed these things in His word for me and for you

All leading us to understand the work of Jesus better
So let's treasure every name, every word, every letter

Thank You Lord for such tender care of us
Thank You Lord for sending Your Son, our Lord, Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 37:1-11 **(SHEAVES OF THE FIELD AND STARS OF THE SKY)**

Introduction: For many, many chapters, Jacob has been the center of focus in the pages of the Bible. As we saw, his life was used in a most dramatic way to reveal what would come about in the future as God unfolds history before our eyes.

We've been able to use him as a reference for so many points in history. Some have come to pass and some are yet to happen, but they were laid out for us to see and believe. Now, as suddenly as Abraham and Isaac left the center of focus, Jacob does the same.

Joseph now becomes the focal point of the narrative with a couple of brief interludes concerning Judah, Jacob's fourth son. But Jacob will mostly be on the sidelines from this point until just prior to his death. The stories and pictures which issue from Joseph's life are no less wonderful than those which we saw in Jacob.

We'll not hurry through these coming chapters, and we'll look for Christ as we go, knowing that He is truly the focus of all of Scripture, as He Himself told us. The name Joseph means, "He shall add." May these stories about him add to our understanding of God's beautiful plan of redemption.

Text Verse: *For God may speak in one way, or in another,*

Yet man does not perceive it.

15 In a dream, in a vision of the night,

When deep sleep falls upon men,

While slumbering on their beds,

16 Then He opens the ears of men,

And seals their instruction. Job 33:14-16

When reading about dreams in the Bible and seeing that they are actually prophecies, we need to be careful to not assume that every dream we have is a prophecy or a vision from God. God's word is written and we have everything we need in it to understand what He desires from us and for us.

Since the completion of the work of Christ, other than Acts chapter 2, which was spoken to the Jewish people by Peter who is the Apostle to the Jews, dreams as prophetic utterances are never mentioned as being applicable to us. As this is so, we can make the

logical assumption that they are not *intended as a tool* for us during this dispensation of time.

I bring this up because we can lose a foothold on sound Christianity very easily by pursuing dreams or those who have had dreams. We have the Bible, we have God's revealed word, and that word is all-sufficient for our faith and practice and so... May God speak to us through *His word* today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Genealogy of Jacob

¹ Now Jacob dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan.

In the previous chapter, we saw Esau's move from Canaan to Seir. This verse then is to remind us that Jacob is the son of promise and the one who has remained in Canaan. Here it says that he "dwelt in the land where his father was a stranger."

While Esau's line had moved to and possessed the land where they lived, the son of the promised line is still living as a stranger. It will be several hundred years before the Israelites will possess the land of Canaan as the sons of Esau did in their own land. After the death of Abraham, it was Isaac who was noted, just as Jacob is now -

"And it came to pass, after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac. And Isaac dwelt at Beer Lahai Roi." Genesis 25:11

The Bible is reminding us of who is in the covenant line and that God's plans are being worked out through this line. These men, dwelling in tents as pilgrims, are noted to show that they were waiting on an eternal inheritance. Hebrews 11 explains it to us -

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. (13)

Along with the record of this main line, incidents occur which are selected by God to show us pictures of what will be seen in Christ. The coming chapters dealing with Joseph are no different.

The line of the Messiah comes through Judah, not Joseph. But Joseph's life will be a rich tapestry of pictures of what God will do in the world through His Son, Jesus. The amazing depth of how the stories in Joseph's life picture Christ is truly wonderful.

² **This *is* the history of Jacob.**

We now come to the eleventh set of “generations” listed in the Bible. This is the last set in Genesis. But, unlike the other genealogies, no listing of descendants is given.

I see two reasons for this. The first is that the sons of Israel were named just towards the end of chapter 35. The second is that Jacob is the last individual son of promise. From him will come the people of Israel and all 12 sons are included in the covenant.

This history then is less of a list of names followed by historical information, than that of a detailed historical account of what happens to the family all the way through to his death in the land of Egypt. In order, the previous lists of generations were -

The generations of the heavens and the earth (2:4); the generations of Adam (5:1); the generations of Noah (6:9); the generations of the sons of Noah (10:1); the generations of Shem (11:10); the generations of Terah (11:27); the generations of Ishmael (25:12), and the generations of Isaac (25:19). Now this *is* the genealogy of Esau, who is Edom. (36:1). The genealogy of Esau the father of the Edomites in Mount Seir. (36:9)

God's funnel, His line of selected people who would lead to the Messiah, and those who branch off from that line, is coming more and more into focus. Every detail is precise and is relevant.

If all of this meticulous attention is given to get us to the Messiah, then think about how meticulous He is in how He handles your relationship with the Messiah.

^{2 (con't)} **Joseph, *being* seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers.**

This story actually begins before some of the details in chapter 35. Isaac's death has already been recorded, but he will actually be alive for about thirteen more years. Jacob is, at this time about 107 years old and Isaac is about 166 years old. Joseph is 17 and so this is somewhere right around the year 2275 AM.

Throughout the next many chapters, Joseph will be a type of Christ. The number of similarities between the two are so overwhelming that one can come to no other conclusion. The record of his birth and the giving of his name were the first of such pictures.

If you remember His mother was Rachel, meaning "lamb." The son of a lamb is a lamb and Jesus is called a "the Lamb who was slain" in Revelation 13:8. The giving of the name Joseph came from two words - asaph (to take away) and yoseph, to add.

Jesus was, according to the Apostle Paul, the one who took away the reproach of the law and added gentiles to His fold. Now this son will continue to be used an incredible amount of times to prefigure the Jesus. This verse is the first of them. He is feeding the flock with his brothers; he is a shepherd. Thus he pictures the Lord who said, "I am the good shepherd." John 10:11

^{2 (con't)} **And the lad was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives;**

The sons of Bilhah and Zilpah were Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. There is speculation about why he is with these four, but what is implied is that he is the one in superintendence over them. He is their chief shepherd, a term used of Jesus in 1 Peter 5:4.

If you remember what the two maids pictured, then you might see why this verse is included. They picture the exiles of the people of Israel, and therefore the sons are sons of exile - disobedient sons.

^{2 (con't)} **and Joseph brought a bad report of them to his father.**

As the faithful steward over God's house, Jesus is the One who handles the affairs of his people. Joseph brought a bad report of the sons of the two wives to his father and Jesus is the Lord who brought the bad report of the disobedient sons of Israel to God the Father, resulting in their exiles.

Look at the symbolism so far in just one verse about Joseph. There is so much more ahead as his life will be unfolded before us in a beautiful picture of the true Shepherd and Overseer, Jesus.

³ **Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age.**

The name Jacob is used three times in this chapter. The name Israel is used twice. Both times Israel is used, it is in connection with Joseph. Here it says Israel loved Joseph more than all his children. And the reason is given, "he was the son of his old age."

Most people take this to mean that Jacob had Joseph when he was old, but he had Benjamin after Joseph, so this doesn't make sense. The term in Hebrew is *ben zequnim hu*. Literally translated, it says "son of old age to him." This then probably would be a phrase meaning, "a wise son."

It's not speaking of Jacob's advanced *physical age*, but Joseph's advanced *mental age*. Joseph had wisdom and understanding beyond his 17 years and Jacob loved him for this quality. God has many "sons" listed in the Bible in various contexts, but there is One that He loves above all others, His only begotten - Jesus.

This love is seen and noted throughout the New Testament, starting right at Matthew 3:17 –

"And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

The wisdom of Joseph pictures the greater wisdom of Jesus, noted in many passages, such as this one in Isaiah –

The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. Isaiah 11:2

So here in this verse we have a beautiful picture of Christ, the Son of Father and yet, the Ancient of Days - a title given about Christ in Daniel chapter 7. This Ancient Son, filled with wisdom from eternity past, is loved above all others by His Father, just as Joseph, this wise son, is loved above all his brothers.

³ (con't) **Also he made him a tunic of *many* colors.**

This special tunic is called in Hebrew *ketonet passim*. The term comes from a word which means, properly, the palm of the hand or sole of the foot. By implication, because of the plural form, it would cover the whole body, reaching to both the hands and the feet. What is implied is that Joseph, wearing such a garment, would be an overseer, not one doing manual labor.

The garment is usually translated as a coat of many colors. However, its stripes either varied in *weaving* or varied in *color*, but it's not really certain which. This term is used

only one other time in the Bible, in 2 Samuel 13:18 when referring to the robes of the daughters of King David -

"Now she had on a robe of many colors, for the king's virgin daughters wore such apparel. And his servant put her out and bolted the door behind her."

The beautifully ornate robe of Joseph reflects the same type of garment worn by the Lord. It is His human body, filled with and adorned with the grace and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Joseph's garment would have been a symbol of his beloved status and his place of authority.

Jesus' life and actions, as guided by the Spirit, filled those same roles. The reason I'm being so detailed in this is because if this coat is speaking of Jesus' *spiritual graces*, then the connection can be drawn directly to us.

I just showed you that the only other time this type of garment is mentioned is for that of the virgin daughters of King David. David, like Joseph, pictures Jesus. The symbolism that we can draw from this is found in 2 Corinthians 11. There Paul writes this -

"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ ³ But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. ⁴ For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or *if* you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!" (2-4)

In other words, the same graces of the Spirit which adorn Jesus are to adorn us as well. We, like the virgin daughters of the King, are to be ready to be presented to our groom, Christ Jesus. Our religion and the gospel we adhere to is to be pure and undefiled.

Finally, the symbolism of the full body garment follows through even into heaven itself. Now, we see it realized in its fullness in the garments worn by Jesus in His heavenly dwelling. This is openly noted in Revelation 1:12, 13 –

"Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band."

⁴ But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him.

Joseph is the father's favorite, but not of his brothers. The hatred has nothing to do with the bad report mentioned earlier. This verse is talking about all the brothers. Without a true cause, but merely out of jealousy because "their father loved him more," they couldn't even speak peaceably to him.

In Hebrew, the normal greeting is *shalom lekha* - peace to you. This is the greeting they failed to even utter to their brother. In Hebrew it says, *v'lo yakhelu da'bero l'shalom (44)*. It's not that they couldn't speak *peacefully* to him so much as they couldn't speak *peace* to him. In reality, they wished him harm.

Likewise, the Jews around Jesus, His own brothers of the flesh, hated him and couldn't speak peace to Him. Instead, their words were harmful and they plotted His death at every turn. This is perfectly realized in Jesus. John 15:25 is a good example of this -

But *this happened* that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, 'They hated Me without a cause.'

In their hatred of Jesus, they didn't just fail to speak *peacefully* to Him, they failed to speak *peace* to Him. They intended and they followed through with harm towards Him. As we'll see, the hatred, and the harm which follows to Joseph, will be used by God for the sake of all of Jacob's home.

The same is true with Jesus. The people intended Him harm and they went through with their intentions, but this was known by God and it was used by Him for all people everywhere. Out of tragedy, God can weave a beautifully joyous tapestry. This thought is seen in John chapter 11 -

⁴⁹ And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, ⁵⁰ nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." ⁵¹ Now this he did not say on his own *authority*; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, ⁵² and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.

These type of lessons from Joseph's life should give us the same type of comfort in our own trials. When we think everything is out of control, this is when God shines through all the more brightly.

II. Joseph's First Dream

⁵ Now Joseph had a dream, and he told *it* to his brothers; and they hated him even more.

Verses 5 through 8 form what is known as a chiasm. This is a pattern which says something and then turns around and says the same thing in the opposite direction. These are literary devices which tell us something that God intends for us to see. I found this chiasm while preparing this sermon and I'll show it to you so you can see how it works –

Genesis 37:5-8 - Joseph's Dream

Israel Bows to the King (08/26/13)

- a. Concerning Joseph's dream spoken to his brothers
 - b. they hated him even more
 - c. So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: (giving of the dream)
 - x. There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf."
 - c. And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?"
(explanation of the dream)
 - b. they hated him even more
- a. Concerning his dreams and his words to his brothers

This particular chiasm is showing us that even though he was already hated, it is his rule and authority which is what they truly resent. As he pictures Jesus, what we see is painfully clear. The tribes of Israel, represented by these sons, wanted nothing to do with their God-ordained King.

It will take many years and painful lessons for them to come to the point where they acknowledge him as their leader and bow down to him. The same is true with Jesus.

⁶ So he said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed:

He now tells them the dream and their hostility towards him will only grow because of it. The anger though is less because of how the message is received than what the message says. And this same thing will follow through the entire Bible.

When prophets speak, they are hated for the message itself, not because of how they received it - be it in a dream, a vision, or God speaking directly to them. They are hated for the words they turn around and tell to the people. Read the book of Jeremiah just once and you'll see this time and again.

What God reveals is far more offensive to those who hate Him than *how* He reveals it. This is true with what we would call His natural revelation through creation. We're happy with what He has created, but we hate *what* it tells us, and so we make stuff like evolution up to hide our faces from the reality we see.

It is true with His special revelation which came through prophets and the Bible. People say they love the Bible and they love Jesus all the time, but they pick and choose the parts of the Bible they like or don't like, including the words of Jesus, because they actually hate what the overall message says.

Churches dedicate monuments of ostentation to the very thing they hate. Professors spend years in education first learning and then teaching Bible disciplines while at the same time dismissing the words they teach. Jacob's brothers hated both the message and him because of the message. How accurately he pictures Jesus here.

⁷ There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf."

This dream is so obvious that anyone reading it, even for the first time, should be able to see what is being said. Verse 5 says that he told the dream to his brothers, meaning all of them.

Joseph says, *v'hineh* (behold!) There are the 12 sons of Israel, binding sheaves in the field. He then repeats his exclamation *v'hineh*! Something big and important happened. "My sheaf arose and stood up." And then again, *v'hineh*! Something marvelous occurs. "Your sheaves stood all around mine and bowed down to my sheaf."

Joseph, one of twelve brothers, will rise to an exalted position as the second highest ruler in Egypt and all of his brothers will bow down to him. This will be literally fulfilled in Genesis 44:14.

God is showing them now of the future and what will happen to each of them directly, but He is showing their posterity what will happen in its ultimate fulfillment when Israel as a nation bows before the Son of Judah and the Son of David. They will finally, as a people bow down to Him as their rightful Leader.

Even the Jews know that this passage is speaking of the Messiah. One ancient Jewish book, Raya Mehimna in Zohar, records that Joseph's sheaf is to be interpreted as the Messiah. If this is so, and it is, then this is explicitly realized in Philippians 2:10, 11 -

...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

"Every knee" includes every Jewish knee as well as every gentile knee. The nations will behold the Messiah and bow.

⁸And his brothers said to him, "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

This is the second verse that says they "hated him even more" It proves this is an anchor in the chiasm which started in verse 5. The hatred is highlighted by the brothers, but it is the result of the rule which would be imposed on them. "Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you have dominion over us?"

The question will be answered someday when they bow to Joseph, but it is ultimately fulfilled in Christ. When His conception was announced to Mary, Gabriel spoke these words to her -

"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. ³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

His reign was prophesied by Gabriel and His dominion is confirmed by Peter. In His first letter to the Jewish believers, he says this - "To Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever." Amen. 5:11 (It's all about Jesus)

III. Joseph's Second Dream

⁹Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me."

Once again, Joseph has a dream which is as plain to understand as one could be. The second dream *resembles* the first, and in the Bible, when things are repeated, the second occurrence is given to confirm the first. The symbolism of the 11 stars is the same as the 11 sheaves. They are the 11 brothers of Joseph.

Knowing this, the sun and the moon can be interpreted as well. They are his father and mother. Rachel is already dead, and so Leah, being Jacob's wife, must be that mother now. And this then fits the pattern of Jesus and the symbolism of the Bible.

The sun isn't representing God as Jesus' Father. Rather it is representing the tribe of Judah, from who Jesus issues. And the moon is ultimately fulfilled in who Leah pictures, the law. In the psalms, Judah is said to be the lawgiver. The symbolism is perfectly clear here. All the tribes of Israel and the law, which was what established them as a people, will all bow to Jesus.

¹⁰So he told *it* to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What *is* this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"

This dream was told to Jacob as well as the brothers this time, which tells that he now understood exactly what was intended by the dream. And Jacob understood it as well, asking "Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?"

Jacob is incredulous, and it's reflected in his response. But the answer is found in the Bible itself. And the answer is "No." There is no record of Jacob bowing to Joseph. It would be a stretch to find this dream's fulfillment in him in any way at all.

In the end, this second dream can be, and is, only fulfilled in Jesus. The nation of Israel,

and the law which was issued to them, is the only reasonable explanation to what has been seen in Joseph's second dream. Thus, there is a literal and spiritual fulfillment of the first dream, and a spiritual fulfillment in the second. But both are realized in Jesus in the ultimate sense.

¹¹ And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter *in mind*.

This final verse of today will show us in the coming verses that envy can only lead to trouble. However, our trouble can be used by God in ways that are more marvelous than we might imagine. The terrible ordeal that Joseph will face because of his brother's envy will be used by God at the Exodus to show forth His glory in a way which has been remembered for close to 4000 years.

Another group, at a different time, was consumed with envy as well, and they committed the single most horrific act in human history. And yet, out of this came an even greater demonstration of God's glory.

The exodus of Egypt never would have occurred if Joseph wasn't first sold by his brothers. And our exodus from sin and bondage could never have come about unless Christ was crucified. And His cross also came about by the consuming envy of His own brothers. We read about it in Matthew 27 -

Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. ¹⁶ And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. ¹⁷ Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ¹⁸ For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.

In the end, Jesus' brothers handed Him over, and it was out of envy. But this, despite being horrific, brought about the greatest event in all of human history.

Jesus Christ died, not for His own sins - for He had none, but for the sins of the world.

Closing Verse: *For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ¹¹ For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." Romans 14:10, 11*

Next Week: Genesis 37:12-22 (The Son is Sent) (93rd Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Dreamer of Dreams

Now Jacob dwelt in the land
Where his father was a stranger
In the land of Canaan, a place of safety
He lived without fear of danger

This is the history of Jacob
Joseph, being seventeen years of age
Was feeding the flock with his brothers
When soon his life would turn another page

And the lad was with his kin
The sons of Bilhah and Zilpah his father's wives
And Joseph brought a bad report along with him
Of them to his father about the conduct of their lives

Now Israel loved Joseph more...
Than all his children that he had
Because he was the son of his old age
And he made his father's heart so glad
Also a tunic of many colors for him he made
Yes, Joseph of all the sons was handsomely arrayed

But when his brothers saw this thing
That their father loved him more
Than all his brothers, they hated him
And could not speak peaceably to him, only words so sore

Now Joseph had a dream
And to his brothers he told it
And they hated him even more
It gave them quite a fit

So he said to them, as he confidently beamed
"Please hear this dream which I have dreamed..."

There we were, all of us - you and I
We were binding sheaves in the field
Then behold, my sheaf arose in my mind's eye
And also stood upright as my dream revealed

And indeed your sheaves stood all around
And bowed down to my sheaf, right to the ground
And his brothers said to him thus
"Shall you indeed over us reign?
Or shall you have dominion over us?"
Let's not hear this kind of thing again

So they hated him even more
For his dreams and for his words
Which really made them sore

Then he dreamed still another dream
And told it to his brothers,
And said, "Look, I have dreamed another dream
I wonder if I'll have any others?
And this time, the sun and the moon,
And the eleven stars bowed down to me
Will this happen someday soon?
What can the meaning of these dreams be?"

So he told it to his father and his brothers, you know
And his father rebuked him and said to him, is it really so?

"What is this dream that you have dreamed?
Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed
Come to bow down to the earth before you?"
Has this thing been decreed?

And his brothers envied him as you might expect
But his father kept the matter in mind
These dreams were given so that we could recollect
That God knew before, the things He had designed
God spoke through dreams and through prophets too
Giving wise instruction which will carry us through

These words are recorded now in the Bible for us to heed
To teach valuable lessons to each and every one
So let us pay attention, to His word giving heed
This wondrous word which tells us of His Son

Hold fast, stand strong, and fix your eyes on Jesus
As we await that glorious day when He will return for us

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 37:12-22 (THE SON IS SENT)

Introduction: Today we're continuing on with the life of Joseph. Just as God unfolded parts of His plan through stories about Jacob, He is doing the same with Joseph now. Every story contains lessons about how we can and should interact with others. They also continuously show us man's failures, even the great heroes of the faith that we hold to.

God doesn't hide or gloss over these things, but rather exposes them for all to see. Every time such a story comes about, along with being appalled at our fallen state, we should marvel at the grace of God who continues to bear with us despite our actions. Today's story is a perfect example of this.

Jealousy turns to hatred and then hatred turns into a conspiracy to commit murder. If God's chosen family acts in such a way, can we look in the mirror and claim we are any better? Rather, the recesses of our hearts are deep chambers of wickedness which can overflow at any time if we don't guard our conduct closely. Let's endeavor to do just that.

Text Verse: *My son, if sinners entice you,
Do not consent.*

¹¹ *If they say, "Come with us,
Let us lie in wait to shed blood;
Let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause;*

¹² *Let us swallow them alive like Sheol,
And whole, like those who go down to the Pit;*

¹³ *We shall find all kinds of precious possessions,
We shall fill our houses with spoil;*

¹⁴ *Cast in your lot among us,
Let us all have one purse"—*

¹⁵ *My son, do not walk in the way with them,
Keep your foot from their path; Proverbs 1:10-15*

God warns us to stay away from trouble-makers and those who would entice us to sin. We may have friends or co-workers who have a "plan" which is intended to make us rich or get ahead, but it may involve something contrary to God's word. If so, there can be no true profit in it. Let's be careful to adhere to what the Bible says as it is written and

intended for our good. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Sent on a Mission

¹² Then his brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

Jacob is, at this time, living in Hebron. During this period, Joseph had his dreams concerning his brothers sheaves bowing down to his sheaf, and then the 12 stars and the sun and moon bowing down to him. At some point after this, his brothers went back to Shechem to feed their flocks.

This is the same place which Jacob bought from Hamor and the same area where they had killed all of the males of the town. Thus, through both purchase and conquest, they owned the entire area. So far they'd been safe since killing the city's residents, and so they must have felt it was ok to go back to the area now.

Shechem is about 60 miles north of Hebron and traveling at a shepherd's pace, it would have taken 20 to 30 hours to get there, maybe longer. It would be like us getting up and walking with a flock of animals to Tampa or beyond. That may seem like a long way to go just to feed a bunch of animals, but they must of had a reason. Maybe it hadn't rained enough in the south for awhile.

The area of Shechem is now, and certainly was then, well watered and so there was probably plenty of food and water for the flocks. Whatever the reason, God used the distance to bring about a chain of events which would lead to the fulfillment of Joseph's dreams.

¹³ And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers feeding *the* flock in Shechem?"

The name "Israel" is mentioned only twice in this chapter. Once it is speaking of his love *for* Joseph and then this time when he speaks *to* Joseph directly. Later, when he hears of his son's supposed death, he will be called Jacob. There is Jacob, the deceiver, who will be deceived, and there is Israel who struggles with God. In this verse, he is Israel.

And so Israel says to Joseph, the beloved son, "Are not your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem?" A question like this doesn't mean that either Jacob or Joseph was ignorant of the matter. Rather, it was a way of introducing a line of thought.

It is a rhetorical question like others frequently used throughout both the Old and New Testaments. The question is a statement of fact. Jesus did the same thing when He spoke to people around Him -

"Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God." Luke 12:6

Jesus and the people knew that in fact five sparrows are sold for two copper coins. In the same way, Jacob is preparing Joseph for his direction by asking what is already obvious.

13 (con't) Come, I will send you to them."

By introducing his thought as a question, it alleviates any later explanation. Jacob has said where the brothers are and what they're doing. So all he has to do is give his direction and anticipate the response. We do this all the time in English without realizing it.

When mom walks out to the table with a plate full of yummy pancakes and says, "Who wants pancakes?" she already knows the answer. By asking the question, she has already told what is being served and avoided additional questions and answers. I'm explaining all of this because it bears on what is being pictured.

Jacob is now a picture of God the Father. Joseph, in type, pictures Jesus, beloved of the Father. Joseph is hated by his brothers, something which was specifically noted three times last week - in verses 4, 5, and 8. Jesus, likewise, knew He was to be hated by His brothers.

Jacob didn't know what Joseph's brothers would do to him, but the picture is still clear. God the Father, despite knowing what would come about, sent His beloved Son from His heavenly home to the wicked world to seek and save us. The plotting of man and the death of Jesus would eventually save many people alive.

13 (con't) So he said to him, "Here I am."

Joseph has been at home while his brothers have been working with the flocks. This tells us that he is certainly the overseer of the brothers. The long, beautiful robe he had wasn't something one would work in, but rather supervise with. When he goes to Shechem, it will be to check up on the progress and the well-being of his brothers.

It should be noted that as soon as Jacob spoke, Joseph responded, and he did so without hesitation in his words. Rather, he replied, "Here I am." When God asked for a volunteer from Isaiah, the same thing happened -

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:
"Whom shall I send,
And who will go for Us?"
Then I said, "Here *am* I! Send me." Isaiah 6:8

And in Hebrews 10, quoting the 40th Psalm, Jesus responds in the same manner, something which is actually being pictured in this portion of the life of Joseph -

⁵ Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:
"Sacrifice and offering You did not desire,
But a body You have prepared for Me.
⁶ In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin
You had no pleasure.
⁷ Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—
In the volume of the book it is written of Me—
To do Your will, O God.'" Hebrews 10:6, 7

Throughout the Bible, there have been many calls by God to His people. Some have answered like Joseph does to Jacob, "Here I am." Abraham was like this. He was asked to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering and he responded immediately.

Others have lingered, like Lot before the destruction of Sodom where it says he hesitated. Some have partly obeyed, like Saul. This cost him the kingship. Others have tried to deflect the calling through excuse, like Moses. All this did was to kindle the Lord's wrath. And Jonah, Jonah tried to run away and hide from the Lord.

If you're a faithful Christian, then God has certainly called you at one time or another, and He will do so again. There are many answers we could give - "Just a minute Lord", "I'm busy Lord", "I'm afraid Lord", whatever.

But the response He will be pleased with is, "Yes Lord, here I am." Keep this in mind as you are led to respond to the Lord's call in your life. Be ready and willing to step up and accept that His will is always the right path.

¹⁴ Then he said to him, "Please go and see if it is well with your brothers and well with the flocks, and bring back word to me."

In Hebrew Jacob says, *lekh na re'eh eth shalom*, "go see if there is peace." (2:29). Jacob is looking to make sure that the family is ok and that the flocks are ok. If so, he was to bring back the news. Again, this shows that Jacob had assigned Joseph as the overseer.

The sons of Israel are in the place where they had killed the entire town. Because of where they were, Jacob may have wondered if everything was ok with them. But there is more to it than that because he also mentions the flocks.

He obviously would know that if the brothers were ok that the flocks should be ok too, unless the brothers weren't *properly tending to the flocks*. And so here we see that the chief shepherd isn't only to be concerned with the shepherds, but the flocks too.

In other words, Joseph's responsibility is for even the weakest of the sheep. This is beautifully realized in Jesus. To get a full appreciation of this, take time today to read Ezekiel chapter 34.

In that passage you'll see how the Lord watches over and judges the shepherds of the flocks to ensure that the whole flock is safe. Joseph here, and the Lord in Ezekiel, are both seen fulfilled in Jesus' work in the New Testament, especially in John 10 -

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. ¹⁵ As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd.

¹⁴ (con't) **So he sent him out of the Valley of Hebron, and he went to Shechem.**

Jacob and Joseph have been in the Valley of Hebron. The term is *emek hevron*. The idea of a valley is a place of depth and the meaning of Hevron is that of conjoining or attachment. I would suggest that this name is included in this verse to give us an insight into the incarnation of Christ.

It is the only time in the Bible the term, the Valley of Hebron or *emek hevron*, is used. Any other time, only the name Hebron is given. I would submit, without trying to overreach here, that this is specifically named to show us that from this place of depth comes the conjoining of God and man in the Person of Jesus.

Joseph is being sent out of the Valley of Hebron; Jesus was sent from the unsearchable counsels of God. The root for the word "valley" which is the same in spelling, but with a different pronunciation is used in this manner in Psalm 92:5 -

"O LORD, how great are Your works!
Your thoughts are very **deep**."

And so I see that *emek hevron* has been included by God to picture the coming Savior, Jesus. As Romans 11:33 says, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out!"

The valley of Hebron, the *depth of the conjoining* is, in other words, the uniting of the wisdom of God with humanity; the incarnation.

II. Two Wells

¹⁵ Now a certain man found him, and there he was, wandering in the field. And the man asked him, saying, "What are you seeking?"

Here is Joseph, having arrived at his father's field in Shechem, and his brothers aren't there. As he wandered the area, a man asked him what he's seeking. There is dispute over who this person was. He's not named or identified, so all we have is speculation.

Whoever he is, the Lord had him there when Joseph's brothers were there, and he has him there now to ensure that Joseph would be led to them. Here again is a picture of Jesus. Joseph is seeking the lost just as Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

The brothers may not have felt lost, but to Joseph they were. That is the important thing that we need to see. The leaders of Israel certainly didn't think they were lost, nor did they think they were misleading their flock, but they were. Jesus was sent to fix this.

¹⁶ So he said, "I am seeking my brothers. Please tell me where they are feeding *their flocks*."

Joseph, not sure where his brothers are asks the man where they have gone. His question is *ephoh hem ro'im* (2:56) "Where are they pasturing." In essence, "If they're not here feeding the flocks, then where have they gone?"

Let's think this through. The brothers were to have been in Shechem, which is where their father was told they would be. The concept of feeding the flocks in the Bible translates directly into the concept of proper teaching of the word.

One of the Bible's explicit examples of this is found in 1 Peter 5 and is beautifully reflected in what we see in this picture of Joseph and his brothers -

"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." (2-4)

Keep thinking of who each represents. The sons of Israel picture the leaders of the tribes. The flocks represent the multitudes. Joseph is going to check on the shepherds and their flocks, just as God sent Jesus to check on the leaders of the flocks and the condition of those flocks.

But Joseph's brothers have diverted from where they said they would be. They are *lost to Joseph*; a keen parallel to the state of Israel, as well as the church anytime that the leaders stray.

¹⁷ And the man said, "They have departed from here, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'"

Dothan is a location about 12 miles due north of Shechem.

Unlike many names of people and places in the Bible, there is little disagreement about the meaning of the name of Dothan. It means "two wells."

As we learn in John chapter 4 the piece of land where they were in Shechem contained Jacob's well, but Dothan has two wells. As wells in the Bible picture the place where one's life-spring is derived, the picture we're to learn from this is that the sons of Israel thought they would fare better with two wells for their flocks. What could that mean? If we look at this in a spiritual sense then, it is exactly what is seen throughout the span of the nation of Israel and even the church. God's people trade the true waters of life for false waters, or mix the two rather than sticking to the one true Source of their existence. This is explained quite clearly to us in Jeremiah 2:13 -

“For My people have committed two evils:
They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters,
And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.

There are pits which can hold water and there are those which cannot. There are wells which nourish and there are those which disappoint. In the end, only the fountain of living waters will do. Someone has to lead the flocks and someone has to seek the lost.

The people of Jeremiah's time, as well as at Jesus' time, had forsaken the true water of life and had hewn for themselves broken cisterns. This is what we are told again and again and again in the Bible - to stand on the word of God and never mix in anything which could defile that, nor are we to turn to another well in hopes of being refreshed.

The well is the place of spiritual nourishment and the true well is found only in Christ. And Christ is only properly revealed in the Bible.

¹⁷ (con't) **So Joseph went after his brothers and found them in Dothan.**

Instead of turning back home to his father, Joseph went on to Dothan in order to find his brothers and he found them there. Instead of turning away from His wayward people who had added every type of legalism and error into God's law, Jesus proceeded onward to His own brothers where He found them... in the place of two wells.

III. The Lord of Dreams

¹⁸ **Now when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, they conspired against him to kill him.**

Even from a long distance, the brothers knew who Joseph was. Probably, above all they could tell because of his ornate coat. But his manner of walking, his stature, and how he carried himself told them as well. The same is true with Jesus. In John chapter 3 it says this about the leaders of Israel and their perception of Jesus -

“Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” John 3:2

Like John the Baptist, they actually knew they were dealing with a representative from God when they saw Jesus, even if they didn't fully understand it. But just as the brothers of Joseph conspired against him, the leaders of Israel likewise conspired against Jesus.

The son and father relationship is seen in both Joseph and in this verse from John 5 about Jesus -

Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

-John 5:18

Again, as seen in Matthew 26, the leaders of Israel conspired against Jesus, just as the brothers are conspiring against Joseph -

³ Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, ⁴ and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill *Him*. (3, 4)

¹⁹ Then they said to one another, "Look, this dreamer is coming!"

The book of Matthew is 28 chapters long and each of those chapters has one or several links, or hidden connections, to the first 28 books of the Bible. In Genesis, there are no less than four of these links. One of them is in the dreams of Joseph.

In Genesis, Joseph the son of Jacob, is shown to have dreams. In Matthew 1, Joseph the legal father of Jesus was given dreams as well. There is a difference here though. The dreams of Joseph, Jesus' father were intended to save Jesus, but the dreams of Joseph here were used as an excuse to kill him.

But, as God often does, these intentions will be turned around in order to save the people of Israel, just as happened with the dreams of Joseph in Matthew. In this verse, Joseph is called *ba'al ha'khalomowt* (3:20) a lord of dreams.

They are using it as a term of derision. Dreams, if prophetic, could only come from God and so they are deriding him as blasphemous. Clearly, though intended as a derogatory title, God intends for us to see Jesus in this as well. Jesus is the true Lord of dreams.

Throughout the Bible, Jehovah is the one who directs man's dreams, both in the giving and interpretation of them. And so even though the title is meant one way when spoken by his brothers about Joseph, it is intended - in its fullest sense - in another way when picturing Christ.

²⁰ Come therefore, let us now kill him and cast him into some pit;

At Dothan, the place of the two pits, the brothers intend to kill Joseph and cast him into one of the pits. The word for "pit" here is the Hebrew word *bowr*. It is used symbolically in the Bible for the place where the dead go. There is Sheol, the place of the dead, but there is also the pit. This is seen, for example, in Psalm 30 -

O LORD, You brought my soul up from the grave;
You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the **pit**. Psalm 30:3

In the brother's hatred of Joseph, they have gone so far as to contemplate murder. The parallel with Jesus is obvious. And this brings up a point that every one of us should think about. These brothers have been stewing over this for some time and in a place many miles from home.

The fact is that none of us are above committing a crime of one sort or another, even going as far as murder. How we handle life's temptations and trials is up to each of us and the way that we will keep ourselves from these things is to hand them over to the Lord.

Nothing is hidden from the eyes of God and our hearts are open and they're exposed before Him. If we can remember this, it will help us in any situation. When we're anxious, we'll have the knowledge that He is there with us.

When we're facing sickness, we can remind ourselves that He directs our health, from the day we were born until the day we die. And when we are filled with anger, jealousy, or bitterness, all we really need is to hand it over to Him. Whatever the situation, let go of your pride and humble yourself before the Lord. That's what Peter tells to do,

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, ⁷ casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." 1 Peter 5:7

²⁰ (con't) **and we shall say, 'Some wild beast has devoured him.' We shall see what will become of his dreams!"**

Jealousy, murder, conspiracy, and lying in one verse. Not only do they hate Joseph, but they had no regard at all for their father. All they could think of was doing away with Joseph. As was the case with chapter 34 in the incident with their sister Dinah, the Lord is never mentioned in this entire chapter. Not in general and not specifically. He is entirely left out of the picture.

The covenant children of the covenant line of God have completely failed to meet their responsibilities *as* the covenant people. Again, as the Bible notes often, it is a picture of the people of Israel. They are either striving with God, for God, or - as in this case, striving with God, against Him.

The sons of Israel here are reflective of the elders of Israel mentioned in the first few verses of the 2nd Psalm -

¹ Why do the nations rage,
And the people plot a vain thing?
² The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, *saying*,
³ "Let us break Their bonds in pieces
And cast away Their cords from us."

The brothers plotted their deed, against the favorite son of their father. They wanted to cast off his rule and his authority just as the leaders of Israel did to the Lord, the favorite Son of the Father. In both cases though, God's plan would prevail.

What was intended for evil turned out so beautifully, that people still marvel over His glorious work thousands of years later. Jacob's family will be saved from famine and death and a world full of people will be saved from hell.

²¹ But Reuben heard *it*, and he delivered him out of their hands, and said, "Let us not kill him."

The Bible doesn't specifically tell why Reuben protested the plan, but scholars generally attribute it to his heart being more tender than the other brothers. Rather, the explanation is hinted at in Genesis 42. When they stand in Joseph's presence in Egypt, not knowing it is him, Reuben will say this -

"Did I not speak to you, saying, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us." Genesis 42:22

This was what God spoke to Noah about 600 years earlier -

Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man.

⁶“Whoever sheds man's blood,
By man his blood shall be shed;
For in the image of God
He made man. Genesis 9:6

Even if God is left out of this chapter explicitly, He is there implicitly, both in the direction of the events and in the conscience of Reuben which is based on the law of shedding man's blood.

²² And Reuben said to them, “Shed no blood, *but* cast him into this pit which *is* in the wilderness, and do not lay a hand on him”—that he might deliver him out of their hands, and bring him back to his father.

Reuben was no stranger to wrongdoing. Back in chapter 35, he slept with his father's wife Bilhah. But he knew there was a line which should never be crossed, and that line was murder. He'd seen it in his two younger brothers, Simeon and Levi, when they killed the males of Shechem.

Because of what he did with Bilhah, he may already have known that Jacob wouldn't give him the birthright. And the same is true with Simeon and Levi. However, by rescuing Joseph, he may have hoped to regain his father's favor after what he had done.

Whether that is the case or not, he intended to keep Joseph alive and have him returned home safely. We have to leave the story off here today and we will pick it up again next week. As you can see, it's all pointing to Jesus. Every word, every title, every single thing that happens is recorded for this purpose - that God might reveal His Son to us so that we might hear the word and believe.

If God put so much care into His word, taking thousands of years to bring it to us, how much does He truly care about you!

Closing Verse: *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! Psalm 133:1*

Next Week: Genesis 37:23-36 (In and Out of the Pit of Despair) (94th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Sending out the Son

Joseph's brothers went to feed
In Shechem, their father's flock
And Israel said to Joseph, "Please take heed
Listen, while to you I talk

Are not your brothers this very day
Feeding the flock in Shechem?
Come, I will send you out their way
So he said to him, "Here I am."

Then he said to him, "Please go and see
If it is well with your brothers, the flocks too
And then bring back word to me
This is the thing that I ask of you

So of out of the Valley of Hebron he was sent
And Joseph headed for Shechem as he went

Now a certain man found him, maybe praying
And there he was in the field, wandering
And the man asked him, saying,
"What are you seeking? Or what are you pondering?"

So he said, "I am seeking my brothers here today
Please tell me where they are feeding their flocks"
Can you say?

And the man said, "They have departed from here,
For I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan,
That's kind of near

So Joseph, after his brothers, off he went
And found them in Dothan right where he was sent

Now when they saw him afar off still
Even before he came too near
They conspired against him to kill
For God's law they showed no fear

Then they said each to one another
“Look, this dreamer is headed our way!
Therefore, let us now kill Joseph our brother
And cast him into some pit this very day

And we shall say, ‘He was devoured by some wild beast
What will become of his dreams when his life has ceased?

But Reuben heard it, the thing they said
And he delivered him out of their hands
And spoke, “Let us not his blood shed
He was not in favor of their plans

And Reuben said to them in his address
“Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit
Which is out here in wilderness
And do not lay a hand on him; do not do it

He said this that he might deliver him out of their hands
And bring him back to his father, stopping their evil plans

Another conspiracy took place in the Bible's pages
And it led to the highlight of God's great plan
Which was prophesied for many ages...
Israel's leaders and Roman officials as well
Crucified Jesus on a tree at Calvary
But in truth, the Bible has more of the story to tell
He died for the sins of people like you and me

God knew that without the cross we simply had no chance
And that the devil would eternally reign over us
But because of it we are freed from hell's dark expanse
And brought into the wondrous light of our Lord, Christ Jesus

And so may we with hearts of grateful praise
And voices of song to our God employ
Yes, to our Lord Jesus let us eternally raise
A triumphant shout overflowing with joy

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 37:23-36 (IN AND OUT OF THE PIT OF DESPAIR)

Introduction: You know that throughout the Genesis sermons, we've found a ton of pictures which find their fulfillment in later redemptive history. Adam Clarke, the great Methodist commentator and theologian cautions strongly against this. Here are his thoughts -

"Parallels and coincidences of this kind should always be received cautiously, for where the Spirit of God has not marked a direct resemblance, and obviously referred to it as such in some other part of his word, it is bold, if not dangerous, to say "such and such things and persons are types of Christ." We have instances sufficiently numerous, legitimately attested, without having recourse to those which are of dubious import and precarious application."

In his later comments from chapter 40 of Genesis, he is even stronger in his wording and condemnation of the searching out and use of such pictures. But in this, he and I will have to disagree.

First, because he is long since dead, and secondly, his thoughts dismiss the very words of both Jesus and the apostles which state that these things testify to Jesus. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 10, as on several other occasions, Paul uses such examples from the Old Testament and demonstrates exactly how they symbolically picture and point to Christ and His work. He then says,

"Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." (11)

Having said this, pictures, patterns, and parallels cannot be pulled out of the wind. They must align with something God later instructs us on, either implicitly or explicitly. And they must be directed properly to the *plan of redemption* as the Bible reveals it.

If so, then the patterns are not only acceptable, they actually explain the seemingly unnecessary nature of some things the Bible includes. They are not unnecessary, but are integral words, ideas, and pictures which reveal to us the majesty of God's wisdom and the glory of the work of Christ.

Today's patterns will be no different. So let's continue our journey through Genesis with the story of Joseph as he is sold off to slavery in the land of Egypt.

Text Verse: *I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly;*

I go mourning all the day long.

⁷ *For my loins are full of inflammation,*

And there is no soundness in my flesh.

⁸ *I am feeble and severely broken;*

I groan because of the turmoil of my heart. Psalm 38:6-8

Both Jacob and Joseph will suffer greatly from the events of today's passage. It's hard for most of us to relate to what occurred to them, but how much more the things which they picture in Christ. What He suffered for us was done willingly - for people like you and me.

Such is the love of God for His wayward creatures. Let us never forget what He went through to reconcile us back to Himself and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Waterless Pit

²³ So it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the tunic of *many* colors that *was* on him.

Our first verse today is undoubtedly recorded for the purpose of showing us the coming abasement of the Lord of Creation, our Savior Jesus. Joseph's brothers hated that their father favored him and that he was set above them.

The coat was a sign of that favor and of his authority over them. They wanted him to feel the effects of its loss and so when he was sent by his father to check up on them, they stripped him of it. The same idea is true concerning Jesus.

He, the favored Son of His Father, was sent on a journey to His brethren, the people of Israel - to be the Shepherd over them, but when they saw Him coming, they hated the authority He possessed and so they eventually stripped him as well.

This concept of His coat actually finds its fulfillment in two ways, one spiritually, and one literally. In his earthly adornment, God prepared a human nature, a coat, for His Son in a way which no other possessed. He was filled with His Spirit and adorned with the gifts

and graces of that Spirit. When His brethren saw this, the Bible shows their jealousy of Jesus.

But in a literal way, Christ was also stripped by those around Him. First, when He was taken to Herod, Luke 23:11 says that they "arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe." He was later stripped of this. He also had his own personal tunic which was an expensive and carefully made garment of which He was stripped. The account is recorded in the gospels for us. In John 19 we read -

²³Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. ²⁴They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says: "They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots." Therefore the soldiers did these things. John 19:23, 24

²⁴ Then they took him and cast him into a pit. And the pit *was* empty; *there was no water in it.*

Here again we see a picture of Jesus. Last week we saw that Reuben kept the other brothers from killing him. Instead, he told them to throw him into a pit, hoping to rescue him from it. We saw that the word for "pit" is the Hebrew word *bowr*, a word used symbolically for the place where the dead go.

Joseph is thrown into the pit and so in both intent and in picture, he is symbolically slain by his brothers after having been stripped bare. This is exactly fulfilled in the crucifixion of Christ. He died and his body was placed in the grave. His soul had departed.

Moreover, in this verse, the state of the pit Joseph is thrown into is described not once, but twice in the Hebrew - *v'habowr req en bow mayim* - "now the pit was empty, without water."

It is described as both empty *and* without water when either could have sufficed, but this was again to show us coming pictures. The note that the pit was *empty* was to picture the unused grave Jesus was laid in. This is found in Luke 23:53 -

"Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb *that was* hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before."

That the pit was *without water* was to picture that Jesus' life was gone from the body - water being a picture of life in the Bible. One of many verses to show us this would be the famous passage of Jesus with the woman at the well in John 4:13, 14 -

“Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again,¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Joseph's ordeal, though tragic, has been recorded for more than one reason. It shows us how the dreams that he had actually came about. It also shows the sequence of events which would lead to the Passover. And it shows how these events parallel the greater work of Jesus.

Not only do these things mirror what He will do, but the things they lead to such as the Passover, do the same thing. The Passover again mirrors the cross of Jesus. One story builds into another and then into another, and yet each has hints of what will occur in the life and ministry of the Lord.

No wonder Jesus could claim that the words of Moses testified to Him. Everything written in the past was given in anticipation of His coming and His work. When speaking to the leaders of Israel, He said this -

Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is *one* who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust.⁴⁶ For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.⁴⁷ But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” John 5: 45-47

II. Selling Off the Favored Son

²⁵ And they sat down to eat a meal.

Amazingly, even this short sentence, which is only a part of verse 25, shows us a parallel to the time of Jesus' cross. Joseph was cast into a pit which is a picture and type of Jesus' death. While there, the brothers sat down to eat a meal. Likewise, when Jesus was crucified and buried, the leaders of Israel sat down to their own meal. In John 18:28 this is recorded -

"Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover."

And again we read this in John 19:41, 42 -

"Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. ⁴² So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation *Day*, for the tomb was nearby."

Just as Joseph's brothers coldly ate a meal while their brother was in the pit, the same was true with Israel's leaders. They feasted and celebrated the Passover while Jesus lay in the tomb.

²⁵ (con't) **Then they lifted their eyes and looked, and there was a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead...**

The plain sense of this verse needs little explanation. They're eating a meal and along come some Ishmaelites from Gilead along with camels bearing spices that they will take to Egypt to sell. But one must ask, "Why has God included all the detail? Couldn't he have skipped some of it?"

Well, let's go back and look at what the names mean. Ishmael means "God hears." Gilead means the "Perpetual Fountain." Joseph is in the pit, certainly praying for God's assistance. God hears him and sends his deliverance. A group traveling from Gilead, the Perpetual Fountain.

In the same way, the psalms prophetically speak of the prayers of the Lord from the pit. In the 16th Psalm it says, "Preserve me, O God, for in You I put my trust." Then at the end of the psalm we read the note of victory -

For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
¹¹ You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence *is* fullness of joy;
At Your right hand *are* pleasures forevermore. (10, 11)

²⁵ (con't) **with their camels, bearing spices, balm, and myrrh, on their way to carry *them* down to Egypt.**

Like I said, the Bible could have just recorded the generalities. For example, "They had camels full of goods." Instead it lists the goods and that they are going to Egypt. Egypt means "double distress." God chose to include that they were spices, balm, and myrrh specifically to give us a picture of Christ's death.

Joseph is in the pit, symbolic of death. Jesus is in the tomb, dead. In order to meet the customs of the Jews, it says this in Luke 23:56, speaking of the women who were with Jesus at the cross -

"Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment."

In John 19, we learn that the burial spices included myrrh and aloes, thus we see the parallel brought clearly into focus once again. God is using everything in these accounts to wake us up to what He has done and will do through His precious Son.

²⁶ So Judah said to his brothers, "What profit *is there* if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?

Judah is the one who realizes that there is an alternative to leaving him in the pit, something tantamount to killing him. Instead they could profit off the sale of him. And so he devises his plan...

²⁷ Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he *is* our brother *and* our flesh." And his brothers listened.

Judah proposes to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites. Selling Joseph involves the supposition that he is in fact alive. They threw him into the pit and went to eat. To them, he was dead. But now they acknowledge that he is alive. This is important for us to understand what is going on here.

He says "he is our brother and our flesh" and from this note it says that his brothers listened. In other words, they agreed to the deed.

²⁸ Then Midianite traders passed by;

Suddenly, and this is hugely curious!, an entirely different group of people are brought into the story. The Ishmaelites were noted. Now, almost completely ignoring that for a

moment, it says that "Midianite traders passed by." Commentators, almost universally lump them in as "Ishmaelites."

But Midian was a son of Abraham through his concubine Keturah. Ishmael was the son of Hagar. They are an entirely different group of people. They very well may have been traveling together, but God, once again, chooses to single them out by name. Midian means "Place of Judgment."

This name, "Place of Judgment" bears directly on what is about to happen in this same verse and what it points to in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

²⁸ (con't) **so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit,**

Guess what? The Hebrew does not say "so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit." Rather, the words, "so the brothers" are inserted by translators for what they *believe* is clarity. Here is Young's literal translation of this same verse -

"And Midianite merchantmen pass by and they draw out and bring up Joseph out of the pit, and sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty silverlings, and they bring Joseph into Egypt."

Reading it this way, as the Hebrew reads, it says that the *Midianites* brought him out of the pit and then they sold him to the Ishmaelites. This is similar to what the Jewish scholar Pirk Eliezer believes. The brothers sold him to the Midianites and then they sold them to the Ishmaelites.

There is no confusion in the word at all. The brothers sold him and didn't even want to see him again. They simply pointed to the pit and let the Midianites get him out. The Midianites then turned and made a quick buck off of re-selling him.

Why though? Why did God choose this wording? The reason is Jesus. He was in the tomb, the Place of Judgment, which is exactly what Midian means. In that pit, our sin was judged in Him and He was judged faithful. God raised Him from the grave, thus signifying that the divine judgment on sin was paid in full.

This is exactly explained in Romans 5 by Paul -

For the judgment *which came* from one *offense resulted* in condemnation, but the free gift *which came* from many offenses *resulted* in justification. ¹⁷ For if by the

one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.)

God did hear (Ishmael); from the Perpetual Fountain (Gilead), which is His throne; He restored the life of Jesus to His body which was covered in spices and myrrh at the Place of Judgment (Midian). This is why all of these names are given. Each word, selected by God, to show us what is coming in the work of Jesus.

28 (con't) and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty *shekels* of silver.

Of all of the pictures of the coming work of Jesus, *this one* is most commonly associated with it. It is almost universally agreed by commentators and scholars that this is a picture of the money paid to Judas by the leaders of Israel, and I... I completely disagree. Joseph has already been in the pit and Joseph is now brought out of the pit. What Judas did was *prior* to the crucifixion, not after.

This is picturing something else, something completely different and it's found in Matthew 28:12-15 -

When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, ¹³ saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him *away* while we slept.' ¹⁴ And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure." ¹⁵ So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Money was exchanged to keep people quiet and hide a crime. This is exactly what happens in both instances. Joseph was sold off by his brothers *after* being brought from the pit and Jesus was sold off by the leaders of Israel *after* He rose from the grave.

In both cases, the act results in movement from Israel to the gentiles. And in both cases, the movement will eventually return to the Jewish people. Joseph will be reconciled to his brothers after he rules Egypt during seven years of famine. Jesus will be reconciled to His people after the time of the gentiles and during the seven years of tribulation.

Foreigners carried off Joseph to their land, and the gentiles have carried the gospel of Christ into all the world.

²⁸ (con't) **And they took Joseph to Egypt.**

The price is paid, the money exchanged hands, and the Ishmaelites take charge of Joseph. He is taken to Egypt, the place of *double distress*. This is a picture of the message of Jesus going from the Jews to the Gentiles.

The Jews had the law, the gentiles had nothing; they are in double distress. But in a land of no hope, Joseph will bring prosperity and peace. And in the place of no hope for the Gentiles, Jesus will do the same. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:12, 13

"...that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

III. Jacob's Anguish

²⁹ **Then Reuben returned to the pit, and indeed Joseph *was not* in the pit; and he tore his clothes.**

Apparently, Reuben went out pasturing his flocks and he went in a roundabout manner in order to come back to the pit and deliver Joseph out of it. But when he got there, it was too late. He was already sold. Reuben means, "See, a Son."

³⁰ **And he returned to his brothers and said, "The lad *is no more*; and I, where shall I go?"**

Reuben hadn't consented to the sale, nor did he know of it. But when he found that his brother was gone, he tore his clothes, a sign of intense grief and he asked "where shall I go?" Or, as God's Word translation says it, "What shall I do now?" This is a beautiful picture of the people of Israel who had gathered in Acts chapter 2.

Peter explained what had happened, how the tomb was empty, and the Lord was risen. And verse 37 says this -

"³⁷ Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?'"

Those Jews whose hearts were softened to the plight of their brother Jesus responded just as Reuben did. For those who repented, they were given the right to be called children of God. See, a Son! Thus the name of Reuben finds its fulfillment in them.

³¹ So they took Joseph's tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood.

But, there are those who hid the truth of the message of Jesus and who refused to acknowledge their deed, just as the brothers of Joseph plotted to hide what they had done from their father. Regardless of whether they killed their brother or not, the bloodguilt remained.

They had sold him off as a slave, thus condemning him. What this is showing us is a time of rejection of Christ for the Jewish people. The Hebrew for "a kid of the goats" is *seir izzim*. It is a specific term used in Leviticus 16 for the Day of Atonement rituals.

On that day, two goats were selected using this same term - *seir izzim*. One was made a sacrifice for the sins of the people and one was used as a scapegoat. The scapegoat had the sins of the people confessed over it and then it was released alive in the wilderness to carry away, or expiate, the sins of the people.

This goat, killed by the brothers is the scapegoat for their deeds, but they killed it to cover what they did, using its blood as a trick against their father. This is a sad, after the fact, note which they had brought on themselves and which is reflected in these words from Matthew 27:25 -

"And all the people answered and said, "His blood *be* on us and on our children."

Instead of accepting their King and rejecting Barabbas, they called for Barabbas and accepted the bloodguilt of Christ.

³² Then they sent the tunic of *many* colors, and they brought *it* to their father and said, "We have found this. Do you know whether it *is* your son's tunic or not?"

What is as cowardly as could be, they sent the tunic to their father by a messenger. They didn't even have the intestinal fortitude to take it themselves so that they could be there to help their father through the grief.

But their actions couldn't conceal their own guilt anymore than the leaders of Israel could conceal theirs. Joseph's brothers will admit as much when they go down to Egypt looking for food. And the leaders of Israel knew it also when they tried to force the apostles to be quiet about Jesus. In Acts 5, we read this -

"And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council. And the high priest asked them, ²⁸ saying, 'Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!'"

Our actions can be hidden from other's eyes, but they can't be hidden from our own consciences, nor can we hide them from God who sees all things. The Man's *blood* was on them.

³³ And he recognized it and said, "It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces."

"My son's tunic." The ruse worked for the sons of Israel and the ruse worked for the leaders of Israel. Having rejected their Lord, they went about working to seek righteousness in a new way. They codified Jewish law in the Mishna and the Gemara, which together form the Talmud - the code of Jewish living to this day.

Jacob, whose name means "Deceiver" was once again deceived, and Israel has likewise faced the deception concerning Jesus for two millennia. The scapegoat's blood has remained and it can only be removed when one turns to the Lord and acknowledges their guilt before Him.

In his anguish, he cries out *tarowf towraf* - "torn torn." To Jacob their seems no hope and to Israel it seems the same. But God is in control of all things and His heart and affections for His people will always bring about a good end. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning. So it will be for Jacob and so it will be for Israel. All in God's good timing.

³⁴ Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days.

Tearing ones clothes is used as a sign of mourning. It would be like someone wearing a black band on their arm or rubbing ashes on their head. He demonstrates his grief

openly, and then he puts on sackcloth. This is the first time sackcloth is mentioned in the Bible.

Like tearing one's clothes, it is used as a sign of mourning. Instead of one's regular clothes, they'd simply put on this coarse material made from hair which was used for sacks. In this state, it says he "mourned for his son many days." He was a broken man, now living a shattered existence.

And this is the state that the Bible speaks of for Israel. In Hosea 3:4, 5 it says this -

⁴ For the children of Israel shall abide **many days** without king or prince, without sacrifice or *sacred* pillar, without ephod or teraphim. ⁵ Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days."

The name "Jacob" won't be mentioned again until chapter 42 when he directs his sons to go down to Egypt to buy grain. And isn't this a perfect picture of the last 2000 years for Israel. They have been a side note of history. Living out mournful years of existence and awaiting their destined meeting with Messiah.

The patterns are rich and extravagant. The parallels are too numerous to dismiss. And Israel's continuance is a testimony to God's faithfulness to preserve them, despite the actions of the past.

³⁵ And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him.

One of the things that irks me most, and it is almost unanimous among scholars, is to say that "all his sons and all his daughters" doesn't literally mean "daughters" even though it is in the plural. Jacob could have had 20 daughters and it wouldn't harm the Bible's narrative at all by mentioning only Dinah by name.

The reason Dinah was mentioned was because of her relevance to the pictures God was making for our understanding of His work. Daughters are only mentioned when this is the case. In other instances, they are left out of the record. Not because they were unimportant, but because the family line travels through the male.

If your commentary says something like this, put a big fat "X" through it. Jacob had

many daughters and they, like his sons, were unable to comfort him in his sadness. Instead, he said that he would go to Sheol, the place of the dead, in mourning for his son.

The word *sheol* comes from another word *shaal* which means "to demand." It is the place which inevitably demands all souls as its own. Jacob knows he will someday be required in Sheol and when he arrives, his hope is to be again with his beloved son, Joseph. Until then, his mourning will continue.

³⁶ Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh *and* captain of the guard.

Once again, your Bible probably doesn't reflect what the Hebrew text reads. It doesn't say "Midianites" at all. Instead, it says "Medanites." Medan is a brother of Midian. Both are sons of Abraham by his concubine Keturah.

Translators and commentators alike simply use the excuse that it is a scribal error, or its another name for the same people, and so on. But the plain sense of it is that the Ishmaelites, Midianites, and Medanites were all involved in the purchase, sale, and resale of Joseph.

Where Midian means "Place of Judgment," Medan means simply "Judgment." This is not arbitrary nor a mistake. Jesus was brought out of the Place of Judgment when he was brought out of the tomb. Now through *that* Judgment He is brought to the place of double distress where He rules during this dispensation. He sits in judgment.

When Joseph is brought to Egypt, he is sold to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, also called the captain of the guard. Potiphar is a name which is hard to pin down, but in essence it means "Priest of the Bull" in the Coptic Egyptian language.

Interestingly enough, the bull pictures the High Priest of Israel and so ultimately the work of Jesus. Once again, it appears that even the names in this last verse of the chapter are pointing to the on-going ministry of Jesus as our High Priest - the Priest of the Bull.

When a name is relevant to the story, it is given. When it isn't, then no name is given. There is only one reason why Potiphar's name is given and that's because of what his name pictures. Jesus is our High Priest, a duty He performs for us before God. Joseph is brought here to show us where Jesus went to minister as well.

Finally, the term used to designate Potiphar as the Captain of the Guard is literally "captain of the slaughterers", meaning the executioners. He would be the commanding officer who executed capital sentences. Why this name is important will come about later in how he treats Joseph over an offense in his house.

This is the end of the chapter and I'd like to remind you that God is never mentioned throughout all of the 36 verses.

Like chapter 34, which dealt with the sins of the sons of Israel, this one too deals with their sins. It shows that when they lived without God, they failed. The same is true with Israel the nation. When they are obedient to their Lord, they will receive blessing and honor. And when they disobey, they will suffer loss.

But through obedience or disobedience, God has remained faithful to them. Keeping them, tending to them, and preparing them for each step of His marvelous plan of redemption. And Israel, in a way, pictures us. When we include God in our lives, all goes far better than when we put Him on the shelf.

Let each of us strive to live for, and honor, this wonderful God who has given such minute attention to His word, that we can see His Son time and again... I love You - and my Son is the proof.

Closing Verse: *For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have done all these great things, to make Your servant know them. ²² Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 2 Samuel 7:21, 22*

Next Week: Genesis 38:1-23 (Judah and Tamar, The Transfer of the Pledge) (95th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Pit of Despair

So it came to pass, in a plot so thick
When Joseph had come to his brothers
That they stripped Joseph of his tunic
The tunic on him, the one of many colors

Then they took him and cast him into a pit
And the pit was empty; there was no water in it

And they sat down to eat a meal
Thinking what they had done was no big deal

Then they lifted their eyes and looked
And there were Ishmaelites in a company
Coming from Gilead with their camels
Bearing spices, balm, and myrrh abundantly

They were on their way, we are told
To carry them down to Egypt, where they would be sold

So Judah to his brothers said
“What profit is there if we kill our brother
And conceal his blood when he is dead
When we kill him, the son of our father

Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites
And let not our hand be upon him
For he is our brother and our flesh, isn't that right?
Let us not with malice do our brother in

And his brothers listened
In their minds, the thought of silver glistened
Then Midianite traders passed by
So the brothers pulled Joseph up from there
And lifted him out of the pit so dry
And sold him to the Ishmaelites without a care

For twenty shekels of silver he was sold
And they took Joseph to Egypt, just 17 years old

Then Reuben returned to the pit
And indeed Joseph was not there in it

And he tore his clothes in dread
As a sign of his overwhelming woe

And he returned to his brothers and said
“The lad is no more; and I, where shall I go?”

So they took Joseph’s tunic in their hands
And then of the goats they killed a kid
And dipped the tunic in the blood as part of their plans
This is the dastardly thing that they did

Then they sent the tunic of many colors
And they brought it to their father and said
“We have found this. Do you know whether it is our brother's?
It is your son’s tunic or not?” We think he is dead

And he recognized it and said,
“It is my son’s tunic, not that of another
A wild beast has devoured him, now he is dead
Certainly torn to pieces is Joseph your brother

Then Jacob tore his clothes in his grief
And put sackcloth on his waist
And mourned for his son many days with no relief
The memory of what happened couldn't be erased

And all his sons and all his daughters arose
To comfort him; but he refused their tries
To be comforted, and he said in his woes
Nothing will stop the tears in my eyes

For I shall go down into Sheol
In mourning will I go to my son
Thus his father wept for him in his soul
This is the result of what they had done

Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt
To Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh
He was the captain of the guard
Those who carried the bow and the arrow

The life of Joseph has taken a sad turn

And he seems doomed to misery and woe
But from this story soon we will learn
That God had a great plan, one He did foreknow

Like all things, we should trust that God is in control
And so to Him our cares and troubles we should roll

His love is greater by far for each of us
Than we could ever fully recognize
And it is demonstrated beautifully in the giving of Jesus
The most glorious gift from our Creator so wise

And so in gratitude to our glorious Lord above
May we return to Him our undying, undivided love

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 38:1-23

(JUDAH AND TAMAR, THE TRANSFER OF THE PLEDGE)

Introduction: Chapter 38 of Genesis is somewhat like chapter 34. In Chapter 34, we saw the incident with Dinah being violated and then Jacob's sons killing the whole town. That story was there for a reason, however, that reason was veiled in pictures of things that really happened, but which pointed to something else.

This chapter is the same. It is interesting, it has intrigue, sadness, and joy all mixed into it, just like chapter 34. But it's more than a fun story. One of the things that it includes is the continuance of the line of Judah which is the tribe Jesus comes from. This is certain. But we could have learned about that in a sentence or two.

All of the extra detail could otherwise be considered fat to be removed unless it is telling us something deeper, something rich, and helpful to our understanding of the reason why things happen as they do. The ultimate meaning of what this chapter is pointing to is actually quite similar to that of Chapter 34.

If you remember how that turned out, then you may also be able to see the fulfillment of the pictures in this story too. If not, pay attention to the historical and cultural details today and then next week we will finish up the chapter with a wonderful explanation of what we are being told.

In all honesty, just like the story about Dinah, I had only an inkling of why this one was given. It turned out that thinking these pictures through has made for one of the most difficult sermons for me yet in the book of Genesis. I frustrated over it, mulled over it, pondered over it, and fretted over it for hours.

Then I went to bed thinking about it. At 3:04 in the morning, I suddenly realized what this story was talking about and by 3:19 I had almost the entire picture in my head. Yes, the night watches were filled with contemplating the Word of God. And because of this, I have a text verse for you today from the 119th Psalm -

Text Verse: *My eyes are awake through the night watches,
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148*

God's word is a beautiful treasure. But as is the case with most treasure, it isn't revealed without being searched out. One can't place the Bible under their pillow and expect the

information to ooze in to their brain. Rather, it needs to be read, contemplated, and meditated on.

Even into the darkest hours of the night the psalmist meditated on God's word, and so should we. Make every effort to spend your days wisely - reading, pondering, and loving God's precious gift, the Holy Bible. It is living and active and ready to instruct us as we pay heed to it and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Judah' Unrighteousness

Chapter 38 of Genesis is interesting for what it contains. It seems like a side narrative unless you know why it's included. It in fact, is a main narrative, just as the life of Joseph is. Joseph's life and ordeal is recorded to show how the Israelites ended up in Egypt and how they were cared for when they got there.

At the same time, everything about Joseph is also providing pictures of the coming Messiah. The story of Judah and his family here in chapter 38 is given to show us about the main line which leads to the Messiah. Jesus will come through Judah. Because of this, the story here bears directly on His ancestry.

¹ It came to pass at that time that Judah departed from his brothers, and visited a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah.

This first verse starts with, "it came to pass at that time." In other words, it's a general statement which can fit into any of the events of the previous chapter. At some point during those stories, the events of this story come about and continue to unfold. Judah, like his brothers, is a shepherd and so he would take his flocks and head out for green pastures. For whatever reason, he decided to go out on his own, leaving his brothers, and to visit someone he met named Hirah.

Hirah means "Nobility." He's noted as an Adullamite. Adullam is a town to the south and west of Jerusalem in the lowlands. Adullam means "righteousness" or "justice of the people."

² And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua, and he married her and went in to her.

While visiting Hirah in Adullam, Judah married a daughter of Shua, who is identified as a Canaanite. Shua means "Wealth." This verse is one which should tell us about the importance of names that God records in the Bible. Why? Because the name of Judah's friend is given, the people his friend belongs to is given, and the name of his father's wife is given.

But the wife's name isn't. The one person you'd expect to be named is named at all. This tells us to pay attention when names are given. There is a story within the story we should be looking for. The dating it is hard to pin down, but Genesis 46:12 says this concerning those of Judah's family that go to Egypt in the future -

The sons of Judah *were* Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan). The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.

If the sons of Perez actually went to Egypt, then Judah got married at about 14 years old and it happened around the time that they lived in Shechem when Dinah was violated.

But another possibility is that the two sons of Perez were actually born in Egypt, even though they are listed as those who went down to Egypt. This type of speech is seen at other times in the Bible. A person who is still in the loins of the parent is spoken of in a future sense. So either is possible, but either way, Judah is a young man.

³ So she conceived and bore a son, and he called his name Er.

Judah's firstborn is named Er. Er means "Watching" or "Watcher."

⁴ She conceived again and bore a son, and she called his name Onan.

With no other commentary about the times and life of Judah, the story jumps straight to the next son to be born, Onan, which means "Strong." But instead of Judah naming him, it says she named him.

⁵ And she conceived yet again and bore a son, and called his name Shelah. He was at Chezib when she bore him.

And yet again, a third son is recorded by name. His name is Shelah which means "Prosperity." Again the wife names the son and then it notes the he, Judah, was at Chezib when she bore him. Chezib means "false" or "falsehood."

⁶Then Judah took a wife for Er his firstborn, and her name *was* Tamar.

Judah got married at a young age and now he finds a wife for his firstborn at a young age as well. The wife he chooses for her is named Tamar, meaning "Palm Tree." In the Bible, the palm tree has several connotations. It is a symbol of prosperity, the element of an oasis, and it also is a picture of a faithful and righteous person.

The 92nd Psalm gives this symbolism -

The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,

He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

¹³ Those who are planted in the house of the LORD

Shall flourish in the courts of our God.

¹⁴ They shall still bear fruit in old age;

They shall be fresh and flourishing,

¹⁵ To declare that the LORD is upright;

He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him. (12-15)

Because of this symbolism, depictions of palm trees lavishly adorned the walls of both Solomon's and Ezekiel's temples.

⁷But Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and the LORD killed him.

This is one of those verses where people really start to take offense against God and against the Bible. Or, there are those that have no problem with this verse, but then struggle with the death of someone that they think is a "good" person. But God is the Creator and this is His world.

If he wants to remove someone for *whatever* reason, because they are wicked or to save them from what might be a bigger catastrophe in their future, this is His right. In the case of Er, he was wicked in the sight of Jehovah and so Jehovah killed him. I have no problem with this at all.

"The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord." In Er's death, God's plans are worked out. And in each of our lives, we can only count on the breath in our nostrils. Our life will in fact end. The only questions are "when" and "how."

In an interesting play on Er and wickedness, the same letters are used in the Hebrew for both words. Er is spelled Ayin, Resh and "wicked" which is *ra* is spelled Resh, Ayin. It is

almost as if the Bible is describing him as completely wicked; it being his very nature. Er's wickedness is great like the people before the Flood of Noah and the people of Sodom.

⁸And Judah said to Onan, “Go in to your brother’s wife and marry her, and raise up an heir to your brother.”

Because Er is dead and he left no children, Judah tells his second son Onan, to take Tamar as his wife and raise up and heir for Er.

*Onan, take your brother's wife
Take Tamar and go into her
For I want you to raise up another life
Yes, I want you to raise an heir for Er*

The word used for this marriage is a special word used just for this purpose. It is where a person acts as a husband for the widow of a brother who died without children.

This is something that will actually be mandated under the Law of Moses, but it was a custom which was obviously known at this time. It is also known to have been practiced in many cultures of the mid-east and Africa.

It is a way of honoring the name of the dead so that their name doesn't die out. It will also ensure that the inheritance of the firstborn remains alive.

⁹But Onan knew that the heir would not be his; and it came to pass, when he went in to his brother’s wife, that he emitted on the ground, lest he should give an heir to his brother.

Well, never let anyone say that the Bible hides the faults of man, no matter how unusual they are. Because of the custom of the land and Judah's direction to him, the first child of Onan wouldn't be recorded as his. It would be listed under Er. And the inheritance for Er would go to this son rather than to his own.

This didn't sit well with Onan and so instead of refusing to have Tamar at all, he committed a worse act. He took her as his wife, but he wouldn't provide a child for her in the process. The Hebrew word literally says he "destroyed to the ground."

So he treated her shamefully, disgraced the name of his brother, and violated the custom handed down to him by his father.

¹⁰ And the thing which he did displeased the LORD; therefore He killed him also.

Because of this sin against the Lord, the woman, the brother, and his father, the Lord killed Onan also. The questions one might ask are, "Why does the Lord kill Er when there are lots of wicked people on the earth, and yet he doesn't kill all of them?" and "Why did the Lord kill Onan when there were certainly others who did the same thing as him, but he doesn't kill them?"

The answer is found in the title of the One who killed them, "the Lord." It is Jehovah specifically, not just the general title for "God." When the title "Jehovah" is used, it is speaking of the One who monitors the covenant and the covenant people.

The title Lord, or Jehovah, is only mentioned three times in this chapter and only in the two verses about Er and Onan. What they have done is a violation of the covenant God gave to Abraham and which was passed down to Isaac, then Jacob, and then to the sons of Israel. As Judah is the son in the line of the Messiah, these sons have willfully disgraced the covenant.

What Onan has done here has been used a jillion times as a verse prescribing that one must not do what he did. From that, the concept is built on that one must *intend* to procreate every time they have relations with their wife.

And from there come mandates against birth control. One concept is built upon another inserting mandates which are beyond what Scripture is stating or even implying. The use of the term "Lord" or Jehovah shows us that this is not at all what is intended.

This is a covenant violation, not a human transgression. Otherwise, another term such as "God" would have been used. The Bible is silent on the issue of birth control, be it using the timing cycle or any other means, and this verse cannot be used as a text against it.

Reuben, Simeon, and Levi have all been excluded from the blessing of leading to the Messiah. And so Jehovah's eyes and covenant keeping responsibilities are directed toward Judah and his descendants. Jehovah saw these two as unfit and they were killed.

It is His covenant to monitor and He decides how it will be enforced. Now, with the two wicked sons out of the way a new avenue to the Messiah will be sought out.

I would suggest right now that Tamar was probably aware of the covenant and the promise of Messiah through Judah. There is no reason to assume that Judah would have kept it from his wife, nor is there a reason to assume that Er wasn't made aware of it. And so Tamar heard through him or through Judah himself.

¹¹ Then Judah said to Tamar his daughter-in-law, "Remain a widow in your father's house till my son Shelah is grown."

Tamar has seen two husbands die without bearing children. Judah knows that Shelah is too young to perform his duties by giving her a child in place of those two brothers. And so he says to her to remain a widow in her father's house until Shelah is old enough to fill the role.

In saying this, it's indicating that she must remain a widow and not marry outside of the family. As he has a responsibility to the name of his son, she has a responsibility to the dead husband.

^{11 (con't)} For he said, "Lest he also die like his brothers."

We can infer that he said this to himself, not to Tamar. What Judah was actually worried about isn't Tamar, but the life of his third son. In essence, "She must be the cause of the first two dying." He didn't want the third to die because of her as well.

^{11 (con't)} And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

What is obviously in view here is that Tamar is the one who has suffered the loss of two husbands. Judah may feel that she is to blame, but Tamar may think the opposite. "I've lost two husbands from this family already - one was wicked, the other was cruel. When will this pain end?"

And yet, in faithfulness to the family and to the custom, she went back to dwell in her father's house. She acts in an upright manner, as her name "Palm Tree" implies.

II. A Pledge is Given

¹² Now in the process of time the daughter of Shua, Judah's wife, died;

Here we have a phrase, *v'yirbu ha'yamim*, or "and the days were multiplied." It means an indeterminate amount of time, but it usually means a pretty long period, even several years. Sometime after Judah made his promise to Tamar, his wife dies.

Birth, life, and death are all at the Lord's discretion, and so it shows us that what is coming is being set up through the Lord's hand.

^{12 (con't)} and Judah was comforted, and went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

After a time of mourning for his wife, it says he went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, taking along his friend Hirah. Timnah means "a part assigned" or "territory". The reason for taking his friend is that at the time that the sheep are sheared, it's usually a time of fun and parties.

The owners would invite friends, and treat their working hands to entertainment, good food, and festivity. This occurs around the end of March after the winter is ending. Because of the festive time, he brings Hirah along as well.

¹³ And it was told Tamar, saying, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep."

In what is probably a matter-of-fact happening, someone mentions to Tamar that Judah, her father in law, is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep. Whether the comment was simply an innocuous statement of fact or not, Tamar is going to use it as an opportunity for personal justification.

¹⁴ So she took off her widow's garments, covered *herself* with a veil and wrapped herself,

The clothes that she wore while living in her father's house distinguished her as a widow. She had remained faithful to her trust not only by not marrying, but also by showing those around her that she was a widow and living as a widow. If nothing else, the righteousness of her actions are testified to in the Bible.

However, because of the length of time mentioned in the previous verse, she had figured out that Judah had no intention of giving his third son to her as a husband. This was *her right* and if she knew of the Messianic blessing, then even more so.

And so she devised a plan, maybe without knowing its outcome, to get him to see the error of his ways. She put on a veil and wrapped herself in a manner that would identify her as a prostitute. The word for "veil" is *tsiaph*. It is used only three times in the Bible.

The first was when Rebekah covered herself as she approached her husband-to-be, Isaac. The other two are both in this story. She is unknown to Judah because of the veil.

14 (con't) and sat in an open place which *was* on the way to Timnah;

Then she sat in an open place on the way to where he was heading. In Hebrew, the term "open place" is *bepheta enayim* - "the gateway of eyes." She is dressed as a prostitute and sitting in a location which would identify her as one as well. And the reason for her doing this is seen in the continuation of verse 14...

14 (con't) for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as a wife.

It had been long enough for Shelah to grow up to the point that she should have been given to him as a wife, but it hadn't happened. Now, in order to be justified as she should have been by Judah, she will turn the tables on him.

15 When Judah saw her, he thought she *was* a harlot, because she had covered her face.

Of course he did. She's dressed as a harlot in a harloty kind of place, and her face is covered to disguise who she is. So Judah simply thinks it's a prostitute and not his daughter in law.

The Hebrew word is *zonah*, a person who sells themselves for hire, but it is used figuratively throughout the Bible when speaking of religious prostitution. An example of this is found in Hosea 9:1 -

Do not rejoice, O Israel, with joy like *other* peoples,
For you have played the harlot against your God.
You have made love *for* hire on every threshing floor.

16 Then he turned to her by the way, and said, "Please let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she *was* his daughter-in-law.

Judah, seeing this woman by the wayside, being unmarried, and being completely unsuspecting of who she really is, makes an offer for a tryst. The Bible notes specifically that "he did not know that she was his daughter in law." In other words, it implies that if he knew, he wouldn't have done this.

And that should be obvious because he never propositioned her before. He unsuspectingly was led to do what he otherwise would have refrained from doing.

16 (con't) So she said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?"

A deal is a deal. He has offered and she asks what he is willing to pay for her services. Again, as I mentioned earlier, the Bible doesn't hide these things.

They are the state of fallen people in a fallen world and the Bible shows what happened, not just to give us fun stories, stories about how stupid we can be, or merely irrelevant stories, but to show us moral lessons and greater pictures of God's workings in this world.

17 And he said, "I will send a young goat from the flock."

Judah's offer for her services is a goat from the flock, in Hebrew *gedi izzim*, a kid goat. It's something that he will send back to her later. But without the payment in hand, she plays the true role of a harlot, expecting something as collateral...

17 (con't) So she said, "Will you give me a pledge till you send it?"

im titen eravon ad shawl-khekha (2.59) - "so, give me a pledge until you send it." The word "pledge" here, *eravon*, signifies an earnest deposit. When the goat is received, then the earnest can be returned.

18 Then he said, "What pledge shall I give you?" So she said, "Your signet and cord, and your staff that is in your hand."

When he asks what she wants as a pledge, she asks for three things, his signet, cord, and staff.

khothemkha - your signet. It's either a ring or a medallion which was used to make impressions in wax or clay. It was used like we use a signature. It is one's identity. In the

case of a king, it would be his symbol of authority. In Haggai 2:23, it is used when speaking of the authority of the Davidic line bestowed by God upon Zerubbabel.

uphtilekha - and your cord. The word comes from pathal - to twist. Some call this a bracelet, some a piece of clothing, but what is most likely is that it was a cord attached to the signet so he could keep it around his neck.

u-matekha - and your staff. This is a walking stick which would have been used as his ensign. In the 110th Psalm it's used to indicate the scepter, the symbol of the strength and authority, of the Messiah -

The LORD said to my Lord,
"Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."
The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion.
Rule in the midst of Your enemies! (1, 2)

¹⁸ (con't) **Then he gave *them* to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him.**

These three things are taken as a pledge for the kid goat. They show the ensign, the authority, and the identity of Judah. Until he receives them back, she has the title to them.

After obtaining possession of these articles, we are told that Judah received his payment and in turn Tamar receives his seed. She conceives a child through this one encounter. Another divinely directed event in the unfolding moments of man's redemption, just like what happened with the two daughters of Lot.

¹⁹ **So she arose and went away, and laid aside her veil and put on the garments of her widowhood.**

In order to avoid receiving the kid goat immediately and thus having to return the pledge, she hurries away from the location. Once home again, she removes the veil and puts on her garments of widowhood. She possesses the pledge and she possesses the child. She is the bearer of the coming Messiah and the possessor of the authority of that Messianic line.

III. The Missing Harlot

²⁰ And Judah sent the young goat by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive *his* pledge from the woman's hand, but he did not find her.

For whatever reason, instead of going himself, he sent the goat with his friend the Adullamite. The payment is being offered, and the pledge is expected in return. However, she is gone and she is nowhere to be found.

The term *Aduallamite* has been used three times. In the first two, Hirah's name is used in conjunction with it. This time, it leaves his name out and only calls him the Adullamite.

²¹ Then he asked the men of that place, saying, "Where is the harlot who *was* openly by the roadside?" And they said, "There was no harlot in this *place*."

Hirah asks around for the harlot, but this time a *different word* is used for "harlot." It is the Hebrew *qedeshah*. This is a temple prostitute. One who has sex for religious purposes, not for money.

The word *qedesh* is spelled the same and closely related to *qadesh*. Both carry the connotation of what is holy. He is supposing that this was her type of prostitution. This type of prostitution was common in and around the middle east for many centuries. It was also practiced around the Greek and Roman empires.

But in this case, none of the people around have any knowledge of there being a temple prostitute and they even deny there being one. And so back he goes to Judah...

²² So he returned to Judah and said, "I cannot find her. Also, the men of the place said there was no harlot in this *place*."

His search complete even to inquiring of the people of the place and yet he couldn't find her. He's done everything he can, but to no avail. Again, he uses the term *qedeshah* instead of *zonah* to describe the harlot.

²³ Then Judah said, "Let her take *them* for herself, lest we be shamed; for I sent this young goat and you have not found her."

Judah is more worried about being laughed at by man than his conduct before God. The tokens of his position, title, and identity also mean less to him than being laughed at. He

is unwilling to bear the reproach of his actions even at such a high cost. And then he shrugs it off by saying that he did his part by sending the goat.

If the payment isn't acceptable, that isn't his fault, he feels he can do without the pledge. And he feels justified because he went through the motions of his obligation, even though it was for completely perverse purposes.

Well, this is, surprisingly, the point where we have to stop off today. The completion of the story and the chapter will come next week. Until we get there, I hope you'll think on what you've heard and make an effort to place it in a New Testament context. In particular, think on the pledge that Tamar was given.

If you can place that, then the rest of the story will start to make sense. A pledge is something that is provided in anticipation of receiving something else. We, like Tamar, have been given a pledge if we have called on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

It is the sealing of the Holy Spirit; the guarantee of our promised redemption. As God doesn't make mistakes, we have the absolute assurance of the fulfillment of this promise. Stand fast on that.

But if you have never called on Jesus, you have no guarantee except the surety that when you die, you will remain separated from God. But in His great mercy, God sent His Son to change that.

Closing Verse: *Keep my soul, and deliver me;
Let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in You.*

²¹ *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me,
For I wait for You. Psalm 25:20, 21*

Next Week: Genesis 38:24-30 (The One Who Breaks Through) (96th Genesis Semon) - Make sure to read and study those verses.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Judah and Tamar

The Transfer of the Pledge

It came to pass at that time

That Judah from his brothers departed
And visited a certain Adullamite
Whose name was Hirah, the name he was imparted

And Judah saw there a daughter
Of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua
And he married her and went in to her
Soon there would be more than just them two-a

So she conceived and bore a son
And he called his name Er - he was the first one

She conceived again and soon a son she bore
And she called his name Onan, a second son to adore

And she conceived yet again and bore a son
And called his name Shelah
He was at Chezib when she bore that one
And with the third, she cried "Zippity doo dah!"

Then Judah took a wife for his firstborn, Er
And Tamar was the name that was given to her

But Er, Judah's firstborn
Was wicked in the sight of the Lord
And the Lord killed him because of his scorn
Such is noted in God's precious word

And Judah said to the second son Onan
"Go in to your brother's wife and marry her
And raise up an heir to your brother, young man
Fulfill your duty to your dead brother Er

But Onan knew that the heir would not be his
And it came to pass, in actions quite unsound
When he went in to his brother's wife he did this
That he emitted instead on the ground

Lest he should give an heir to his brother

He thought only of himself, not another

And the thing which he did displeased the Lord
Therefore He killed him also, as says the word

Then to Tamar his daughter-in-law Judah said
“Remain a widow in your father’s house
Till my son Shelah is grown in the days ahead
And I will give to him you as his spouse

“Lest he also die like his brothers” is what Judah said
And Tamar went and dwelt in her father’s house
Because now her second husband was dead

Now in the process of time, as the days passed
The daughter of Shua, Judah’s wife, died
After a time of grief he went up to his sheepshearers
To Timnah, with Hirah the Adullamite at his side

And it was told to Tamar, saying
“Look, up to Timnah is going your father-in-law
To shear his sheep” for this you have been praying
"Get moving Tamar, don't hem and haw

So she took off her widow’s garments
Covered herself, and with a veil wrapped her face
She went to a spot on the way to Timnah
There she sat in an open place

For she saw that Shelah was grown in life
And she was not given to him as a wife
When Judah saw her, he thought she was a prostitute
Because she had covered her face, she seemed of ill-repute

Then he turned to her by the way, and said
“Please let me come in to you”
For he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law, instead
As if this made it right to do what he did do

So she said, "What thing will it be
That you will give, so you may thus come in to me

And he said, "A young goat from the flock I will tender."
So she said, "Until then will you to me a pledge render?"

Then he said, "What pledge shall I give you?"
So she said, "Your signet and cord also,
And your staff that is in your hand." This you shall do
Then what you have promised I will receive, I know

Then he gave them to her, and into her he went
And she conceived by him, in this time that they spent

So she arose and went away
And laid aside her veil that she had wore
And put on the garments of her widowhood, that day
Living without a husband once more

And Judah sent the young goat as was planned
By the hand of the Adullamite, his friend
To receive his pledge from the woman's hand
But he did not find her as he did intend

Then he asked the men of that place
Saying, "Where is the harlot who did disappear
Who was openly by the roadside and covered her face?"
And they said, "There was no harlot around here."

So he returned to Judah and said
"I cannot find her, though I looked everywhere
Also, the men of the place, I do dread
Said there was no harlot working there

Then Judah said, "Let her take them for herself,
Lest this get out and we be shamed
For I sent this young goat
And you have not found her, we can't be blamed

The details are given for us to continue to see
God's unfolding plan being revealed in history

Every word gives us insights into His loving heart
Each story is to show us more of His Son Jesus
As we read the word, to us it does impart
Wisdom and beauty, given from God to us

And so be sure to cherish the word every day and every night
Let it be your comforting friend and let it be your guiding light

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 38:24-30 **(THE ONE WHO BREAKS THROUGH)**

Introduction: Last week we got most of the way through chapter 38, but there are a few verses left to look at. The woman who seemed destined to be left barren and without a husband turns out to be the one who bears twins and also who finds God's favor by becoming an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

Stories like this should help us to remember that God is in control and he watches over all of life's details. He tenderly cares for the person who puts his trust and hope in Him. Today, we'll see the explanation for why all of the details of this chapter were given and what it is pointing to.

These are wonderful insights given to us by the same God who placed the sun in the heavens and filled the world with good food for His creatures. His attention is on the details, and it is in those details that His wisdom and greatness is clearly seen.

Text Verse: *Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness!
You have relieved me in my distress;
Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer. Psalm 4:1*

Tamar was certainly in distress as she waited on a husband who would provide her a child. When she saw that she was being deprived of her rightful due by her father-in-law Judah, she took action in order to receive what she had been denied. God saw her plight and rewarded her by giving her children and the high honor of becoming an ancestor of our Lord.

Let's see today how it all turned out and what this beautiful story is meant to tell us. It is a part of God's word and so it is meant to speak to us - to our heart and to our soul and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Righteousness of Tamar

²⁴ And it came to pass, about three months after, that Judah was told, saying, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; furthermore she *is* with child by harlotry."

It's been a bit more than three months and Tamar is obviously showing the signs of her pregnancy. And the word got back to Judah. "Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot." Both words, "has played" and "harlot" are based on the word *zonah*, not *qedesh*.

We saw last week that *zonah* and *qedesh* are both translated "harlot", but they have different connotations. Those who report on her say she is an adulterous harlot, not a temple prostitute. And then they add in that through her fornication, she is with child.

²⁴ (con't) **So Judah said, "Bring her out and let her be burned!"**

Judah demands the full force of the customs of the people. Later, under the Mosaic Law, a person caught in adultery was to be stoned. Only the most wicked offenses were to include burning as part of the punishment.

Judah is demanding the penalty for something which he was equally criminal in, whether he realized it at the time or not. It also needs to be noted that the most violent death possible is demanded for adultery and yet there is no consideration at all when temple prostitution is involved. In fact, it is considered socially acceptable.

²⁵ **When she *was* brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "By the man to whom these belong, I *am* with child." And she said, "Please determine whose these *are*—the signet and cord, and staff."**

In one of the most ironic twists of the Bible and a note worthy of the greatest turning point of a movie or a play, Tamar - on her way to her burning, sends the signet, cord, and staff of Judah back to his hand with the response, "By the man to whom these belong, I am with child."

The previous possessor of the pledge is now shown the error of his ways. What should have been his and in his possession has rightfully, though temporarily, belonged to a gentile who now bears the Messianic hope in her womb.

What was kept *from her* through stubborn refusal to meet his responsibilities, was granted *to her* by God who monitors his covenant, sees to His people, and cares for those who otherwise seem unsuitable to the task.

²⁶ **So Judah acknowledged *them* and said, "She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son." And he never knew her again.**

*Yes, yes it is true in fact
These are the tokens of my act
The child is mine, and all can see
I am guilty, and the offending party*

His statement that, "She is more righteous than I" is her vindication before her accusers. And the reason is given. Judah knowingly withheld from her the promised child through his third son, Shelah.

This is the reason why we can rightly assume that she understood her right to the Messianic line. If it was to come through Judah, and Shelah was not to be given to her, then her act with Judah would bring about the child leading to Christ.

This is no different than what the daughters of Lot did many years before when they seduced their father. Their actions, though questionable on other levels, were with the intent of leading to the Messiah, which in fact happened. Tamar is such a woman of note.

With the act behind them, the record states that Judah never knew her again. This means that they were never intimate again.

II. Twins in the Womb

²⁷ Now it came to pass, at the time for giving birth, that behold, twins were in her womb.

In a manner similar to Judah's grandmother, Rebekah, Tamar is to be the mother of twins. For those of you who missed that sermon, there is an interesting squiggle for your brain in the word "twin" in Hebrew. It is *thaomim* and is where the name Thomas comes from.

This is why in the New Testament we have this verse from John's gospel - "Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." John 11:16

He is Thomas the twin, but twin in Greek is Didymus. This is where we get our word "ditto." And so Thomas is the Twin, and the Twin is the Ditto. Now when you meet a Thomas, you can explain all these unnecessary details to him about his name.

*Thomas I'd like to ask you, "Did you know
That your name comes from the Hebrew word thaomim
And from the Greek word we translate as "Ditto"
Both of these actually mean that you are Thomas the Twin*

Anyway, Tamar won't just be a mother, but the mother of two children.

²⁸ And so it was, when she was giving birth, that *the one* put out *his* hand; and the midwife took a scarlet *thread* and bound it on his hand, saying, "This one came out first."

In order to establish which is the firstborn child for the giving of the birthright, and to make sure they wouldn't get confused in the coming chaos of the birth of twins, the midwife placed a scarlet thread on the hand of the one who first came out.

No sooner is the thread on, proving he is the firstborn, then he withdraws his hand back into the womb. The elder son has to wait to see the light with his eyes that his hand was already exposed to.

²⁹ Then it happened, as he drew back his hand, that his brother came out unexpectedly; and she said, "How did you break through? *This breach be upon you!*" Therefore his name was called Perez.

After the older retreats back into the womb, the younger breaks out to replace his older brother. Though not the firstborn technically, he takes the lead in birth. Because of this, he is named Perez - to break through or break out.

*Little one, how did you break through?
I tied the thread to the other child's hand
And now, this breach be upon you
What has happened is hard to understand*

³⁰ Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet *thread* on his hand. And his name was called Zerah.

Only after the younger comes out does the elder leave the womb. The one marked by scarlet, proving he was first, arrives. Because of this, his name was called Zerah, meaning "Dawning" or "Rising of Light."

III. The Details Explained

There's always a reason for the minuteness of details in a story like this. The names, places, even the way things happen or come about are used to show us other things. If the main details of the surface story were all that God wanted us to see, the contents of the chapter could be condensed into just a couple short sentences.

But the details are necessary for us to see greater pictures of coming events in redemptive history. I was having dinner with a friend during the composition of this sermon and she asked, "Why does God make it so difficult to see these things?" The answer is that there is something for people at every level.

That same week, I talked to five people who have very limited English ability, three of them on that same day. They all understood the simple gospel well enough to be saved. They may never understand the details, but they understand the overall, simple, saving message. There are others who find moral applications in the stories. Others find cultural and historical value in them.

Just this week, I saw a comment on the Bible website that I refer to for the Hebrew and Greek. It was from a secular historian, but he still finds value in the Bible for its historical importance. I challenged him to set aside his disbelief and come to the word without bias. If he does, he will certainly find more than just historical value in it.

God's word is truly inexhaustible in how it can be viewed, understood, and shared. I'm a detail guy and so God has approaches for people like me. But my comprehension of Hebrew is minimal and so there are those who have translated and defined the Hebrew to help guys like me out.

Others have researched the etymology of the words so that we know where they came from and the intent behind them. And so on. No one person has a lock on God's word. It is a gift for all people at all levels. Today's story is another example of this.

Because this chapter stands alone and isn't directly tied in to the accounts of chapter 37 or chapter 39, the first thing to be looked at is the context of those surrounding chapters. By doing this, we can see why the chapter was inserted here. And it was for a reason.

Chapter 37 detailed Joseph's dreams which pointed to the coming Messiah and Joseph pictures the Messiah as well. We saw pictures of His coming, His death, His burial, and

His resurrection. We saw Him sold off to the gentiles after that. All pictured by events of Joseph's life.

Chapter 39 continues with Joseph's life in a gentile area - Egypt. Because of this, we can rightly determine that God chose to place this story in this location to show something that occurs *during* Jesus' reign over the church age. And so, from this starting point, we can then properly evaluate the rest of the story in that context.

The first verse said that "Judah departed from his brothers." This is that starting point. Judah represents the Jewish people. The focus is on them and their relationship with the upright gentiles who are seeking the Messiah. The early church was entirely comprised of Jews. Eventually, gentiles came into the church.

Judah, which means "Praise," goes to visit Hirah the Adullamite. Hirah means "Nobility." Adullam means "The justice of the people" or "The righteousness of the people." This immediately tells us that there is a pursuit of the law - the righteousness of the people, rather than a pursuit of Christ - the righteousness of God.

Paul explains this in Romans 3:21-22 - "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,²² even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe."

Association with nobility and having justification before the people is of no account to God. Rather, he looks for those who seek Him through His provision. While with Hirah, Judah marries a Canaanite, a gentile. The daughter of Shua, meaning "Wealth."

He has married into wealth, but he is left destitute of what is true riches. In this household he has three sons - Er, Onan, and Shelah.

Judah names Er which means "Watching or Watcher." Judah's wife names Onan which means "Strong," and she names Shelah which means "Prosperity." It notes that Shelah is named while he is in Chezib, which means "False" or "Falsehood."

Being sons of Judah, they should be faithful to the covenant, but it immediately becomes apparent that they aren't. Er, meaning "Watchful" isn't attentive; he doesn't watch out. In the New Testament, those of the faith are told in Colossians to be watchful, but he fails at this.

Judah gets a gentile wife for him named Tamar, "Palm Tree," a symbol of uprightness. She has married into the people of God, but she isn't treated as if she were the people of God. She, this gentile, has been selected to be the bearer of the Messianic line, and she is upright and faithful to her calling.

However, instead of being watchful, as his name implies, Er is wicked, as the reciprocal of his name implies. The Lord, who tends to His covenant, kills him. The Lord is building a house of living stones, but Er is inattentive to his duties. He is well-reflected in the 127th Psalm -

Unless the Lord builds the house,
They labor in vain who build it;
Unless the Lord guards the city,
The watchman stays awake in vain. Psalm 127:1

They aren't a good match. He is wicked, she is upright. He shuns the Lord, she seeks him. Er failed to be a right mate for this upright woman. Because of Er's death, Judah calls on his second son, Onan, to perpetuate the name of the one who should have been the bearer of the Messiah.

Onan, or "Strong," fails to live up to his name. He was weak in his adherence to the honor and integrity he owed to his Lord, to the covenant, and to his family. The second son fails in his duties.

He openly shames the Messiah by destroying his seed on the ground. Onan, like Er, failed to attend to this upright woman, the gentile, who was seeking the Messiah.

This wickedness pictures what is seen in the book of Acts and even more so in the book of Galatians - Jewish people coming in to trouble the gentiles who are seeking after God. Instead of leading them in that pursuit, they introduce legalism. Instead of offering the Messiah, they offer works. Paul speaks of them this way in Galatians 4:17 -

They zealously court you, *but* for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them.

After the death of Onan, Judah tells this upright gentile to "remain a widow in your father's house" until Shelah is grown. Shelah means "Prosperity" and his location of birth is specifically noted, Chezib - "falsehood." The name anticipates the story. The promise of Tamar having "Prosperity," or Shelah, is false.

Instead of understanding that the wounds were self-inflicted by his sons, he places the blame on this gentile who is seeking the favor and the relationship with the people of God in anticipation of the Messianic blessing.

Each of these names has shown the relationship between the gentiles and the Jews in early church history. They mandate the law instead of accepting and explaining the grace. There is disobedience when there should be the proclamation of the Messiah.

Eventually, after some amount of time, Judah's wife dies. Once the period of mourning was over, He and Hirah head for Timnah where the sheepshearers are.

Timnah means "a part assigned" or "territory." It is the place where the sheep are being tended to, picturing the land of Israel. Sheep picture the common people in the Bible. Judah is going to tend to the sheep; the Jewish leaders are to be attentive to their people.

Tamar hears that Judah is going to Timnah and seizes on the opportunity to again be included among the people of God and be the bearer of the Messiah. In order for her to succeed, she takes off her widow's garments and wraps herself in clothing that will disguise her. The clothing includes a veil.

The clothing and the veil are what disguise who she is. Judah, picturing the Jews, is blinded to the truth. Her clothing disguises her widowhood just as the gentiles' nature disguises their called status as God's people. This is seen, for example, in Acts 10 where gentiles are granted the same salvation as Jews.

The veil is the law and it hides the Jewish eyes from the work of the Spirit apart from the law. This is exactly reflected in Paul's words to the Corinthians -

¹² Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech—

¹³ unlike Moses, *who* put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. ¹⁴ But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the *veil* is taken away in Christ. ¹⁵ But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. ¹⁶ Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty. ¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:12-18

The law could never bring about righteousness, pictured by Tamar's faith. Instead, the Jews' minds were blinded by the veil, hiding the truth of the message of Christ. At this point, I should remind you that this is a picture. Pictures are never 1 for 1 comparisons.

I say this because the sex and deception is not what is being focused on here, but rather that there is an overall picture which is being presented. God is using a real story with wickedness and intrigue to show us something else. There are enough specific details to understand the overall message.

Tamar sits at *bepheta enayim* - the gateway of eyes wearing unknown clothing and hidden behind a veil. Where there should be vision for Judah - there at the gateway of eyes, there is only a lack of it. He sees a *zonah*, a prostitute who sells for money, but instead, she is the upright person pursuing the Messiah.

And why has she done this, because she has been denied her right. Jesus would explain it this way -

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in." Matthew 23:13

They won't enter into the kingdom, but they will enter into a harlot. This is picturing the spiritual prostitution mentioned throughout the Old Testament such as in Jeremiah 3:8 -

"Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the **harlot** also."

And so, thinking Tamar is a harlot, he propositions her. She asks what price he is willing to pay to have her. Judah's answer is a young goat from the flock. In Hebrew, *gedi izzim*. This is an animal used for an offering to the Lord, such as in Judges 13 -

"So Manoah took the **young goat** with the grain offering, and offered it upon the rock to the LORD." (19)

In agreement to the deal, Tamar then asks for a pledge until the payment is made. The word for pledge here is *eravon*. It is an earnest deposit. When the goat is received, then the earnest can be returned.

This Hebrew word, *eravon*, which is used only three times in Old Testament, all in this chapter, was later adopted by the traders of Greece and Rome. It is used in the New Testament three times as well. All by Paul, *the apostle to the Gentiles*. Each time he equates it to our promised redemption, the sealing of the Holy Spirit.

Identical words between Hebrew and Greek are most unusual in the Bible and yet this word was carried over, certainly so that we wouldn't miss the significance of what it is showing us. Here are all three examples from the NT for you to see the connection -

²¹ "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God,
²² who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee."
-2 Corinthians 1:21, 22

"Now He who has prepared us for this very thing *is* God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee." 2 Corinthians 5:5

¹³ In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." Ephesians 1:13, 14

Each time this word is used, it is referring to the Holy Spirit. He is the security, given in hand, for the fulfillment of every promise which relates to our salvation and hope of eternal life.

All who hold the pledge, and can so produce it, will be saved from condemnation and will be granted the eternal life. This is the surety we have because of our pledge, the Holy Spirit. And this is what Judah's pledge represents.

This pledge consisted of his signet, cord, and staff which represent Judah's identity, authority, tribe, and rule. This is what Tamar asks for and what is granted by him. And this is what passed from the Jews to the Gentiles during this dispensation known as the Church Age. By being the bearer of the Messiah - as Tamar was, and as we are - we share in His identity and His authority.

Tamar looked for personal justification by obtaining proof of her righteousness. Likewise, the Christian is granted justification and the proof is the Spirit. We are righteous, not because of intrinsic righteousness, but because of the giving of the Spirit based on the work of Jesus.

Remember the context from the previous chapter. Joseph, the one now picturing the Messiah, has been sold off to the gentiles. This insert story is given to confirm that and to show us the fulfillment of Noah's prophecy over his sons from almost a thousand years earlier. That prophecy stated -

²⁶“Blessed *be* the LORD,
The God of Shem,
And may Canaan be his servant.
²⁷ May God enlarge Japheth,
And may he dwell in the tents of Shem;
And may Canaan be his servant.” Genesis 9:26, 27

Shem would be the bearer of the spiritual legacy, but for a time that legacy would be transferred to the gentiles. This account of Judah and Tamar is showing us that. If you missed the earlier Noah sermons, and especially the Genesis 10, Table of Nations sermons, then you should watch them to understand this already prophesied event.

The pledge is given and Tamar, picturing the upright gentiles who have received Jesus, has ascended to be the bearer of the Messiah for a period of time. One must continue to think - Tamar bears the child leading to the Messiah; the gentiles bear Christ. Once the pledge was hers, she set aside her garments and veil and returned to her garments of widowhood to await the child.

After Tamar returned home, Judah sent the goat by the hand of his friend. But for the first time, his name is left out. Only the term "Adullamite" is used. There is no longer the name "Nobility" associated with what has happened - in either the picture or what is pictured. Instead, there is only the thought of self-justification.

During his search for the woman, he used the term *qedeshah* instead of *zonah* for "harlot." Instead of a harlot for wages, Hirah is looking for a religious prostitute. There is written all over this a rejection of the Lord and the following after of one's own devices. Every word is selected to show us the truth of the account.

When the message is returned that the woman can't be found, instead of acknowledging the wrongdoing and accepting the shame for what he did, only a thought of saving face is noted. In the same way, Israel to this day has failed to acknowledge their transgression. The Lord states this explicitly in Ezekiel 36:21, 22 -

"But I had concern for My holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations wherever they went. ²² "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I do not do *this* for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went."

The next thing we saw was an account reminiscent of the woman caught in adultery in John 8. The hypocrisy of the occurrence is palpable in both instances. When Tamar is found with child, blood is demanded.

And in the accusation, the term *zonah* is again used. She was accused of being an adulterous harlot instead of a religious harlot. In his hypocritical indignation, he demands her to be burned. The crime and the penalty will, in fact, be meted out some day in the future, but it will be for true spiritual harlotry.

And it will be executed on a global scale on Jew and Gentile alike. The Lord has made His offering and it will be rejected by most of the world. On that day, Revelation 18 shows us the consequences when speaking of Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots -

"Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong *is* the Lord God who judges her." (v. 8)

Unlike Babylon though, there will be vindication for those who trust in the Lord God. The evidence will be the pledge given to those who put their trust in Him. The great day is ahead and the token will be presented by God's people, just as righteous Tamar presented the proof of her righteousness to Judah.

Remember, Tamar never received the goat. Her vindication comes from the sealing of the Holy Spirit and from the righteousness of God in Christ, not from offerings of goats and rams. This is exactly explained in the book of Hebrews.

And yes, Judah acknowledged it. This is also future to us now. There is a day when all Israel will be saved. It's shown multiple times throughout the Old Testament and Paul notes it in Romans as well.

The God of Israel, who was for a season proclaimed by the Gentiles, will again be called on, and attested to, by Judah - the Jews. And, although we are not there yet, this is why

it is Judah who will give the one of the most moving speeches in the entire Bible in petition before Joseph in Genesis 44.

Benjamin, which means Son of the Right Hand, and a picture of the Son of God, Jesus, will be petitioned for by Judah in the presence of Joseph, also picturing the Ruler, Jesus. The symmetry of these Genesis stories and what they later picture in coming redemptive history are so beautifully woven together that only God Himself could have composed the Bible.

The reason for all of these things is explained by Paul in Romans 9. Why did the banner get passed from the Jews to the Gentiles? Why was Tamar justified when Judah wasn't. The answer is found in these words -

³⁰ What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; ³¹ but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. ³² Why? Because *they did* not *seek it* by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. (30-32)

What the Jews sought, they did not attain, and what the Gentiles didn't pursue, they did attain. But this is so that God can have mercy on us all, Jew and Gentile alike. And because of this, the words of Hosea, as quoted by Paul, ring all the more true -

²⁵ "I will call them My people, who were not My people,
And her beloved, who was not beloved."

²⁶ "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them,
'You *are* not My people,'
There they shall be called sons of the living God." Romans 9: 25, 26

Approximately 40 men interspersed in several countries of the Middle East, over a 1600 year period, penned a book which is so perfectly structured to match itself internally - on numerous levels, and in the chronology of history itself, that it could only have been written by divine inspiration.

IV. Divine Election

At this point of chapter 38, the pictures of Jew and Gentile are left behind to introduce another picture. One of Adam and Christ and one which is repeated time and time again in the pages of Scripture. The second replacing the first.

We've already seen it in God accepting Abel over Cain, Shem over Japheth, Abraham over Haran, Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, and Rachel over Leah. These patterns will continue throughout the Bible as God continuously shows us the patterns which point to the second Adam replacing the first.

In this chapter, it is Perez, the younger, being placed above Zerah, the older. Paul explains it in 1 Corinthians 15 -

So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. ⁴⁸ As *was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. ⁴⁹ And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*. (42-49)

The unusual birth order was ordained by God to show us this pattern. The first, Adam, will be replaced by the second, Christ. And so it is with these two. Not only is the younger ahead of his older brother in birth, but he will also lead to the Messiah.

In Matthew chapter 1, Perez, not Zerah, is recorded in Jesus' genealogy. And the other details, how interesting they are! Zerah's name means "Dawning" thus picturing Adam who was created at the dawning of humanity. His hand was ornamented with the scarlet thread.

The scarlet pictures the sin of Adam. No sooner did Adam break out of the womb of creation, than he sinned against God, thus dying. Perez means to "Break through." He pictures Christ who is the one who broke through the bonds of death.

*Just as the second, Perez, first broke out from the womb
So did the second Adam, our Lord Jesus,
First break out of the tomb*

His work was prophesied by Micah long before His coming. Using the same Hebrew word as the name of Perez, in Micah 2:13, it says this -

The one who **breaks open** (*ha'poretz*) will come up before them;
They will **break out** (*paretsu*),
Pass through the gate,
And go out by it;
Their king will pass before them,
With the LORD at their head." Micah 2:13

Because of the Breaker, the Lord Jesus, Zerah's scarlet, his sin, can be traded for something else. Isaiah tells us about it -

"Come now, and let us reason together,"
Says the LORD,
"Though your sins are like scarlet,
They shall be as white as snow;
Though they are red like crimson,
They shall be as wool. Isaiah 1:18

Finally today, as a wonderful picture of what Christ did for us, we need to see where the dye for the scarlet thread came from in ancient times. It came from a worm which in Latin is called *coccus ilicis*. In Hebrew it is called *towla*. Henry Morris wrote this commentary on the *towla* -

"When the female of the scarlet worm species was ready to give birth to her young, she would attach her body to the trunk of a tree, fixing herself so firmly and permanently that she would never leave again. The eggs deposited beneath her body were thus protected until the larvae were hatched and able to enter their own life cycle. As the mother died, the crimson fluid stained her body and the surrounding wood. From the dead bodies of such female scarlet worms, the commercial scarlet dyes of antiquity were extracted. What a picture this gives of Christ, dying on the tree, shedding his precious blood that he might 'bring many sons unto glory.' He died for us, that we might live through him!"

Why would he make this connection? The reason is that this worm, the *towla*, is mentioned by name in the 22nd Psalm, a psalm about the cross of Jesus Christ -

But I *am* a **worm**, and no man;
A reproach of men, and despised by the people.
⁷All those who see Me ridicule Me;
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,

⁸ “He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him;
Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!”
⁹ But You *are* He who took Me out of the womb;
You made Me trust *while* on My mother’s breasts.
¹⁰ I was cast upon You from birth.
From My mother’s womb
You *have been* My God.
¹¹ Be not far from Me,
For trouble *is* near;
For *there is* none to help. (6-11)

The Bible says that Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin that we might be the righteousness of God in Him. The red stain of the worm which made the scarlet thread and which pictures our sin was transferred to Jesus' cross so that our sin could be taken away. Our scarlet for His *pure, perfect, white* righteousness.

Closing Verse: *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. Galatians 2:15-16*

Next Week: Genesis 39:1-10 (The Overseer of the House) (97th Genesis Sermon) - Make sure to read and study those verses.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Jesus, The One Who Breaks Through

And it came to pass, about three months after
That Judah was told, a story most wild
“Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot;
Furthermore by harlotry she is with child.”

So Judah said, “Bring her out and let her be burned!”
After the distasteful news of which he had learned

When she was brought out, though reviled
She sent to her father-in-law, saying

“By the man to whom these belong, I am with child.”
The implements of which I am displaying

And she said, “Please determine whose are these
The signet and cord, and staff, tell me please

So Judah acknowledged them and said
“She has been more righteous than I
Because I did not give her to Shelah my son instead
And he never knew her again as time passed by

Now it came to pass
At the time for giving birth
That behold, twins were in her womb
Two more children to walk the earth

And so it was, when she was giving birth
That the one put out his hand before the other
And the midwife took a scarlet thread
To identify who was the firstborn brother

And she bound it on his hand saying
“This one came out first.”
The child for which you were praying

Then it happened, as he drew back his hand
That his brother came out unexpectedly
“How did you break through in a manner so grand?
This breach be upon you!” You little cutie!

Therefore his name was called Perez
This is his name, just as the Bible says

Afterward his brother came out
Who had the scarlet thread on his hand
And his name was called Zerah, no doubt
Wonderful details of a story so grand

These two children picture Adam and Jesus

And a part of the plan which God determined for us
Jesus is the One who breaks open, He so great
He will come up before them leading the way
They will break out and pass through the gate
And go out by it in a most glorious display

Their king will pass before them, with the LORD at their head
The same king who was crucified, whose precious blood was shed

And now He stands victorious over the gates of death
Pardon from sin
Is found in Him
And to us eternal life He bestoweth

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 39:1-10 **(THE OVERSEER OF THE HOUSE)**

Introduction: Joseph was up. He had the coat of distinction, he had the job of overseeing what his brothers were doing, he even had dreams which told him that his brothers would bow down to him. Things couldn't have been better. And yet, within almost no time at all, things couldn't have been worse.

He was cast into a pit, sold to foreigners, and then taken away from his family and his land - to a people of a foreign tongue and no knowledge of the Lord his God. It's probable that none of us here have come even close to such a life-changing disaster. But Joseph kept his faith, his morals, and his conduct pure and undefiled.

He would make the best of his circumstances and the Lord would be there with him through it all. How blessed we are that we have the same assurances because of our faith and hope in the promises of God through Jesus Christ.

Text Verse: *God sets the solitary in families;
He brings out those who are bound into prosperity Psalm 68:6*

After 17 years of family life, Joseph was alone and abandoned, having been sold by his brothers to an unknown fate. But God, who is in control, even when the events around us seem to show otherwise, was preparing to do wondrous things through his life.

This amazing journey, which will lead from slavery to the second highest position in Egypt, begins to unfold in today's verses. In our own lives, when it appears that things are going great, setbacks may come along which seem to end in complete defeat.

And yet, those setbacks may actually work to effect even greater things than would otherwise have come about. Are you content in the place you're at? If you were to lose everything today, would you be able to truthfully say, "God is using this for even greater things in my life"?

If you're a follower of Jesus, He is tending to you even if it seems otherwise. We know this is true because its the message which is found time and again in God's word. What He desires of you is that you accept this and stand fast in it. And the way to do that is to know what His word says. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Joseph's Faithful Service

¹ Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt.

In the Bible's customary way of relating events, the story today goes back to the time of chapter 37 and picks up right at the end of that chapter, skipping over everything from the insert story of chapter 38.

This type of pattern has been seen several times as God unveils this marvelous tapestry of the different pieces of history which will all lead us eventually to Jesus. It's as if we're watching a movie with different scenes being shown, back and forth, and only at the end of the movie is everything brought into focus.

Before that moment though, things seem disjointed and irrelevant. But when the final scene comes up, you suddenly say "Aha! Now I see." This is how the Bible is working... heading toward a great climax, but keeping you guessing along the way.

*Lord I'm not sure what is being said here in your word
It doesn't match with the events I just read
I'll keep reading though to see where it ends
I bet interesting things are in the pages ahead*

^{1 (con't)} And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there.

The very last verse of chapter 37 said this, "Now the Midianites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh *and* captain of the guard." Now, at the start of this chapter, it repeats that verse, but says that Potiphar bought him from Ishmaelites rather than the Midianites.

There is no contradiction here. The Ishmaelites bought Joseph from the brothers. Somewhere along the line, the Midianites took possession of him and sold him to Potiphar. The Bible is referring back to the original sale.

And the reason is because each of the people who were named in Chapter 37, the Ishmaelites, the Midianites, and the Medanites were named to reveal different pictures of Christ's work.

God is using the names to identify what is happening and to show pictures of other

things. When He wants to make one point he will use one name and when He wants to make another, he will use a different one. Paying attention to these subtleties opens up wide avenues of wisdom and design which is otherwise concealed.

Ishmael means "God hears." This verse says the name in the plural, "Ishmaelites" and so it is the group whom God hears. Potiphar is the one to buy him. His name means "Priest of the Bull" in Coptic.

This guy, Potiphar, is called *ish mitsri* in Hebrew. Literally, he is called "a man of Egypt." This is an important phrase and isn't some unnecessary addition. By saying he is a "man of Egypt" it's implying that foreigners were also used to fill high level jobs in Pharaoh's court.

If this wasn't the case, the term would have simply been omitted.

Why do you think this is important? The answer is that there is already a precedent, right here in this verse, for Pharaoh making Joseph the leader of his country. It isn't a foreign concept at all.

Nothing is said about what price he paid for Joseph. When his brothers sold him, the amount was specific, twenty pieces of silver, but now the amount is omitted. Having been bought by an official of Pharaoh, the profit was probably pretty good though. But whatever the price he paid, Joseph was a good bargain for him initially, for Egypt eventually, and for the people of God ultimately. A great New Testament parallel for us is to be found in Ephesians 6:5-8 -

⁵ Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; ⁶ not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, ⁷ with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, ⁸ knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether *he* is a slave or free.

²The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

Here in verse 2 the Lord - meaning Jehovah, is reintroduced into the continuing narrative of the events of Israel. He's only been mentioned 6 times in the past 8 chapters and yet He will be mentioned 8 times in this one chapter.

His name has been used sparsely, but in the case of Joseph, He is named to show us that He is there, tending to the destiny of His people. Because He is named here, we can know immediately that everything which has and will happen is being directed by Him for the sake of the covenant made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

He is attending to the events to ensure that they unfold perfectly to fulfill the covenant, picture Jesus, and lead to Jesus. With the naming of Jehovah, we're asked to stop and think on why He is mentioned. God is pointing us to Jesus in a unique way and He is now using Joseph to picture Him as He once did with Jacob.

Because Jehovah is with Joseph, it says that he was made a successful man. In Hebrew *ish matsliakh* - a man prospering. The favor of the Lord is the well-spring and fountain of all prosperity. When His hand is on His child, that fountain will bubble over to become a river of blessing.

And so it is with Joseph here. He was a man prospering in the house of his master the Egyptian. There are slaves and then there are slaves. When a person was captured during war, they would normally do physical tasks and were subject to harsh treatment.

They may be sent into the heat of the crops, used for cutting stone, or given some other menial, non gratifying work. Their clothes would have been mere rags and their food would be little and of poor quality.

On the other hand, a slave who was chosen from a line-up and bought with money would more likely have a job in a domestic environment, better clothes, kinder treatment, more nourishing food, and even liberties as they proved themselves faithful.

This is the case with Joseph. Despite being sold by his brothers, because Jehovah was with him, he fared better than what may have otherwise come about. Jamieson-Faucett-Brown gives a beautiful summary of Joseph's condition -

"Though changed in condition, Joseph was not changed in spirit; though stripped of the gaudy coat that had adorned his person, he had not lost the moral graces that distinguished his character; though separated from his father on earth, he still lived in communion with his Father in heaven; though in the house of an idolater, he continued a worshipper of the true God

³And his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand.

When we read that Potiphar sees that the Lord is with Joseph, it doesn't mean that he knew who the Lord was. It means that he sees that Joseph is blessed and that he is a blessing. The naming of Jehovah is the Bible speaking to us about the situation, not the Bible speaking to us about Potiphar's knowledge.

But regardless of his knowledge of the Lord, the Lord knows both Joseph and Potiphar and he knows their relationship. In Genesis 12:3, the Lord made this pronouncement over Abraham when He first called him -

"I will bless those who bless you,
And I will curse him who curses you;
And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Jehovah spoke and two hundred years later, Jehovah is carefully watching over that blessing. Potiphar blessed Joseph, whether we see it directly or indirectly, by placing him in his home and now his home is being blessed and prospering by the hand of Joseph.

But the relationship isn't one sided. It is true that God will bless those who bless his people, but his people must also be a blessing. Joseph could have refused to work, been a horrible worker, or a moody soul - downcast over his misfortunes, but instead he accepted his situation and made the best of it.

And this is exactly what we, the descendants of Abraham through faith, are asked to do. Paul wrote to his young protégé, Timothy, and gave him this advice for those in his church -

"Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and *His* doctrine may not be blasphemed."
-1 Timothy 6:1

Today, at least for the time being, we don't have slaves anymore, except maybe in the sense of being slaves to the ever-increasing taxes of the government, but we do have employers, supervisors, and others that we're accountable to. With Joseph as the model and Paul's words as the direction, we too are to count our masters worthy of honor, respect, and allegiance.

And the reason is given, both in Genesis implicitly, and 1 Timothy explicitly - that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. If you profess to be a Christian

and then fail to meet the standards expected of that name, the result will be the diminishing of name of the great God we supposedly serve.

⁴ So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him.

The Hebrew says that Joseph found "grace" in his sight. Grace is unmerited favor. He was a slave in the house, but Potiphar recognized his ability and the divine hand of blessing on him. At this point, there is a mutual respect. Grace is found from Potiphar and service is received from Joseph.

The Geneva Bible ingeniously states the situation this way, "Because God prospered him: and so he made religion serve his profit."

When I first read that, it kind of shocked me. The Lord prospers Joseph and so he makes religion serve his profit. I had to stop and think it through. But isn't this the way it's actually supposed to be? This is the polar opposite of the prosperity gospel, or the "name it and claim it" religion we see all over Christianity today.

That says, "Let profit serve your religion." It is expecting from God in order to serve - which, by the way never ends up happening. Rather, we are to serve God in hope and in anticipation of being blessed. Our religion is to be the basis for our profit, not profit the basis for our religion.

May the Lord bless you only so much as you serve Him. I mean this sincerely. And when I say "serve," that means more than going out and spending time and money on others. It is an acknowledgment of who He is. We can serve the Lord simply by talking to Him and meditating on His word.

Who would expect a blessing from the Lord without acknowledging Him in all their ways? But we do. Add in to this that failing the Lord has nothing to do with serving the Lord. One doesn't exclude the other. Thus grace is preserved. I fail Him pretty much every day, but I pray that I serve Him just as much...

*Lord, though I fail You with each beat of my heart
I know that grace remains because of Your love for me
Help me to serve You in gratitude for that grace You impart
Help me to strive to honor You always and ceaselessly*

⁴ (con't) **Then he made him overseer of his house, and all *that* he had he put under his authority.**

Joseph has been faithful to the Lord his God and now the blessing of His God is upon him. He is made the overseer of the house of Potiphar. The word for "overseer" is *yepkhd*. This comes from the word *pkad* which means to take care of or superintend over.

The Greek version of Genesis translates this as *episkopos*, which is where we get the word Episcopal. *Epi* means "over" and *skopos* would be "to see". In the New Testament, this word is used several times and is usually translated as overseer or bishop.

This honorary position has been granted to him for his diligence and faithfulness. In this capacity, he is now granted complete authority and free-will to exercise that authority over all matters related to the house.

This distinction would be comparable to Eliezer of Damascus who was Abraham's chief steward. With a man like this in the house, Potiphar would need to do nothing but feed himself and then head out to attend to his job under Pharaoh.

II. The Blessing of the Lord

⁵ **So it was, from the time *that* he had made him overseer of his house and all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was on all that he had in the house and in the field.**

The amount of time Joseph spent in the house before his advancement isn't given to us, but through hard work, honesty, and above all, the Lord's blessing, he is made to be overseer. And Potiphar's choice isn't left without reward.

Jehovah's blessing graces and adorns the entire house, even to include what was raised in his field. Maybe He directly blessed the field by a miraculous crop, but it could also be that Joseph's manner and empathy toward the workers made them all the more diligent to work hard.

The best equipment in the world when put in careless hands won't produce any profit, but an old bag of tools in the hands of a well-treated employee can bring about an immense surplus. Colossians 3 gives each of us personal instruction and insight into this wonderful truth -

²³ "And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."

Once again we can refer to the blessing of Jehovah on Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. As one of the covenant sons, this same blessing now belongs to Joseph. Potiphar has blessed Joseph and so Jehovah the Lord blesses the house of Potiphar.

⁶ Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate.

Obviously Potiphar had other things he did for himself, but the reason for excepting the bread which he ate is two-fold. First, for other than an invalid or a complete sloth, feeding oneself is indicative of the most basic function known to man. It represents the voluntary maintaining of life.

The second reason is that Egyptians had a caste system which would preclude even eating with, much less being fed by, a Hebrew. We'll see this noted later when we get to chapter 43. But other than an idiom concerning food, Joseph is granted complete authority over the house of Potiphar.

III. Resisting the Lust of the Eyes, the Lust of the Flesh, and the Pride of Life

⁶ (con't) **Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.**

Suddenly, *in the middle of a verse*, an entirely new thought and direction comes into play. The break is so sudden and obvious that one has to step back and wonder why the verse wasn't divided before this sentence, but God who oversees His word determined it to be otherwise. In the Hebrew, the first thought ends with a verb and the second thought begins with one.

And so it says, *v'hi yosef y'pneh toar v'pneh mareh*, "Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance." This is the same set of words given to describe his mother, Rachel, in Genesis 29:17, "Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance."

This seemingly innocuous statement set up a course of events which would lead to seven years for Jacob as he worked off his payment for one wife and another seven years of trial and grief working off payment for a second wife. All because of the deception of his father in law.

In a similar way, through the deception of another person, this same set of words will lead to some years of grief for Joseph followed by his exaltation to become the second highest in the land of Egypt. And when he is in that position, there will be seven years of abundance and then seven years of famine. Thus the connection between Rachel and Joseph is one of symmetry and beauty.

The term used to describe them signifies a fine shape accompanied by fine features. It is what others consider as essential to the beauty of another. This is polar opposite to what we read about Jesus - "He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him." (Isaiah 53:2)

Although Joseph pictures Jesus, the contrast is given to show us that Jesus' ministry was attractive, not because of the looks of the Person, but because of the beauty of the message. Potiphar, like God the Father, looked for care of the House. Potiphar's wife, like the Jews of Jesus' time, was looking for other things.

⁷ And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, "Lie with me."

Depending on how it is handled, beauty can be a blessing or a curse. And the one handling it doesn't need to be the one possessing it as evidenced here. When the beauty of one is mingled with the authority of another, it can complicate many things.

We see this all the time. President Clinton, military commanders, congressmen and senators, CEO's, and even school principals and teachers have all wielded their authority over someone of beauty and it has cost one or both of them much grief and trouble.

But the source of the grief isn't always the beauty. Rather the source of it is the wickedness of the human heart. The Bible says the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. It then asks, "Who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9)

Potiphar's wife is living in a land which has been well documented as one of loose morals. More so than one might think of the Arab world today. The women weren't secreted away in brown, blue, or black burkhas and they were given freedom to come and go at will.

But with such freedom comes moral responsibility, something which most people lack. She saw Joseph and wanted him. The verse says she "cast longing eyes on him." The desire of her eyes became the obsession of her soul.

⁸ But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, my master does not know what *is* with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand.

The chances are that this wife is a beauty. Potiphar, as a member of Pharaoh's employ, could probably have had whatever woman he wanted. Plus, all of the surrounding events of this story would lead us to believe that she was certainly more beautiful than average.

But he refused... There is a universal knowledge concerning this. The wife of a man belongs to that man. This is understood from the earliest pages of the Bible and it is understood by the very terms "husband" and "wife" in whatever language they are spoken.

Joseph had no intention to violate the sanctity of the bond despite of the beauty or position of the person. Regardless of what had been entrusted to him in all of Potiphar's house, without any record of it being spoken, Joseph knew that his authority didn't reach to the wife, nor could it.

And in acknowledgement of that bond, to which he had no authority to sever, he calls on an even greater witness...

⁹ *There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you *are* his wife.*

Notice what he says to her here. This is something we can say with full confidence to anyone in any such type of situation. He elevates the authority beyond himself, starting with his master and then demonstrating that *she* is responsible *to him* as well.

He doesn't skirt the issue by saying, "We could get in trouble." He also doesn't dismiss the issue by demeaning himself as unworthy, and he doesn't delay it by simply putting it off, which is something we all tend to do with one thing or another. Sometimes it's the easiest path, but in this case, it would only aggravate things later.

And so he first shows *his authority* - it is over the entire house. Then he shows *the exception*, the wife of his master. This takes us right back to Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

He didn't quote Scripture, but he cited the intent of it by citing God's law. If he has a master and his master has a wife, then his master's wife is one with his master. To lay with her then would be to usurp his master's authority.

⁹ (con't) **How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"**

In the Hebrew here, what he says is emphatic - *v'ekh er'eseh ha'arah ha'gedolah* - how to do this wickedness, this great one.

The sin against his master in this case would be to sin against God. It isn't true that we can *only* sin against God, the Bible bears out that we can sin against one another. And not all sins against one another are sins against God, but more often than not the two overlap. This is one of those times.

It's still at least two hundred years prior to the time of the law and yet it is an understood precept - not only to him, but to her as well. And so he invokes God as his defense against her advances. To sin against her husband may mean little to her, but to sin against God *may* cause her to consider the act.

In this exchange, he uses the term *elohim* for God instead of Jehovah. Instead of the God of the covenant, of whom she is excluded, he mentions the God of creation to whom she is accountable. God has instilled such knowledge in the heart of man and he hopes she will reflect on it.

¹⁰ **So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her.**

It's one thing to have someone enticing you to do something you shouldn't do when you can avoid them. It's another thing to be near them without the ability to get away. It may be in school, at home, or at work, but the constant nagging of sin crouching at your side can wear down the strongest of people. Don't think you're immune.

There is only one true refuge from it and that is to keep your thoughts on what is morally right. It is to reflect on the conscience given by God, understanding that it is, in fact, from God. To ascribe a conscience to anything other than God will eventually lead to a violation of that conscience.

Jobs change, bosses die, governments fade away and with them may go the source of our supposed conscience. But for those who know that God holds us accountable, there is the continued source of strength to endure even the most belligerent foes.

Joseph is such a person. He had his conscience in tune with God and his eyes on Jesus, without yet knowing it was Jesus to whom his eyes were turned. In Romans 13:14, Paul tells us where to find our covering and how to defend against the devil -

"But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts."

Today's ten verses are as much a moral lesson for us as they are pictures of Christ. Without going into too much detail on that second aspect, let's briefly look at how they do, in fact, picture Jesus.

Verses 1-6 are a precursor to the same picture we'll see again when Joseph becomes ruler over Egypt. Joseph was sold by his brothers into Egypt - the land of the gentiles. Jesus was, in essence, sold by His brothers to the gentiles. When they rejected Him, His message was carried to the nations. Paul explains this in Romans 11.

The Ishmaelites, the people whom God hears, carried Joseph to Egypt which means double distress; the gentiles whom God hears have carried the gospel to the world. The Jews have the law, but the gentiles have nothing, thus they are in double distress.

There in the lands of the gentiles the message of Jesus will flourish. Potiphar, whose name means "Priest of the Bull", pictures the completed work of Christ and thus God on the throne. He receives Joseph, just as the New Testament shows us that God received the work of Jesus (Acts 2:36 & Hebrews 9:24-26).

Potiphar is called the Captain of the Guard - the one who executes judgment. In the New Testament, the Lord is said to be the one to execute judgment in Jude 1:15. The Lord was with Joseph, the Spirit of the Lord rests upon Jesus (Luke 4:18).

In all that Joseph did, the Lord made him prosper. The same thing, using the same Hebrew word, is used of the coming Christ in Isaiah 53:10 -

"He shall prolong *His* days,
And the pleasure of the LORD shall **prosper** in His hand."

Because of his faithful service, Joseph found favor in Potipher's sight. In His life, Jesus is said to have increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:52)

Eventually, Potipher made Joseph overseer of his house. In 1 Peter 2:25, using the same word as the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it says this of Jesus - "For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and **Overseer** of your souls."

Potiphar grants Joseph complete authority over the house. In Matthew 28:18, because of his faithful service, Jesus states that "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

If there were one or two similarities between Joseph and Christ in these verses it could be coincidence, but there are too many to dismiss. Every word finds its parallel and fulfillment in Jesus.

From the middle of verse 6 on, a new picture is revealed. Joseph is called handsome in form and appearance and things suddenly change from that point. Next week, the continuation of that story and what it is showing us will be looked at and revealed.

It may seem a bit odd stopping in the middle of a picture like this, but God is the one who began the new picture in the middle of a verse. What seems odd, actually flows perfectly and it will come out exactly as it should when we continue on with the life of Joseph, a life dedicated to the Lord and which looks forward to the life of Jesus.

So, here we are looking at all these stories, learning moral lessons and interesting facts, but above all, we're learning about the heart of God which is most revealed in the Person of His Son, our Lord Jesus.

Closing Verse: *Can a man take fire to his bosom,
And his clothes not be burned?
28 Can one walk on hot coals,
And his feet not be seared?
29 So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife;
Whoever touches her shall not be innocent. Proverbs 6:28, 29*

Next Week: Genesis 39:11-23 (False Accusations, Unjust Punishment) (98th Genesis Sermon) - Make sure to read and study those verses.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Overseer of the House

Now Joseph down to Egypt was taken
And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh
Captain of the guard, an Egyptian, looked at makin'
Him a slave in his house, Joseph's prospects looked narrow

He bought him from the Ishmaelites
Who had taken him down there
The Lord was with Joseph in both days and nights
And he was a successful man because he took care

And he was in the house of the Egyptian, his master
Tending to it and keeping it from disaster

And his master saw the Lord was with him in a way very grand
And that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand

So Joseph found favor in his sight
And served him ever-so dutifully
Then he made him overseer of his house, a future looking bright
And all that he had, he put under his authority

So it was, from the time that he had made him overseer
Of his house and all that he had
That the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house
For Joseph's sake, the deal wasn't half bad

And the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had
In the house and in the field, certainly making him glad

Thus he left all that he had in Joseph's hand
And he did not know what he had, there was no care
Except for the bread which he ate at the table he manned
Joseph was a servant certainly beyond compare

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance
Something that in his duties would cause interference

And it came to pass after these things
That his master's wife on Joseph cast longing eyes
And she said, "Lie with me, for you my heart sings"
But in this matter Joseph stayed alert and wise

He refused and said to his master's wife
"Look, my master does not know
What is with me in the house, he trusts me with his life
And he has committed all that he has to my hand, even though...

There is no one greater in this house than I
Nor has he kept back anything from me but you,
Because you are his wife, so don't you even try
To seduce me,,, with such an idea I am through

How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"
When He is ever with me, seeing me, in each step that I trod
So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day
That he did not heed her to lie with her or to be with her
Instead her advances he cast far away

Sin is a trap, deadly, and consuming in our life
If fed it can only lead to sadness and death
It leads us down paths of turmoil and strife
In the end, it will steal our souls at our last breath

But there is a cure for our plight in this world of sin
Jesus is that cure, He our righteousness
Through the cross He scored the marvelous win
And now He is ours when we His great name do profess

He is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls
He is the One who leads us in a glorious parade
And when the names are called on heaven's honor rolls
We will be there because of the profession in Jesus we made

Let us magnify our God and our King
He is Jesus, the Lord mighty and victorious over the grave
For all of eternity let our joyous hearts sing
Yes, He is our wondrous Lord, mighty to save

Hallelujah and Amen....

GENESIS 39:11-23 (FALSE ACCUSATIONS, UNJUST PUNISHMENT)

Introduction: I don't know how many of you have felt like the king of the world one minute and then as far down in the dumps as you could be the next, but its not an uncommon theme, both in the Bible and in real life. Joseph was the favored son of his father, but then was thrown into a pit by his brothers.

Then he was taken out of the pit and sold to Arabs who took him to another country where he was sold again. No sooner is he sold in Egypt, than he was exalted to the chief position in his house. But once again, that will come to a screeching halt.

While we look at the details of these stories, *do not hesitate* to relate them to your own life. Its a truth that we can't know what's good without what's bad, we can't truly know what's sweet without comparing it to what's bitter. Unless we get sick, we can't really appreciate what it means to be healthy.

*Oh God, contrast is what makes the sweet even sweeter
Contrast helps me to know how good feeling good really can be
And knowing the brightness is one hundred percent neater
Having walked before in darkness; now in your light eternally*

We can have general ideas about things, but contrast is what helps us to understand things more completely. Joseph's life is one of peaks and valleys, but so are ours. Through the good and the bad, the Lord was with Joseph. He was a son of the line of promise and God was faithful to be with him in every situation.

If He was with Joseph, who lived prior to Jesus, how much more sure can we be that He is with us now that we have the full measure of God's love poured out in us through His Son? This is why Paul confidently tells us again and again about the sure hope and promises that we have in Christ.

Don't lose sight of this. Joseph was never abandoned, and the Lord will never leave you nor forsake you either.

Text Verse: *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD.
⁹ “For as the heavens are higher than the earth,*

*So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:8, 9*

When Joseph was rejected by his family, sold into bondage, or thrown into prison, he must have really wondered about the love of God and the promises passed on to him by his father about the God of Abraham. And yet, he is a model example of one who continues to act with integrity in every situation he faces.

Paul was the same way. He trusted Jesus with *every fiber* of his being and even in the most difficult of circumstances. He understood that the Lord's ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are infinitely above ours.

If you too understand this, then no matter how bad things get, you can know that God is right there with you, and directing you through those things to a great finish line. It is His word which allows us to have this confidence. Therefore, let's open it again today and see a wonderful example of it in Joseph's own trials. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Accusing the Overseer

Let me give a quick review of what happened in the previous verses. Joseph was sold by his brothers and taken down to Egypt where he was bought by Potiphar, the chief of the executioners. Because of his faithful service, he was eventually elevated to the overseer of Potiphar's entire house.

In turn Potiphar's house was more than abundantly blessed. Everything from the house to the field prospered. Eventually though, because of his ravishing good looks, Potiphar's wife cast longing eyes on him. She continuously nagged him to lie with her, but he resisted. Now we start up with verse 11...

¹¹ But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house *was* inside,

"About this time" takes us right back to verse 8 of the chapter which said, "And it came to pass after these things that his master's wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, 'Lie with me.'"

Potiphar's wife had longing eyes for Joseph and the burning didn't end when he shunned her the first time. Instead, her passions went right on. She had been rejected

by a handsome slave and this probably only made her want him more. In his usual order of duty, we're told that Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside.

According to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, this was because it was a time of a festival. He tells us that it would be usual for the women to attend these things, but instead she told her husband that she was sick and would stay home.

That would explain why there was no one else around and even Joseph probably didn't know she was home. In verse ten, it implied that he tried to avoid such entanglements. There it said "day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her."

¹² that she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me."

In verse eight, she said these exact same words, *shikbah immi*. Since verse eight, no other words from her are recorded. And so here we see the Bible do what it does quite a few other times. It is showing the depth of the intent of a statement by a person by exactly repeating it without any intermediary words from them.

This repetition by Potiphar's wife is intended to show us the perverse nature of the woman and her determined purpose of pursuing this course until she wears Joseph out. Such repetitions are used in films and TV shows nowadays.

One person will be introduced from time to time and they say the exact same thing every time they're seen. If you wondered where the idea came from, the Bible is a top candidate as a guess. Even if that's not where Hollywood got the idea, it shows the Bible's depth of the understanding of humanity by recording things like this.

If God is the Creator, and He is, and this is His word, and it is, then it will give us insights into the nature of man in a way that is timeless. Little insights like these are amazing in their literary and anthropological value.

After having read the Bible though for the 20th time or so, I started making each new time through interesting by looking for something different. On one of those times, I searched for every such repetition in the Bible. I found about a hundred or so of them and then cataloged them in order and then in a few different ways.

If you take time to do things like this, you'll find simply wonderful tucked away. These are fantastic little treasures that may have never been seen or thought about before. So

use your imagination when you study the Bible. It's an infinite resource of wisdom and beauty for us to peruse.

*Yes Lord, Charlie is right about this one, for sure
Searching Your word will only help as I grow day by day
So give me a hunger to pursue You more and more
And in the study of Your word, my hunger I will allay*

¹² (con't) **But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside.**

In the Middle East, even today in some cultures, but throughout the whole area at this time, the people wore garments that were loose around the body. It is hot and having something like this would have been cool and yet fashionable. Slave garments would probably have been of different material, style, and/or color to identify them, but they would follow the general motif of the day.

In Joseph's case, she got hold of it, probably hoping to pull him closer. A touch will excite more than just words and maybe she was hoping this would do the trick. Instead, away he runs away with either very little, or nothing at all, to cover him.

The same thing happened at the Garden of Gethsemane as one of Jesus' disciples fled from the guards who arrested Him -

"Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around *his* naked *body*. And the young men laid hold of him, ⁵² and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked." Mark 14:51, 52

Because Mark is the only one who recorded this in the gospels, it's believed that he was writing about himself. Both Matthew and John do the same thing as they speak about themselves in the third person in their own gospels.

The contrast is notable though. Joseph fled *for* the honor of what is right; Mark fled in the disgrace *of doing* what was wrong. One fled *to* God in righteousness; the other fled *from* God in cowardice. One will be punished for doing the *right thing*; the other will be forgiven for doing the *wrong thing*.

Such is the marvelous tapestry of God's word as it unfolds before us. And such are the lessons we can learn for ourselves. We very well may be punished or harmed for

pursuing righteousness, but God is watching and recording our actions for future rewards.

Likewise, we may take the wrong course and run from what we know is right, and God is there watching and recording in order to demonstrate His great mercy on us - the objects of His affection. Never underestimate the grandeur of the ability of God to use your rights as well as your wrongs in amazing ways.

¹³ And so it was, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and fled outside,

With all of the intrigue the world has seen, Joseph's actions are all the more surprising. How many times have lovers planned ways of overthrowing homes, spouses, and even empires. If he wanted this woman, he could have turned the situation into a cunning plot that may bring him to freedom and even wealth. Instead, Joseph turns and runs.

In the Morning Bride by William Congreve, the actress Zara says this in Act III, "Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned, Nor hell a fury like a woman scorned." I wonder if Congreve was thinking of this verse after reading the account of Potiphar's wife?

The woman is scorned *by a slave more righteous than she*, and so with his garment in her hand, she can now take out her fury in place of the passion she has lost...

¹⁴ that she called to the men of her house and spoke to them, saying, "See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us. He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice.

The term "Hebrew" hasn't been used since Genesis 14:13 when it was first introduced into the pages of the Bible. In other words, this is only the second time it's been used thus far in Scripture. If Israel is the national identity of the people, the term Hebrew is somewhat synonymous with, yet something deeper. It is the calling of that national group.

Our national identity is American, but who we as a people, first and foremost, should be "Christians." This is the force and effect of the term Hebrew. When Jonah was asked who he was, his answer was, "I *am* a Hebrew; and I fear the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry *land*."

He was identifying himself with the collective group of people who were spiritually tied to the Lord, Jehovah. To Jonah, this identified the "why" of the circumstances which had occurred that had led to the question in the first place.

The term Hebrew is derived from Abraham's great-great-great-great grandfather Eber. Eber means "he who crossed over" and it signifies that he and his family are the ones who crossed over the Euphrates and away from Babel, the land of apostasy from all truth. This was more than just a physical crossing of a river, but a spiritual crossing over, hence the title being used first of Abraham.

Potiphar's wife is probably calling him a "Hebrew" as a way of shaming him. In essence she might be saying, "This guy calls himself a Hebrew. If that is a Hebrew, then what a bad thing being a Hebrew must be." Joseph had done nothing wrong and yet he was being maligned by the use of his identity.

This is exactly the same intent concerning the use of the word "Christian" in 1 Peter 4:16 - "Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter." It is the biblical model that suffering for what is right is commendable.

*Lord, the thought of suffering doesn't make me tickle with joy
But to suffer for your name is the highest honor of all
And so give me the determination to a humble attitude employ
When suffering comes; yes Lord, on the day of such a call*

Something important happens here for us to see. Whether you noticed it or not, Potiphar's wife has indicted *her husband* in this verse. "See, **he** has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us..." The accusation of Joseph's actions fall on the one who appointed Joseph. This is the same thing that is seen in Jesus.

Paul, citing the 69th Psalm, shows the same attitude towards Christ as we see in this verse about Joseph and Potiphar - "For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.'" (15:3)

Joseph sets the example and the ultimate realization of it is found in the cross of Christ. Joseph was stripped of his garments and suffered shame in the process. Jesus was likewise stripped of His garments and bore the reproach of many who surrounded him. However, the accusation of Christ is an accusation against God.

The question we should then ask is, "Should we, if we are wrongly accused for our faith as Christians, feel that we are above these things?" No! Rather, we should feel honored if we suffer for having done right and maintained our integrity. In the case of Joseph, the very thing that he had run from is what he is accused of. And in the process, Potiphar shares in the blame.

"He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice." All wrongs will be made right. Someday, Potiphar's wife will stand in the presence of the Lord and receive her fair sentence as will we all. As Jesus said in Matthew 12 -

"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. ³⁷ For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Those who wrongly accuse us may have the temporary victory, but in the end, it is the faithful follower of Christ, who runs to God and away from sin, that will be exalted. Don't forget this when it's time to speak up, especially about moral issues which are so quickly degrading our society. God does has your back.

¹⁵ And it happened, when he heard that I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me, and fled and went outside."

How would a lady explain having a man's garments in her hand? A loud yell would do it. Verse 11 said that none of the men of the house was inside. The only way to feign innocence would be to claim she yelled for everyone to hear her, when in fact she knew that there was no one who could.

But the story will work because it plausibly explains why she would have the garment when Joseph was stronger than she was.

II. The Oldest Trick - Passing the Buck

¹⁶ So she kept his garment with her until his master came home.

Potiphar's wife is using Jacob's garment to accuse him. This is a parallel to what happened to Jesus. In Luke 23:11, it says, "Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate."

Later in John 19:1-5, we read this -

¹"So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged *Him*. ²And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put *it* on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. ³Then they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck Him with their hands. ⁴Pilate then went out again, and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him." ⁵Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And *Pilate* said to them, "Behold the Man!"

The robe of Jesus, first placed on Him by Herod and which was then taken off to scourge Him before being put back on Him, was used as an accusation against Him. In essence it was to imply that he was an usurper of the ruler - who to Israel was God alone. By wearing a king's garments, it implied that He was a King.

This is exactly what Potiphar's wife is accusing Joseph of. By trying to sleep with her, he would usurp Potiphar's authority because she was the one thing that was withheld from Joseph. Time and again, every detail is pointing to Jesus.

The meticulous work of God in using real details of real lives is simply amazing. In the case of Joseph, it's even more so. Not only is he recorded to show us what would come *in* Christ, but also how God would deliver Israel in the future. But that deliverance of Israel, is given to us to again show the work of Christ!

God is building upon each story in such an intricately marvelous way and every detail is about His entrance into the stream of humanity in the Person of Jesus. And yet, people pray to Mary, confess to popes and priests, and miss the mark of God's astonishing love which is found in nail-scarred hands longingly held out to us.

¹⁷ Then she spoke to him with words like these, saying, "The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us came in to me to mock me;

The accusation she said to those around her, she now states directly to Potiphar - "The Hebrew servant *whom you* brought to us..." This is exactly what Adam did to the Lord when he was confronted with his sin. In Genesis 3, we see the first example ever of passing the buck from one's own guilt to someone else -

"And He said, "Who told you that you *were* naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" ¹² Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

Potiphar's wife, just like Adam, places the blame for her own sin on him. And in turn, Joseph is the recipient of her deserved punishment. Fortunately for us, we too have a recipient for ours. Jesus will bear our guilt, just as Joseph will be forced to bear the guilt of this woman.

¹⁸ so it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out, that he left his garment with me and fled outside."

There is truth mixed with lies in this verse; statements which will convict an innocent man. The same happened with Jesus. He stood in front of several councils prior to His crucifixion and people came with testimony which was only partially true or which was misconstrued.

He had actually done no wrong, but He was tried and found guilty. The pattern is first seen in Joseph and ultimately realized in who he is picturing. Joseph is the falsely accused overseer of Potiphar's house; Jesus is the falsely accused Overseer of God's house.

And so here we have an amazing picture of man's fall and redemption. Adam was found naked after disobeying God; Joseph was stripped of his garment; Jesus was stripped of His garment.

Adam blames God by saying He gave her the woman. Potiphar's wife blames Potiphar, picturing God by saying he brought the Hebrew in to them. And, the chief priests, scribes, and elders blame God as is noted in Matthew 27-

"He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

-Matthew 27:42, 43

After Adam's transgression, God covered him with the skins of an animal. After Joseph is cast into the pit, he will be brought out and clothed in garments of fine linen. And when Jesus was brought out of the tomb, he received His heavenly garments.

But even more, He now grants us the same white garments of righteousness, lost by Adam at the fall. In Christ, the circle is complete in returning man to a state of undefiled righteousness in the presence of God - pictured here as the events of Joseph's life continue to unfold.

*The call rings out "not guilty," though I have sinned so many times
And I look and see a Man hanging bloody on a tree
My guilt was transferred to His cross thus excusing all my crimes
What kind of love has been poured out on undeserving me?*

III. The King's Prisoner

¹⁹ So it was, when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, "Your servant did to me after this manner," that his anger was aroused.

Potiphar's anger is aroused at what happened, but it doesn't say at who. We *infer* that it is Joseph, but it's not specific. It could have said, "His anger was aroused at Joseph" as the Bible often does. An example of this is when Moses is alone with the Lord.

"So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and He said: 'Is not Aaron the Levite your brother? I know that he can speak well.'" Exodus 4:14

I believe that Joseph's name is omitted because it pictures Christ. God's anger was aroused at the sin that had occurred, but it was aroused in a unique way in Christ. He became the Substitute for our sin. What we've done wrong was, in fact, judged in Him. This is why Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, said this -

"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Luke 22:42

The cup of God's wrath was handed to Jesus, and He drank it down in our place despite being innocent of any wrongdoing. Potiphar's anger was aroused as well and he took it out on an innocent man. Looking at the next verse, we can see this more clearly...

²⁰ Then Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. And he was there in the prison.

Joseph was Potiphar's property, and Potiphar is the captain of the executioners. If he believed that Joseph was truly guilty, it is certain he would have had him executed. But because of the accusations of his wife, which couldn't be substantiated, he took a course of action that shows us the substitutionary work of Jesus.

He sent Joseph to the place where the king's prisoners were confined. In Hebrew, it is *beit ha'sohar*, the Round House. It is a very unusual term which is only used eight times in the Bible and all eight are in this particular story and nowhere else.

The Jewish writer Mercer observes, "that it was made under ground, and at the top of it was an hole which let in light, and at which they went into it." It is a convincing description of what we would think of as the tomb of Jesus; a round area cut out of stone with an entrance which could be covered.

Joseph has taken the blame for what she did even though Potipher surely knew he was innocent. Jesus took the blame for what we have done, even though He is innocent. Every sin will be punished. It will either be in us or in a Substitute. What this account seems to show is that precept. Even down the location - a round hole dug out of rock.

²¹ But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

If the sentence of Joseph pictures the sentencing of Jesus, then the Lord's presence with Joseph in that sentence is to be seen in the same way towards Jesus. In death, the Lord was with Him.

Joseph was never abandoned by the Lord, even though he suffered for a crime he didn't commit. And Jesus was not left abandoned when He suffered for our crimes. The favor of the Lord was with Him and it remained with Him. Thus the words of the psalm are true, "His mercy endures forever."

In Psalm 16:10, it says, "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." Jesus was raised from the tomb to become the ruler of all of God's kingdom. Joseph will be in prison, but he won't be abandoned. Instead, he will be brought out and made ruler over all of Pharaoh's kingdom.

²² And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing.

Again, we're being asked to view this from a prophetic perspective. There is no doubt about it. If all of the other aspects of what has happened have pointed to Jesus, then we can surely see the same in this verse as well. It is Jesus who has been given authority over all those who are in the prison of the tomb.

He has the complete authority over all the souls of men in the grave. We take passages like this, and we make sermons about how to live nobly in difficult circumstances, which by the way is true, but we miss what God is trying to show us. The details of Joseph's life were selected to show us the magnificence of the work of Jesus.

There isn't a verse yet which hasn't brought closer to understanding Him and His glory. If we get this right, and if we can focus on that, then all of the "living right" concepts will follow and the right living applications will be much more pronounced in each of us.

Jesus prevailed so that we can prevail. The Lord was with Joseph to show that the Lord was with Jesus. If we are *in Christ*, then the Lord is with us. Even in death, we can have the absolute assurance that He is the Overseer of our lives and of our souls. Who wouldn't live right with that kind of knowledge!

²³ The keeper of the prison did not look into anything *that was under Joseph's* authority, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper.

Having taken everything that we have seen in this section and viewed it from the lens of the work of Christ, we can take this last verse and see it completely realized in Him. Christ was in the grave, the prison of Joseph, if you will.

The Lord was with Him and whatever He did, the Lord made it prosper. Think on that as I read you this familiar passage from Isaiah which almost mirrors what we've seen in these last verses from Genesis 39:9-12 -

⁹And they made His grave with the wicked—

But with the rich at His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor *was any* deceit in His mouth.

¹⁰Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;
He has put *Him* to grief.

When You make His soul an offering for sin,
He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days,
And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

¹¹He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied.
By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,
For He shall bear their iniquities.

¹²Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,

And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,
Because He poured out His soul unto death,
And He was numbered with the transgressors,
And He bore the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors.

Hallelujah for the work of the Lord and for the beautiful pictures of that work which have been given to show us of His coming. Matthew Henry, who I don't quote very often, stated this thought about today's passage quite eloquently. Listen to what he says concerning the life of Joseph and how he pictures Jesus -

"Let us not forget, through Joseph, to look unto Jesus, who suffered being tempted, yet without sin; who was slandered, and persecuted, and imprisoned, but without cause; who by the cross ascended to the throne. May we be enabled to follow the same path in submitting and in suffering, to the same place of glory."

All of these many stories, pictures, and patterns are wonderful to see and they tell us the of the truth and soundness of our faith, but without that faith, they are just interesting stories which seem to have no final goal or purpose. In God's redemptive plan though, they come into focus.

First in the preparation, care, and redemption of the Jewish people, but even that only points to the greater work of Christ. If the redemption of Israel were the end of the story, it would be a sad tale for the rest of the world, but through them God did something even more marvelous. He sent His Son, Jesus, to provide redemption to all mankind.

Closing Verse: ¹⁶*These six things the LORD hates,
Yes, seven are an abomination to Him:*

¹⁷*A proud look,*

A lying tongue,

Hands that shed innocent blood,

¹⁸*A heart that devises wicked plans,*

Feet that are swift in running to evil,

¹⁹*A false witness who speaks lies,*

And one who sows discord among brethren. Proverbs 6:16-19

Next Week: Genesis 40:1-23 (The Spirits in Prison) (99th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Overseer in Prison

But it happened about this point
When Joseph went into the house where Potiphar did abide
To do his work in that lavish joint
And none of the men of the house was inside

That she caught him by his garment as she planned
Saying, "Lie with me." But he denied
He left his garment in her hand
And fled and ran outside

And so it was, when she looked
That he had left his garment in her hand
And fled outside, yes he booked
His 50-yard dash was really quite grand

That she called to the men of her house
And spoke to them, as she said
"See, he has brought in to us a Hebrew to mock us
He came in to me to lie with me... to take me to bed
And I cried out with a loud voice
I had to you see, I just had no choice

And it happened, when he heard
That I lifted my voice and cried out
That his garment to me was transferred
And he fled and went outside, scared no doubt

So she kept his garment with her
Until his master came home
Then she spoke to him with words like these
Saying, "Something has happened while I was here alone

The Hebrew servant whom you brought to us
Came in to me to mock me, let me tell you about the fuss

So it happened, as I lifted my voice and cried out
That he left his garment with me
And fled outside, scared no doubt
I'm telling the truth sweetie-pie. You do believe me?

So it was, when his master heard the words of the deceitful planner
The words which his wife spoke to him
Saying, "Your servant did to me after this manner,"
That his anger was aroused, things were looking grim

Then Joseph's master took him in kind
And put him into the prison
A place where the king's prisoners were confined
And he was there after his mater's anger had arisen

But the Lord was with Joseph alright
And showed him mercy you know
And He gave him favor in the sight
Of the keeper of the prison, yes this is so

And the keeper of the prison
Committed to Joseph's hand
All the prisoners who were there
Joseph's skills were noted as quite grand

Whatever they did there it was his doing
Because Joseph was honorable in all he was pursuing

The keeper of the prison did not look
Into anything that was under his authority
Because the Lord was with him in that darkened nook
He found favor in the Lord's eyes, you see

And whatever he did, the Lord made it thrive
And so this is how, in prison, Joseph did survive

We, like Potiphar's wife are guilty too
But Jesus took our place
And now through Him we can have life anew

Our condemned state, God will with eternal life replace

Let us never forget that high, high price
That was paid for us at Calvary
Where for our sins His shed blood did suffice
The payment made to set us free

Thank You, O God, for our Lord Jesus
And the marvelous work He accomplished for us

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 40:1-23 **(THE SPIRITS IN PRISON)**

Introduction: Chapter 40 of Genesis is a single story and though being long, it has to be kept in that context. So today we will go through all 23 verses in one sermon. The last time we looked at a whole chapter in one sermon was Genesis 23 which dealt with Sarah's death and burial.

Today's passage shows us how Joseph's release from prison comes about, but that won't happen today. The events of the story though come together to ensure that it will happen in the future. God directly and actively works in this woeful place to ensure the outcome. And so we see that when it's necessary to meet His desired end, He intervenes in the affairs of man.

He isn't a distant God who is uncaring, nor is He a meddlesome God who actively fiddles with our lives in an unnecessary manner. He is infinitely wise, completely interested, and actively involved when it is needed to meet His plans. But, He allows us to make our own choices and He works with those choices for His good end.

Because He works this way, we have to do our part. When He calls, we need to respond. When He directs, we need to pay attention. And where He leads, it is up to us to follow.

Text Verse: *Sing praise to the Lord, you saints of His,
And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.
5 For His anger is but for a moment,
His favor is for life;
Weeping may endure for a night,
But joy comes in the morning. Psalm 30:4, 5*

Because of Adam's sin, separation from the Lord came upon all people. Death was the result, and for each of us that death will last for a moment or for all eternity. The choice is ours. Will we rest in God's favor through the gift of His Son, or will we be consumed in His anger because we have rejected Him?

The Bible gives us instruction in how to live rightly and it gives us pictures of what God has done to restore us to His favor. It is all to be found in His word and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Despondency in the Pit

¹ It came to pass after these things *that* the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt.

We start chapter 40 with the words, "It came to pass..." This shows that it follows after the previous chapter without interruption. One thing led to another. The false accusation of Potiphar's wife led to Joseph's imprisonment and that led to what happens now.

The divine hand of God is seen in the guidance and direction of each step. What Joseph sees as one event after another without knowing why they are happening, God sees as a whole which He has preplanned and set in motion to bring about His intended plans.

Into this unfolding tapestry arrive the butler and baker of the king. The butler is the king's cupbearer; the baker is his personal chef. The occupants of both of these offices were people of very high rank and considered extremely important officials.

They would have had direct access to the royal presence and would have been selected from the most respected of all of the nobles of the land. The Chief of Staff in the White House would be a good example of such a person.

In the case of these two, they were placed in prison where Joseph was because, as it says, they "offended their lord, the King of Egypt." There are several ancient scholars who make guesses as to what they did, but it's not certain. What is possible is that the king got sick from what was brought in to be eaten.

If it was something like that, he would be offended by it and that could only lead to trouble for them.

² And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief butler and the chief baker.

They offended the king and he, in turn, was angry with them. The office of the cupbearer is seen elsewhere in the Bible. Nehemiah was the cupbearer to Artaxerxes, the King of Persia, and in 2 Kings 18, there is a person known as the Rabshakeh which is an Aramaic term for the same position under the king of Babylon.

For the king to be angry with such high-ranking people meant that they had done something which was pretty grave. If he got sick from his meal, that would be enough. And in a few verses we'll see that his anger will end in a bad way for one of them.

³ So he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison, the place where Joseph *was* confined.

Nothing being coincidental where God is concerned, these two high officials were put into the same place where Joseph is. The Captain of the Guard would have been Joseph's master, Potiphar, who had him placed in prison. And so now they are there together.

Joseph was *confined*, but he can move about; he is not literally *bound*. There is an alliteration in the words in this verse. There is the prison which is *ha'sohar* and there is the confinement which is *asur*. It's stressing that Joseph is *bound in the round house*.

⁴ And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them; so they were in custody for a while.

They are in the Round House and Joseph is given charge of them. Their time in this prison isn't specified, but the term *yamim* is used. This means "days" but sometimes it's used to mean an unknown duration, maybe years. This could be the case here because we're going to see that they are let out *on* Pharaoh's birthday.

If they got him sick on or before the previous birthday, then bringing them out a year later would make sense. Whatever amount of time it is, Joseph is given their charge by the captain of the guard.

⁵ Then the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, who *were* confined in the prison, had a dream, both of them, each man's dream in one night *and* each man's dream with its *own* interpretation.

Again we see God's hand working in the story. These weren't ordinary dreams that pass away when you wake up. They were dreams they both remembered and could sit up and compare with each other. They will be found to be prophetic. Each has his own individual dream which would each have an individual interpretation.

And however many people there were in the prison, only these two are given the memorable dreams. Even Joseph doesn't have one. It all points to God's

superintendence over the situation which is intended for us to understand that what is happening was planned by Him to meet His purposes.

⁶ And Joseph came in to them in the morning and looked at them, and saw that they were sad.

Here we see that Joseph isn't bound *in the prison*, but he was bound *in prison*. In other words, he did have freedom to move around. In the morning, he came to them and saw their faces. The Hebrew word here is *zoaphim*. It indicates being enraged.

They had these dreams and they were angry that they had no way of knowing what they meant. If they weren't in prison, but rather still in Pharaoh's court, they could have a magician interpret them.

⁷ So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in the custody of his lord's house, saying, "Why do you look so sad today?"

Madua penkhem raim - Why are your faces evil? For Joseph -

Just one look; that's all it took, yes, just one look

He could tell that things weren't right

There was something bothering the cupbearer and the cook

Something had changed about them during the night

He knew something was wrong by the change in their faces.

⁸ And they said to him, "We each have had a dream, and *there is* no interpreter of it."

They tell him that together they had dreams. Their answer shows that they were angry because "there is no interpreter of it." If only they weren't in this prison, then they could get an answer. But if God is going to give them a dream which *should be* interpreted, He *will give* an interpreter for the dream he has given.

It would make no sense otherwise. A dream from God with no interpretation would be a contradictory concept and so Joseph responds accordingly...

^{8 (con't)} So Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell *them* to me, please."

*Why would God give a dream and not tell you what it meant
This doesn't make sense, so please tell it to me
Maybe this is the reason why to prison I have been sent
Interpretations belong to God, surely you must agree*

If the dream is from God, then it is given *to be interpreted* because "interpretations belong to God." The *Source of the dream* will be the *Source of the interpretation*. If Joseph interprets the dream, it is because God has so used him. He's not claiming to be God's appointed interpreter, but he is saying the he *could be* God's appointed interpreter.

Daniel explained this when he stood in the presence of King Nebuchadnezzar -

"Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise *men*, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. ²⁸ But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days."

-Daniel 2:27-28

And so, like Daniel, Joseph says that God is the interpreter. He doesn't say "the Lord" but simply God. A pagan would have no reference as to who Jehovah is, but everybody realizes who God is, whether they admit it or not. If someone has a dream from God, then there must be God who gave the dream.

II. The Resurrection of Life

⁹Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, "Behold, in my dream a vine *was* before me,

The chief cupbearer speaks first. It doesn't say why, but when we get to the baker, it will say that he spoke when he saw that the first interpretation was good. I'd suggest that he was scared of speaking up first as his dream disturbed him. When you see what this is pointing to, you will understand why he was afraid.

We might ask, "What are we afraid of?" Are you afraid of a bump in the night? Maybe of financial ruin? Are you afraid of losing a loved one? What about death? Death is pretty permanent and it is 100% guaranteed. Are you ready for yours?

*Lord, I don't think about it often, but I know I will die
Everyone before me has, and in me it will happen too
Only Jesus came back from that place, and so I must ask, "Why?"
What can make me rise again? What is it that I must do?*

There is a way to be freed from that fear. Stay tuned and I'll explain it. In the dream, the cupbearer says that he saw a vine. This is an obvious connection to his office. He is the cupbearer and there is a vine. In Hebrew, the word is *gephen* and comes from an unused root which means to bend, just as a vine bends as it grows.

In Hosea 10:1, Israel is likened to a vine and in John 15:5, 6 Jesus says, "I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned."

The symbolism is given for us to see Jesus if we can think the picture through clearly. There is an immediate fulfillment which we'll see in this chapter, but there is an ultimate fulfillment in what will come about in Christ. Stay tuned for the exciting details...

¹⁰ and in the vine *were* three branches; it *was* as though it budded, its blossoms shot forth, and its clusters brought forth ripe grapes.

Right before the cupbearer's eyes, the vine showed three branches which budded, made blossoms, and clusters of ripe grapes. It was as if he were looking at a time-lapse scene on a movie. From vine to grape before his eyes.

Something similar happens overnight after the exodus. When there was a challenge to the priesthood of Levi, the Lord told Moses to have each tribe bring a rod forward with its name inscribed on it. When they did, the following happens as is seen in Numbers 17:7-8-

⁷ "And Moses placed the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness. ⁸ Now it came to pass on the next day that Moses went into the tabernacle of witness, and behold, the rod of Aaron, of the house of Levi, had sprouted and put forth buds, had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds."

The almond has its significance (shaqed) and the vine has its own. God uses the natural, including agricultural themes, to show us how He works out his plan of redemption. There is never a detail which isn't exciting in how it fits into the larger themes of the

Bible. The more you read this book, the more the themes fit together and the more they reveal of the wisdom of God.

numbers, colors, dust, almonds, wheat, barley, etc. water, types of metal, directions, different animals, incense,

He uses created things to make spiritual applications. Because He created these things, the applications will always fit perfectly with the picture He wants to show us. This book has an unlimited supply of intelligence mixed with love, all put together so that we can understand Him better.

¹¹ Then Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand."

No sooner had the vine budded, blossomed, and put out grapes than the cupbearer was pressing them into Pharaoh's cup and the cup was being handed to him.

You can learn something about commentators from reviewing their commentaries on this verse. You can see which scholars were teetotalers and which weren't. Those who are opposed to any hint of drinking alcohol will invariably say that the ripe grapes being brought in and squeezed into the cup was grape juice, not wine.

And then there are those who look at these verses in the context of the whole dream. If the cupbearer saw the vine spread, blossom, bud, and put forth fruit in a single day, then the obvious connotation concerning the pressing of the grapes is that it was his job - whether fermented or not; he was in charge of the process.

This verse has nothing to do with whether the cup had alcohol or not, but rather it is speaking of the *process of supplying the king* with the fruit of the vine. Little distractions like these among scholars diminish the importance of the passage through petty peeves. And they cause me to grind my teeth...

¹² And Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it: The three branches are three days.

The dream is obvious and yet at the same time it requires a spark of divine interpretation to understand that the branches are three days. Seeing that, the rest falls into place. The term he uses is *sheloshet yamim hem* - "yet three days." *Before the third*

day is over, it will come to pass, not at all unlike the death of Christ who was resurrected *on the third day*.

In the Hebrew way of saying this, we get a sense of what other passages in the Bible mean as well. "The three branches are three days", "this bread is my body", "this cup is my blood." In the Hebrew language a one to one comparison is often used to say something represents something else.

This is why when we take communion, we don't believe that the bread is literally Jesus' body, nor is the cup literally Jesus' blood. That was never the intent of His words, though many attempt to justify this in their theology.

¹³ Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your place, and you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand according to the former manner, when you were his butler.

The explanation is complete with this verse. Within three days the cupbearer will be brought back into favor with the Pharaoh. One commentator says that each year the Pharaoh would make a new list of his high officials. On or after the previous birthday they were removed from the list and now the list was being updated.

This would be similar then to the president appointing cabinet officers each term and it would make sense as to why this comes about on his birthday. All in all, it's good news for the cupbearer.

¹⁴ But remember me when it is well with you, and please show kindness to me; make mention of me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house.

When Joseph speaks, there is no hint that his interpretation could be incorrect. He is so confident in it that he says to the cupbearer that "when it is well with you...." This shows with certainty that he knew what would occur. Which brings us back to his own dreams.

He already *knew* that his brothers would bow down to him, but he didn't know *how*. To ask the cupbearer to intercede for him would be a stretch on even a good day, but he may believe that this was his divinely appointed path to freedom.

¹⁵ For indeed I was stolen away from the land of the Hebrews; and also I have done nothing here that they should put me into the dungeon."

Joseph says *gunab ganabthi* - "Stolen! I was stolen." I was taken away from the land of the Hebrews, and I've done nothing here to be thrown into this dungeon. The word for "dungeon" is *bowr*. The same word used to describe the pit his brothers threw him into.

We simply can't miss the usage of the words which have been given in order to understand what is being pictured. The term *ha'sohar* or "round room" was used twice. The term *bowr*, or "pit" is used here. The symbolism is that of a round pit, like a tomb.

Jesus was in the tomb, having done nothing deserving of death. And He was "stolen away from the land of the Hebrews." Instead, His message has gone to the gentiles... just like Joseph. Keep thinking as we go, it will all make sense.

III. The Resurrection of Condemnation

¹⁶ When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said to Joseph, "I also *was* in my dream, and there *were* three white baskets on my head.

The cupbearer was the first to give his dream. And now that such a similar dream has been given an A+ rating by the Bureau of Better Dream Interpretations, the baker decides to tell his as well.

His words are translated many different ways. The term in Hebrew is *sal'le khor* - three white baskets, or three baskets of bread, or some other thing. Mostly likely, it was three baskets of bread. The baskets were wicker and so you would see the bread through them.

Etchings found in Egypt will show men carrying baskets or pots on their head, while women would carry things on their shoulders. If a basket, you would see through the wicker and the color of what was in them would show through.

¹⁷ In the uppermost basket *were* all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh, and the birds ate them out of the basket on my head."

The Jewish historian Josephus says that they were loaves in two of the baskets and in the third were other tasty baked goods. The birds swooped down and ate the bread. What should be the bread for Pharaoh is devoured by the birds.

¹⁸ So Joseph answered and said, "This *is* the interpretation of it: The three baskets *are* three days.

Once again there is a three-day fulfillment of the dream. As we've seen so many times in the Bible so far, and as we will see time and time again in the future, when two things are placed side by side, there is a contrast and yet a confirmation. This is no different. The confirmation is the three days.

day/night; OT/NT; good/evil; Jesus - God/Man

¹⁹ Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you."

As obvious as this verse seems to read, its not really sure how the baker would die. Some translators say that his head would be lifted off by decapitation and then his body would be nailed to a tree. Some say it means that he would die either by hanging or crucifixion. Josephus says that he was crucified.

However he dies, he would hang on a tree and the birds would eat his flesh. The confirmation is that these events will come in three days. The contrast is that he will die. In the dreams there is life and there is death.

We are in Christ or we are in the devil. There is a curse upon man from sin; there is a blessing upon man in the cross. These dreams likewise contrast and yet they confirm.

²⁰ Now it came to pass on the third day, *which was Pharaoh's birthday*, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants.

Only two birthday parties are mentioned in the Bible, Pharaoh's and Herod's. Because both were rulers who supposedly didn't worship Jehovah, the Jehovah's Witnesses came to the conclusion that nobody should celebrate a birthday.

This is the crazy kind of thinking that should let you know you're in a cult. But if you're in a cult, you won't think the thinking is crazy. Such is the nature of not paying attention in life. The fact that these rulers' birthdays are noted has nothing to do with a general celebration of birthdays by the world's people.

They are mentioned because they are rulers and the celebration affected the outcome of the decisions they made. In the case of Pharaoh, it was the time to reassert his rule and reaffirm his nobles. This is exactly what he will do. His rule and authority will be established through decisions concerning life and death.

Specifically, that of his butler and baker. And so he lifts up their heads. The meaning of this comes from the surrounding context. It means something like "to hold a trial." Imagine a group of people entering into the presence of the king. They would have their heads down and their eyes averted from his as a sign of respect.

To lift up one's head then would be to meet their gaze. For those who are in the king's favor, they would be looked on with approval. For those who were out of his favor, their meeting his eyes would be with a note of disapproval. His gaze would then be their sentence - be it imprisonment or death.

Which is exactly what we see in the next verses...

²¹ Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand.

Whatever made Pharaoh angry with the cupbearer, it was forgiven. He lifted up his head with a favorable gaze and his status was restored. In acknowledgement of that, it says he "placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand." In Hebrew, it's much more revealing. It says he "set the cup upon Pharaoh's palm."

The imagery would be the Pharaoh opening his hand palm up, and the cupbearer gently placing it into the palm.

²² But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them.

Exactly as Joseph interpreted, so it came to pass. The chief baker went to his death, and the word used here for his hanging is *talah*. It can mean hanging in a variety of ways, including crucifixion.

However he was hanged, he would have been left in the air for the birds to eat. This would be especially troubling to an Egyptian who believed in embalming and then a trip into the afterlife. Such wouldn't be the case with the chief baker.

²³ Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.

In a sad state of affairs, our last verse today closes with the fact that the cupbearer didn't remember Joseph. If you think about it, who would want to bring up a matter like that to Pharaoh when you just got back into his good graces. You can't blame the guy.

It's the most obvious path to take in such a situation, but the fact that Joseph was forgotten stuck with the Jewish people hundreds of years later as the book of Amos records. Joseph's suffering became an idiom for any time when someone forgot about the affliction of another. In Amos 6, it says this -

³"Woe to you who put far off the day of doom,
Who cause the seat of violence to come near;
⁴Who lie on beds of ivory,
Stretch out on your couches,
Eat lambs from the flock
And calves from the midst of the stall;
⁵Who sing idly to the sound of stringed instruments,
And invent for yourselves musical instruments like David;
⁶Who drink wine from bowls,
And anoint yourselves with the best ointments,
But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." Amos 6:3-6

So, once again, we're at the end of a story which tells us about things that really happened and what the events ultimately lead to. They are interesting and they give us hope that God is also watching out for us in our moments of affliction. But as always, there is more than just the surface story.

The minute detail is given not just as curious elements of a story that could have been told in far fewer words, but rather to get us to search out those details in order to see the work of Christ for us.

At the ending of the last chapter, we read this - "And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who were in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. 23 The keeper of the prison did not look into anything that was under Joseph's authority, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper."

A few things we don't want to lose sight of are that Joseph is picturing Christ, and that Joseph has been sold by his brothers who picture the Jewish people. So what is happening here is an interim story of some sort before he meets up with them again.

Joseph is in prison and all the prisoners have been committed into his care. Regardless of the length of time he is there, this account is picturing the effect of Jesus' work as

seen in His time in the tomb. What occurs here though of long duration for Joseph, is reflecting that short interval and how it bears on the souls of all men.

Joseph has been given charge over the prisoners. Jesus, likewise is in charge of all who are in the prison of death. In Revelation 1:18, it says this - "I *am* He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."

In order to have those keys, He first had to die and prevail over death. Now this power is in His hand, just as Joseph is in charge over those in prison. Paul tells us the reward which followed after the time of trial for Jesus -

⁸Therefore He says:

"When He ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And gave gifts to men."

⁹ (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) Ephesians 4:8-10

So what we have in this chapter is a story of that time in the "lower parts of the earth." There in the tomb are the souls of men. Into that place two men come, nobles of Pharaoh's court. There is the cupbearer and the baker. It is the captain of the guard, Potiphar, who entrusted them into Joseph's care.

The two men picture the saved and the lost of humanity. Both are given a dream and each dream is explained. Both dreams will be fulfilled "on the third day." Jesus' time in the tomb was ended on the third day. But His time in the tomb also looks forward to another 3-day interval.

In this instance, the day represents a thousand years. Peter, quoting the 90th Psalm says, "But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day *is* as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3:8)

The reason why it pictures a thousand years is that Christ came at the year 4000. The final judgment of all men will occur between the year 6000 and the year 7000 depending on if it is the first resurrection or the second resurrection, but all will be judged by the *end of the third day* - the year 7000.

This is why the Hebrew is specific - "yet three days." In other words, from the time of Christ's substitutional and sacrificial death, pictured by Joseph's time in prison, until the end of the 7th millennium, it will be 3000 years; 3 prophetic days.

This is why it's important to remember how Joseph was put into prison in the first place. He went, not for his own wrongdoing, but in place of someone else. The two nobles were placed in prison by Potiphar, the captain of the Guard. Potiphar's name, as explained a few sermons ago, means "Priest of the Bull."

All people have gone, or will go, into the place where Jesus went. And they are placed into His care by the Priest of the Bull, the sacrificial Mediator between God and man. Either their sins were dealt with before they died, or they weren't. Only through the death of Christ can we hope for release from the prison of death followed by eternal life.

And then come the dreams. The first dream is that of the cupbearer. He sees a fruitful vine. It buds, blossoms, and bears fruit. The cupbearer then is the person who is found to be in Christ, the true vine, as He himself said -

¹"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you." John 15:1-3

On the other hand, there is the baker. He has bread to offer to the king, but instead it is eaten by the birds. This symbolism is seen elsewhere in the Bible. Abraham made an offering to God and the birds came down to it, but he was vigilant to drive them away.

In the gospels, Jesus speaks of the word of God being like the seed that is sown. The seed which fell by the wayside was eaten up by the birds. So it is with this man. His offering was eaten up and Pharaoh found no favor in Him. He pictures the person who is not vigilant, nor does he bear fruit. He is in Adam, not in Christ.

Each of them is told their fate in the interpretation of the dream. The cupbearer will live and be exalted, the baker will die and his flesh will be eaten away. This is by the judgment of Pharaoh, who in the next chapter will represent God, the supreme ruler.

The cupbearer, the wise soul who is fruitful in the true Vine, will be restored to the position he originally had - fellowship with God. Adam had that fellowship in Eden

before being sent to the prison of death. This is represented by the cupbearer's fellowship with Pharaoh before he lost favor and was sent to prison. What he lost, he will have restored.

The baker, on the other hand, had his offering stolen away. When he came before Pharaoh, he had nothing to offer but himself. He was taken from prison and executed. This is what will occur to all lost souls at the final judgment. They will be brought from the prison of death (*bowr* and *ha'sohar*), and with nothing acceptable to offer to God, they will receive their sentence - termination in the Lake of Fire.

This passage is a sobering reminder that we all will face God. And it will be on our own, insufficient merits, or on the merits of Christ. The symbolism of death as a prison is given in 1 Peter 3 -

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹ by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison..." (18, 19)

Jesus Himself tells us of this fact in John 6 - "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life." (63)

There are a million more details in this chapter which show the work of Christ, but I've tried to give you enough to show you the marvel of what He has done for us. He went to the grave, and carried away our sins so that we might be restored to our original favor with God.

Closing Verse: *Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Hebrews 2:14, 15*

Next Week: Genesis 41:1-13 (Speaking Out When the Time is Right) (100th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Restored to the Favor of the King

It came to pass after these things
That the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt
"Pharaoh," as his title rings
Offended their lord, and so he flipped

And Pharaoh was angry with his officers, these two
The chief butler and the chief baker
Their status he withdrew

So he put them in custody
In the house of the captain of the guard
In the prison which must have been dusty
The place where Joseph was confined, life was looking hard
And the captain of the guard
Charged Joseph with them, into his care
And he served in this regard
They were in custody for a while, staying there

Then the butler and the baker of Egypt's king
Who were confined in the prison
Had a dream, both of them, a curious thing

Each man's dream in one night
And each man's dream with its own interpretation
It made them both rather uptight

And Joseph came in to them in the morning
And looked at them, and saw that they were sad
And as if in a forewarning
He wondered what trouble these two had

So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him
In the custody of the house of his lord
Saying, "Why do you look so sad today?"
How can your happiness be restored?

And they said to him, almost in a fit

"You see, we each have had a dream
And there is no interpreter of it
It's like having a bowl and no ice cream

So Joseph said to them in an attempt to appease
"Do not interpretations belong to God?
So then, tell them to me, please
To give a dream and not reveal it would be kind of odd

Then the chief butler told his dream to Joseph
And said to him, "Behold, you see
In my dream a vine was before my eyes
And in the vine were branches, three
It was as though it budded
Its blossoms shot forth as well
And its clusters with ripe grapes were studded
And there is still more to tell

Then Pharaoh's cup was in my hand
And I took the grapes and them I pressed
Into Pharaoh's cup so grand
And placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand, thus the dream progressed

And Joseph said to him, "This is the interpretation of it:
The three branches are three days, this I do submit
Now within three days Pharaoh will lift up your head
And restore you to your place, get ready, it's just ahead
And you will put Pharaoh's cup in his hand
According to the former way
When you were his butler and life was grand
Get ready, it's three days from today

But remember me when it is well with you
And please show kindness to me
Make mention of me to Pharaoh, this please do
And get me out of this house quickly

For indeed I was stolen away
From the land of the Hebrews, I submit

And also I have done nothing here, even till this day
That they should put me into this pit

When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good
He said to Joseph, "I also was in my dream
And there were three white baskets on my head
And there's more, so let me continue with the theme
In the uppermost basket (I can't wait for the explanation ahead)
Were all kinds of baked goods for Pharaoh,
And the birds ate them out of the basket on my head
So Joseph answered and said
"This is the interpretation of it:
The three baskets are three days, just three days ahead
Like previously, this detail I do submit

Within three days, Pharaoh as you will see
Will lift off your head from you
And hang you openly on a tree
And the birds will eat your flesh, this they will do
Now it came to pass on the third day
Which was the day of remembering Pharaoh's birth
That he made a feast for all his servants
A feast of happiness and mirth

And he lifted up the head of the chief butler
And of the chief baker among his servants in the land
Then he restored the chief butler to his place again
And he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand
But he hanged the chief baker
As Joseph had interpreted to them
Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph
Instead, he carelessly forgot about him

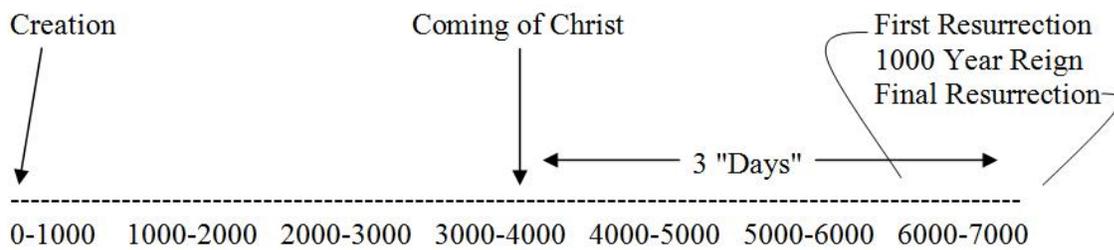
There is a prison where men's souls are bound
And the only release from it is in the work of Jesus
Only through His shed blood can renewed life be found
God has done all of this, all of it, for us

Each story tells us of His glory

Each word shows us of our Lord
It is an amazing and beautiful story
And we find it revealed in His Superior Word

So let our lives be filled with pursuing what He has given
In this glorious book is the recipe for eternal livin'

Hallelujah and Amen...



GENESIS 41:1-13 **(SPEAKING OUT WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT)**

Introduction: More dreams... In Genesis, God is working through dreams in a variety of ways. Looking to the future, He uses them to show pictures of Christ; to show that He is in control of the things which happen in the world both to His covenant people as well as those who are outside the covenant; and also to direct things to turn out as He has planned.

Looking to the past, the dreams are recorded to give us patterns and pictures of the Christ who has come; to substantiate how things came about; and also to verify how things work within the Bible itself. The various dreams which are recorded in Genesis follow a theme and a pattern which is consistent.

And so when they're placed among the almost unlimited number of other patterns, they provide *another level* of validation that this is, in fact, a book which was written with superior wisdom, care, and directed attention.

In the approximately 2500 years of time which Genesis records, only 6 people's dreams are relayed to us; Abimelech the king of Gerar during Isaac's time; Jacob when he dreamt of the ladder reaching to heaven; Joseph in his two dreams about the sheaves and the stars; the cupbearer and the baker who were in prison with Joseph; and Pharaoh's two dreams in today's story.

And after having counted that up, I got curious about how many others had God-directed dreams which are specifically noted as dreams. In all, only 12 people qualify - in over 4000 years of history. God reserves for Himself the truly prophetic dream and that dream's interpretation, and He does so very sparingly.

There are other visions and ways God spoke in the Bible, but just 12 dreams. Because of this, it would be good to remember the words of Jeremiah 23:32 -

"Behold, I *am* against those who prophesy false dreams,' says the Lord, 'and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all,'" says the Lord."

Seeing the rare and select nature of God-directed dreams in the Bible, it is better that we enjoy our dreams without putting too much credence in them, lest we get led astray.

Text Verse: *...He gives wisdom to the wise
And knowledge to those who have understanding.
22 He reveals deep and secret things;
He knows what is in the darkness,
And light dwells with Him. Daniel 2:21, 22*

It's true, God gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. The Bible also says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, so let's get things in order, learn to fear our God, and then seek the true wisdom that can only come from knowing Him and pursuing Him. And the right way to do that is through reading and seeking Him in His superior word and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Two Dreams

¹Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years,

At the end of the last chapter, we read about Joseph's continued plight in the pit. This is how the chapter ended -

²⁰"Now it came to pass on the third day, *which was* Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler and of the chief baker among his servants. ²¹ Then he restored the chief butler to his butlership again, and he placed the cup in Pharaoh's hand. ²² But he hanged the chief baker, as Joseph had interpreted to them. ²³ Yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph, but forgot him." Genesis 40:20-23

The chief butler may have forgotten Joseph, but God never did. He will use the events ahead to bring him to a place of high honor. And so we're told that this comes about at the end of two full years. The Hebrew is *sh'natayim yamim*. Literally "two years of days."

It's not sure if this is from the time of his incarceration or from the time of the dreams of the butler and the baker. Whichever, it was a long time for Joseph to sit and think, but it was also a time of development and preparation which God deemed necessary.

^{1 (con't)} **that Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood by the river.**

Once again, dreams come into the unfolding drama of history, and in particular, Joseph's life. He had two dreams - one of sheaves and one of stars. They contrasted and yet they confirmed the message of authority and rule. Then there were the two dreams of the butler and the baker.

Again, they contrasted and yet they confirmed. The contrast showed the state of the saved and of the lost, but they confirmed the authority *over both* by Christ.

And now, for a third time dreams will have a bearing on Joseph. If the pattern follows, there will be two dreams which will also contrast each other while confirming something. I've said it before though, and I will surely say it again, the Bible is written and dreams should no longer be considered as divine revelation for us.

In the New Testament, the only reference to dreams having any future significance is in Acts 2 where Peter (Apostle to the Jews) was speaking to the people of Israel and concerning the people of Israel. Matthew Henry, wisely wrote this concerning dreams -

"The means of Joseph's being freed from prison were Pharaoh's dreams, as here related. Now that God no longer speaks to us in that way, it is no matter how little we either heed dreams, or tell them. The telling of foolish dreams can make no better than foolish talk. But these dreams showed that they were sent of God; when he awoke, Pharaoh's spirit was troubled."

He notes that the dreams were sent of God. One thing is sure, if He gives a dream to show something, He will give the interpretation of that dream. It would make no sense for God to give a dream which needed to be interpreted and not to provide the interpreter.

If you can see the fine line which is presented, if we start looking at dreams as a relevant source of our doctrine and practice, then we - or whoever give us the interpretation - becomes the arbiter of what practice we should follow. Is that a comfortable consideration when we already have the Bible which is given for that very purpose?

Even this dream of Pharaoh is less concerned with him than it is for the deliverance of Joseph and ultimately his family, who are God's people. Once again, this is the aim and purpose of Scripture. And because it is, we have to be extremely careful about our pondering dreams as some type of prophetic gift from God.

Anyway, in his dream it says Pharaoh stood by the river. The word is *ye-or* and it could be a canal or a river, but almost exclusively it is referring to the Nile, which is certainly the case here.

²Suddenly there came up out of the river seven cows, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow.

While Pharaoh is standing there by the river, we're told that suddenly seven cows come up out of the river. One commentator said this must have been hippopotamuses because they came out of the river. This is completely contrary to the rest of the chapter and makes no sense in the context of what the dream means.

Sometimes we try too hard to reach conclusions and the result is to ruin the passage in the process. These weren't hippopotamuses; they were cows. The heifer cow was regarded by ancient Egyptians as a symbol of the earth, agriculture, and the nourishment which is derived from them.

This is why the cow is the hieroglyphic symbol of these things and why the Egyptian goddess of the earth, Isis, was adorned with the sacred cow - because of the symbolism contained in it. This is what is being pictured, as we will see in the coming sermons.

The fact that they're rising out of the Nile shows that the *cause of their fatness* is derived from the Nile; the water being their source of life and growth. After arising from the Nile, Pharaoh sees them feeding on the marsh grass which is abundant along the Nile.

³Then behold, seven other cows came up after them out of the river, ugly and gaunt, and stood by the *other* cows on the bank of the river.

Suddenly Pharaoh interjects, *v'hineh* - and behold!

*After the seven cows, fine and fat
Came seven more, gross and gaunt
And we can be certain that
As the first did please, the last did haunt*

These next seven came out of the river as well, but when they came up, it says they stood by the cows on the bank of the Nile. Instead of eating in the marsh, the Hebrew uses the term *shahpat*, the lip of the river. What was an overflow for the first seven

cows, resulting in land for grazing, has turned into a thin edge of the river, indicating no overflow.

The Bible says they are evil looking and gaunt. They are miserable bags of bones with the skin hanging loosely off them. The word for "gaunt" comes from a word which means "beaten fine." These cows are reduced to their lowest state. So hungry are they, that they will do something unexpected before Pharaoh's eyes...

⁴ And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven fine looking and fat cows.

In what is contrary to nature on several levels, the skinny ones eat the fat ones. It is contrary that a skinny animal would be able to eat another fat one of the same kind. It is contrary that the weaker should overcome the stronger.

And it is contrary that a herbivore would eat another of its own kind as if it were a carnivore. Nothing in the dream seems to fit *with* reason, and so for the dream there *must be a* reason. And because of the disturbing nature of the dream, the result is...

⁴ (con't) **So Pharaoh awoke.**

*It was a dream to cause the king to wake
One which disturbed him from his slumber, deep
You would think then, for goodness sake
That he would never be able to get back to sleep*

*But you would be wrong
And so let's move along...*

⁵ He slept and dreamed a second time;

As surely as Joseph had two dreams, and as was seen in the two dreams revealed to Joseph in prison, Pharaoh now has a second dream also. This one then, following the biblical pattern of the number two, will contrast the first and yet confirm the message.

⁵ (con't) **and suddenly seven heads of grain came up on one stalk, plump and good.**

In this dream, rather than fauna, there is the contrast of flora. In this case, it is grain used for food and which would be the particular grain known as *triticum compositum*. It's a type of wheat which actually does bear seven ears on one stalk.

In order to support the weight and provide enough nourishment for the grain, it would have a solid stem, or at least one full of pith. This is what Pharaoh sees, but more than just the type, he notes the health of it being plump and good.

⁶Then behold, seven thin heads, blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them.

Suddenly Pharaoh interjects, *v'hineh* - and behold! A new part of the dream captures his attention -

*Seven thin heads he did see
By the east wind blighted
Sprang up after them
It made him feel uptighted*

There is the Nile, the source of water which ran dry in the first dream, and there is the contrasting wind which turns from favorable to hostile in the second. The dreams contrast, but they will also be seen to confirm.

As a side note, this verse has been the subject of derision by people who attempt to diminish the truth of the Bible. The reason is that an east wind is not a normal occurrence in Egypt and even if there is one, it apparently won't have the effects noted here. In case you ever read this, there are a couple things to note.

First, this is a supernatural occurrence which has come in the form of a dream. God is showing the *effect* of what will happen and noting the cause of it. If the dream is given by God, then the effect will come about. If the effect will come about, then the cause, even if not normal, will be from God.

Because of this, the symbolism of the word "east" can be interpreted from the symbolism of what east signifies in the Bible. There are an abundance of verses which tell of the *destructive, directed, and/or divine* nature of that which comes from the east.

In Exodus, Job, the Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Jonah, and Habakkuk the *east wind* is noted in one of several ways. One is for the mischief it wreaks upon the lands of the middle east. It is also used symbolically in a divine manner. A great example of this is in Hosea 13:15,16 -

¹⁵Though he is fruitful among *his* brethren,
An east wind shall come;

The wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness.
Then his spring shall become dry,
And his fountain shall be dried up.
He shall plunder the treasury of every desirable prize.
¹⁶ Samaria is held guilty,
For she has rebelled against her God.
They shall fall by the sword,
Their infants shall be dashed in pieces,
And their women with child ripped open.

Secondly, the Bible uses only four general directions of east, west, north, and south. The wind named here, which is *kadim* in Hebrew, can be comprised of any wind which comes from a northeast all the way to a southeast direction. And so based on that, thirdly...

The southeast wind which usually comes to Egypt in March and April is the one of the longest duration and of the greatest harm in the land. One writer named Ukert is quoted as saying,

"As long as the south-east wind continues, doors and windows are closed; but the fine dust penetrates everywhere; everything dries up; wooden vessels warp and crack. The thermometer rises suddenly ... This wind works destruction upon everything. The grass withers so that it entirely perishes if this wind blows long."

The reason for all the detail is to once again assure you that the Bible is both sound and reliable. If you read enough commentaries, you will normally come across people who want to introduce doubt into your faith. If the Bible can't get something as simple as an east wind right, then how much less will it get matters of life right?

This is the attempt, and this is why its important to be ready to defend against that attempt. God's word is strong enough to overcome these things and at the same time make the people who attack it look foolish for trying.

⁷ And the seven thin heads devoured the seven plump and full heads.

Again, just like the previous dream, that which is contrary to sound reason occurs. Stalks of grain don't normally go around eating other stalks of grain. And even if they did, which they don't, skinny ones couldn't eat fat ones. It wouldn't make sense to a mind in sleep. Instead it would be jolted awake. And that's what happens...

⁷ (Con't) **So Pharaoh awoke, and indeed, *it was* a dream.**

And so he is awakened again; *v'hineh* - and behold. What didn't make sense is seen to have only been a dream. It was a dream which was so real that it was taken as reality until he woke up.

II. Frustrating the Wisdom of the Wise

⁸ **Now it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled, and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men.**

In the morning, *ba'boqer*. It's a term that I love to hear because it reminds me of the travel guide I met in Israel. His name was Zvi, a really great person. In Hebrew, when you greet someone, the word "morning" precedes the word "good." So you would say *boqer tov*.

Zvi, in his beautiful way of using repetition for learning would come out each morning and say "*boqer tov*, morrrning good." After hearing this at least 28 times in two weeks, one could never forget how to say "morning good" in Hebrew.

It was in the morning that Pharaoh was disturbed to the point of calling in his counselors. This takes us back to the dreams of the butler and the baker in the dungeon with Joseph. At that time it said that they were upset because there was no one to explain their dreams. If they were free, they could have consulted these guys. Unlike them, Pharaoh thought he would find an explanation for the dreams. All he needed to do was to explain it to the professionals...

⁸ (con't) **And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but *there was* no one who could interpret them for Pharaoh.**

*Pharaoh's dreams were perplexing indeed
But surely someone could interpret them, right?
If God gave the dream then He must also have decreed
To give an interpretation for the vision of the night*

But... The professionals of Egypt, the greatest country on earth at the time, couldn't help. These were people skilled in all of the arts and sciences, and yet they couldn't interpret what Pharaoh dreamt. And the Bible explains why in 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11 -

"For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God."

The dream was from God and so only the Spirit of God could properly interpret the dream. This will be seen again in the book of Daniel. When God has a plan for his people, His word, and His redemptive purposes, He will intervene in the affairs of men to ensure that these will be tended to according to His will.

What seems almost as a testament against the world, as much as it is one for the world, we see something a bit more than ironic. God changes the course of nations and the destiny of many people by a single night of dreams to a pagan king - imagine that.

And yet, today we have His entire word, given to the entire world, and that word is being more and more neglected and abandoned. It seems the more it is published, and the more it is made available via internet, radio, and TV, the fewer people attend to it in proportion to the amount it is distributed.

This doesn't mean all is lost, but that the Bible's intended effect is at one time to illuminate God more perfectly to His people, while at the same time to increasingly harden those who reject Him. One Pharaoh will hear and take to heart the word, another one will later hear and harden his heart to the word.

Like bookends on the Egyptian years, there is an east wind which causes the move of Israel to Egypt, thus saving them. And there is an east wind which allows the move of Israel away from Egypt when the Red Sea is parted, again saving them.

There is the Pharaoh who softens his heart to the dreams God gave him and promotes a Hebrew to the highest office in the land. And there is the Pharaoh who hardens his heart to the word of God and subjects the Hebrews to the most degrading conditions possible.

There is the welcoming of Israel into one Pharaoh's presence, and there is the casting away of Israel from another Pharaoh's presence. There is the voluntary blessing of Pharaoh by Israel (Jacob) when the two meet, and there is the anxious request of a blessing from Israel by Pharaoh before the two are separated at the exodus.

There is the consolidation of power in Egypt because of Joseph, and there is the loss of all its might because of Moses. On and on, the patterns come to focus in this marvelous

story of how God deals with nations, symbolized by Egypt, because of His beloved people, Israel.

III. The Hebrew Man

⁹ Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh, saying: "I remember my faults this day.

Only after seeing that the magicians and the wise men couldn't resolve the matter of the king's dreams does the butler speak up. He obviously felt that this would put him in a better light with Pharaoh and so he begins with the statement, "I remember my faults this day..."

From the Hebrew, just like the English, we can't tell if he's speaking of his faults before Pharaoh which landed him in jail, or the fault of not mentioning Joseph since he got out of jail. One way or another, he is confessing that he has erred in his actions.

¹⁰ When Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, *both* me and the chief baker,

¹¹ we each had a dream in one night, he and I. Each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his *own* dream.

The cupbearer goes into detail about the situation because of its remarkable resemblance to what has happened to Pharaoh. There were two dreams then and there are two dreams now. But to ensure that what he says has its intended effect, he notes that the dreams were by different people.

Rather than confirming the dreams of one, what he will say will be more weighty because it confirmed the dreams of two. Here, the importance is that Pharaoh is being addressed. He's using tact so that he doesn't lose Pharaoh's favor again if things don't work out.

The interpretation of one person's dreams, even if it came true, could be considered less important, but when two people are involved, both high officials of Pharaoh, it would have much more weight. The biblical axiom "By two or three witnesses a matter will be established" bears true even in this situation.

If he stepped forward with his own dream which was fulfilled, but then Joseph failed now, it could possibly land him in prison again. But if he says both dreams were fulfilled,

then Pharaoh would have to consider that and he would be less likely to be upset, even if Joseph were to fail. Two or more testimonies are always better than one.

And so he gives the details...

¹² Now there *was* a young Hebrew man with us there, a servant of the captain of the guard. And we told him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; to each man he interpreted according to his *own* dream.

The cupbearer takes it on assumption that the Pharaoh would know what a Hebrew is. The reason probably goes all the way back to Abraham. It was about 200 years earlier that Abraham went down to Egypt. Having come originally from the area of Babylon, he would have been wise in many of the disciplines of that area.

Josephus says this about Abraham's time in Egypt - "He communicated to them arithmetic, and delivered to them the science of astronomy; for before Abram came into Egypt they were unacquainted with those parts of learning; for that science came from the Chaldeans into Egypt, and from thence to the Greeks also."

If Abraham was remembered in the same light that we remember Benjamin Franklin, then his people, the Hebrews, would be considered and remembered in that same light. To introduce Joseph as a Hebrew then would add credibility to the discernment of such important matters - even dreams.

¹³ And it came to pass, just as he interpreted for us, so it happened. He restored me to my office, and he hanged him."

To validate his statement, he gives the gist of what happened. Just like this young man interpreted, so it came to pass. "He was trustworthy then and so I'm bringing him up to you now. Maybe he can do the same thing again."

And to conclude what happened, he gives a summary of the results. A very brief one. In fact, we could call his response short and concise. In Hebrew, he doesn't mince words about what happened - he says, *oti heshiv al kani v'otow talah*, restored in my office... hanged. (2:25)

Although he didn't have the book of Ecclesiastes in front of him, he lived out a portion of it very well in this instance -

"For a dream comes through much activity,
And a fool's voice *is known* by *his* many words." Ecclesiastes 5:3

Sometimes the less said, the better, especially when you're around a boss or someone else higher up in the chain of command. Although most of us love to hear ourselves, it is the wise person who speaks little and listens a lot. That is why God gave us two ears and only one mouth. James tells us about this in his letter way back towards the end of the Bible -

"So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰ for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." James 1:19, 20

*Sometimes saying less is the better choice
Speaking too much can make us look worse than a fool
And so let us withhold the sound of our voice
Until its needed for others as a helpful tool*

This cupbearer found himself in prison once and he didn't want to go there again. He was swift to hear, waiting for the magicians and wise men to give their words, and he was slow to speak, but he did finally speak.

Although his name isn't recorded in the Bible, his few words to Pharaoh saved his country, saved the people of Israel, and brought about a chain of events which would eventually lead to Israel's Exodus, return to the land of Israel, and even to ushering in the Messiah of the world. Not bad for a person who was once sitting in a dungeon wondering if he would ever come out, and if so, if it would be for execution.

This is where things end for us today - in anticipation of Joseph being brought before Pharaoh. Let's remember, if God can use an unnamed cupbearer to the Pharaoh as a part of His plan to save the *entire world* of fallen man, then do you suppose He can do the same for you as well? What you're doing in your job or other daily life may not seem important, but every action you take is playing some role in God's world.

You're not an after-thought and what you might see as insignificant could be a step towards an immensely important part of God's plan. Whoever took the time to tell Billy Graham about Jesus, be it family, friend, or some unknown person - whoever - they were in turn a part of bringing the gospel to more people in one lifetime than in all the history of the world.

Maybe you will do the same in some small way. (1) Be confident in your doctrine, (2) be bold in your proclamation, and (3) be steadfast in your determination to be someone that makes a difference. When you get feeling low, think of the cupbearer in prison and remember that he was low too, but he was restored, he was used, and in God's word he is remembered. This is great stuff from a glorious God.

Closing Verse: *I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Matthew 11:25*

Next Week: Genesis 41:14-36 (The Thing is Established By God)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Pharaoh's Dreams

Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years
That Pharaoh had a dream; a vision of the night
And behold, he stood by the river, it appears
That the dream came to the focus of his sight

Suddenly there came up out of the river
Seven cows, fine looking and fat
And they fed in the meadow
On the land which was green and flat

Then behold, seven other cows, not looking so good
Came up after them out of the Nile
Ugly and gaunt, by the other cows they stood
There at the bank of the river for awhile

And the ugly and gaunt cows up they ate
The seven cows, fine looking and fat
So Pharaoh awoke with an increased heart rate
It's lucky he didn't just fall flat

He slept and dreamed a second time
And suddenly up came seven heads of grain
On one stalk, plump and good, so sublime

His dreams were coming once again
Then behold, seven emaciated heads blighted by the east wind
Sprang up after them, looking ever-so thinned

And the seven thin heads devoured
The seven plump and full heads
So Pharaoh awoke not feeling empowered
And indeed, it was a dream woven with confusing threads

Now it came to pass in the morning
That his spirit was troubled within him so
And he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt
And all its wise men, surely the interpretation they would know

And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was none
Who could interpret them for Pharaoh, no... not even one

Then the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh
Saying, "I remember my faults this day
When Pharaoh was angry with his servants,
And put me in custody, yes he locked me away

In the house of the captain of the guard we were
Both me and the chief baker too
We each had a dream in one night, for sure
He and I both had a dream which came true

Each of us dreamed according to that which was
The interpretation of his own dream
Now there was a young Hebrew man there with us
A servant of the captain of the guard of your regime

And we told him what was each dream
And he interpreted both of them for us
To each man he interpreted according to its theme
And he did this quickly, easily, and without a fuss

And it came to pass, as I relate to you now
Just as he interpreted for us, so it came about

He restored me to my office, but the other he did disavow
And he hanged him, the interpretation was true, no doubt

It is God who in various ways and in times past
Revealed His word for us until at long last

The word was finished and so it is complete
It gives us full instruction for guidance in our lives
It will lead us in each trial and challenge that we meet
Be they with our husbands, or children, or wives

Or in any other aspect when troubles come around
In our finances or health, there is peace in this book to be found

Gotta thank God for His superior word
It is filled with exceeding treasure, wonder, and delight
It is the book which reveals to us Jesus our Lord
So we should keep our nose in it, each day and each night

Maybe start with a psalm each morning bright
To God, make it an offering of praise
And end with a proverb to finish off at night
Something to keep us wise for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 41:14-36 (THE THING IS ESTABLISHED BY GOD)

Introduction: Nothing exists without a cause, and nothing changes without a cause. If there was ever nothing, there would still be nothing now. There wouldn't be a debate about existence because it wouldn't exist. But here we are and so we can debate the fact that we are here and how we got here.

And in this world where we are, things are constantly changing. Nothing stays the same. A bar of gold may sit for a thousand years and look like it hasn't changed, but in fact, if nothing else it has gotten a thousand years older. Changes are coming to the land of Egypt and something must be the cause of those changes.

But what we think *might* be the cause is suspect when we are told in advance that the changes will happen. I mean, people can say the weather is going to change based on observable patterns or other phenomena, but there are other things which we're told about which can't happen that way.

When we are told that future events will occur and there is nothing to assign that change to in this natural world, then we are either lacking knowledge about the natural world, or the change has come about by something super-natural.

Pharaoh has dreams; Pharaoh's dreams mean something specific; the dreams, their interpretation, and their fulfillment are not *natural* and so they must have a *supernatural* cause.

Text Verse: *I will lay waste the mountains and hills,
And dry up all their vegetation;
I will make the rivers coastlands,
And I will dry up the pools. Isaiah 42:15*

God speaks again in again in the Bible about what He will do - to people, through people, to the land, to the world, and so on. He tells us sometimes thousands of years in advance and He says, "Pay attention! I will prove that *I am* here and so you should probably pay attention *because* of that."

And then He gives us the choice. We can pay attention, or we can ignore Him. My thought is that if He is there, and He's proved it, it certainly is worth paying attention to what He has to say. And what He has to say is found in only one place, the Bible.

It has enough past evidence to support itself so that we have every confidence in what it tells about the future. And so let's take time again today to search it out and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Interpreter of Dreams

¹⁴ Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him quickly out of the dungeon; and he shaved, changed his clothing, and came to Pharaoh.

Upon hearing about of Joseph's abilities by the cupbearer, Pharaoh is in anticipation of finally finding an answer to his dreams. Joseph is called and brought out of the dungeon. Once out, he is shaved, has his clothing changed, and he is brought to Pharaoh.

According to ancient literature, Egypt is believed to be the only country in the Middle East at that time to regularly practiced shaving. There they shaved both the head and the face. This is seen in the hieroglyphs as well. Before he is brought to Pharaoh, he is cleaned up in this manner and is also given clean clothing.

In this verse, we see a return to pictures of Jesus and His work. Pharaoh means "Great House." Joseph is called out of the pit which is the Hebrew term ha'bowr; the same term used already several times to picture the tomb of Christ. Jesus is called out of the tomb by the ruler of the Great House, God.

This is reflected in Acts 10:40 which says, "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly..."

Joseph's being shaved brings in a concept which we've seen in the past. Hair, throughout the Bible, has several undertones. It denotes awareness, such as man being sentient aware being. This takes us back to Jacob and Esau. Jacob was smooth skinned, Esau was hairy. Jacob pictured Christ, Esau pictured Adam.

Barley, the hairy crop brings in the thought of awareness as well. In one use of it, it is to bring sin to reminder. This is found in Numbers 5. There when speaking of the rite concerning jealousy of a possibly unfaithful wife, it gives this direction -

...He shall bring the offering required for her, one-tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, because it *is* a grain offering of jealousy, an offering for remembering, for bringing iniquity to remembrance. (15)

The study of hair in the Bible could go on and on, but here Joseph, picturing Christ, is shaved. Shaving is something that would occur after an Israelite would complete a vow known as a Nazirite vow. In Numbers 6, these instructions are given -

"Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head *at* the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put *it* on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering." (18)

Whether Jesus had the same appearance of hair after the resurrection or not isn't known, but two of his disciples walked and talked with Him and didn't recognize Him until He broke bread. In the book of Revelation, John says that His hair is like white wool, as white as snow.

The shaving of Joseph's hair is certainly showing us this type of change in Jesus. And finally, we see Joseph given a change of clothing. When Jesus was crucified, He was stripped and his clothes were taken by the Romans.

When He was taken down from the cross, he was laid in strips of linen along with burial spices. But he was clothed after the resurrection. Unless there was a wardrobe in the tomb or an open store down the road, then these must have been prepared specifically for the resurrection.

What seems like an innocuous verse about Joseph being prepared to meet Pharaoh is actually a nifty picture of Christ coming out of the tomb, having been accepted by God.

¹⁵ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, and *there is* no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you *that* you can understand a dream, to interpret it."

Joseph's deliverance from the pit is because of His unique ability which was told to Pharaoh by the cupbearer. No one else possessed the ability, but he is told that Joseph can.

¹⁶ So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, "*It is not in me;*

Joseph doesn't say he won't give an answer. Instead he uses a term, *biladay*, "not in me," to say that if he interprets the dream, that interpretation will have come from God and not from him. It is independent from his opinion.

In essence, he will speak and it will be God who speaks through him. What a beautiful picture of Jesus.

¹⁶ (con't) **God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace."**

Joseph is so confident that he is there to meet the Lord's will that he openly states that the answer is forthcoming and that it would be sufficient to give peace to Pharaoh after his night of disturbed sleep and his morning of frustration at obtaining no answer.

II. The Dream is Repeated

¹⁷ **Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: "Behold, in my dream I stood on the bank of the river.**

¹⁸ **Suddenly seven cows came up out of the river, fine looking and fat; and they fed in the meadow.**

¹⁹ **Then behold, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such ugliness as I have never seen in all the land of Egypt. ²⁰ And the gaunt and ugly cows ate up the first seven, the fat cows. ²¹ When they had eaten them up, no one would have known that they had eaten them, for they *were* just as ugly as at the beginning. So I awoke. ²² Also I saw in my dream, and suddenly seven heads came up on one stalk, full and good.**

²³ **Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, *and* blighted by the east wind, sprang up after them.**

²⁴ **And the thin heads devoured the seven good heads.**

Pharaoh's recounting of the dream is essentially the same as what he said to his wise men and magicians, but there are a couple small differences. One is that he tells Joseph that the cows were so ugly that he had never seen such ugly cows in all the land of Egypt.

A second is that after that bad cows ate up the good ones, no one would have known that they had eaten them and that they were just as ugly as at the beginning.

In the last sermon, we saw that these cows eating each other was contrary to nature for several reasons. One was that a herbivore wouldn't eat another of its own kind as if it were a carnivore.

Although this is a dream which symbolizes real things, the symbolism is explained very clearly. The cows and the stalks symbolize years; years of abundance and years of famine. The cows don't *actually* eat each other. They never have and it will never happen.

If you read a commentary that says that the famine was so bad that cows actually ate other cows, go ahead and put a line through it. God has given us the meanings and we can stick with them.

Finally, while Pharaoh is speaking, an extra term is used to describe the thin heads on the stalks, calling them withered, meaning they were barren or the fruit was dry. By telling the story a little bit differently the second time, it shows that what we're reading isn't just a fable, but an actual account.

This is similar to what we see in the first three gospels. They tell the same story, very closely in some ways, but with differences. Because they are so similar, some liberal scholars say they can't be true because they simply copy each other.

But because they are so different in other ways, other liberal scholars say they can't be true because the stories don't match. Two things are certain, the first is that the stories are exactly what God intends. And secondly, never listen to liberal scholars of the Bible.

The account here as relayed by Moses is accurate and supports itself because of the similarity and because of the differences. You have every reason to trust that it is true, accurate, reliable, and worthy of looking into because God included it in His word.

This happens not just here and in the gospels, but throughout the Bible. From time to time, God gives the same story from different viewpoints. They are similar, but they have differences. And every time this happens, there is some scholar who then writes a commentary about how the Bible is filled with error.

Just ignore them. Every difference has a reason and every story which is given two or three times gives us better insights into the truth of the word, whether we understand why or not.

²⁴ (con't) **So I told *this* to the magicians, but *there was no one who could explain it to me.*"**

Pharaoh finishes his words to Joseph with the note that none of his wisest assistants were able to help. Including this shows us that it is beyond the finest minds in the world at that time. If the dream is from God, then God must intend for the dream to be explained.

If the dream can't be explained then it isn't from God. But if it is, then it is now in Joseph's hands. Thus it means that Joseph is the one who is able to divine the mind of God. This is the intent of Pharaoh's comment to him now.

III. The Dream Explained

²⁵ Then Joseph said to Pharaoh,

There is no note of hesitation, there is no delay, there is no need to pray first or otherwise seek an answer from God. God has revealed the dream to Joseph and He has done so immediately. Joseph proves himself to be the lord of dreams.

In this, we see that the failure of the wise men to interpret the dream is the needed proof that Joseph is speaking now by God's divine counsel.

²⁵ (con't) **"The dreams of Pharaoh *are* one;**

This verse is translated a variety of ways.

"The dreams of Pharaoh are one and the same." NIV

"Both of Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing." NLT

"The dreams of Pharaoh are one;" ESV

"Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same;" NASB

The dream of Pharaoh *is* one: KJV

"Pharaoh's dreams mean the same thing." Holman

"Pharaoh's dreams are identical," ISV (BAD TRANSLATION)

"Both dreams of Pharaoh have the same meaning." NET

"Pharaoh had the same dream twice." God's Word (NOT GREAT)

The king's dream is one: Douay (SHOULD SAY PHARAOH)

There are a couple reasons I read these for you. One is to show how much difference in translation a single verse can produce. Secondly, to show that two entirely different translations can mean exactly the same thing - such as "The dreams of Pharaoh are one", and "The dream of Pharaoh is one."

The third is to show you that you will learn a lot more by reading several versions. And finally, to show you that some versions are just wrong. The ISV said, "Pharaoh's dreams are identical." They weren't identical. One had cows and one had wheat. They were identical in meaning, not content, and they should have said that.

The word used for "one" in this verse is *echad*. *Echad* means one, but it can mean one comprising many. A cluster of grapes is one, but it is made of many grapes. And so, saying either the dreams are one, or the dream is one is essentially the same thing (because of *echad*). There were in fact two dreams, but they comprise one unit.

So you're sitting there wondering why I'm bringing this up. And maybe you will never remember this. But if you do, it bears on similar statements made elsewhere which can have the most theological importance of all.

When asked what is the greatest commandment of all, Jesus turned to the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy and quoted this -

"The first of all the commandments *is*: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.'" Mark 12:29

What Jesus cited is called the *Shema* or "Hear." In Hebrew it says *Sh'ma Yisrael Y'hovah elohaynu Y'hovah echad*. The word *echad* is used to describe the Lord. He is One, but one here can mean one with a plurality, just like Pharaoh's dreams.

If One meant only one, then the word *yachid* could have been used. This means one and only one. In the Greek, the word Jesus speaks in Mark for "one" is *heis*. It can mean the same thing as *echad*. Paul uses it in Galatians 3:28 to speak of our position in Christ -

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all **one** in Christ Jesus."

The importance of the translation of Pharaoh's two dreams concerns the importance of the meaning of words and concepts which help us understand what we are being told. Understanding that two dreams can be one dream is helpful for us to understand that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit can also be one God. You wouldn't think this verse is that important, would you?

*Oh God, the Bible is such a wonderful treasure
Even the smallest detail can be amazingly profound*

*In this book is wisdom beyond measure
In it the answers to our difficult questions are found*

²⁵ (con't) **God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do:**

The Greek philosopher Aristotle taught that there were four types of causes to all things. There is the material cause, the formal cause, the efficient cause, and the final cause. Whether we understand this or not, they are there. Joseph is now instructing Pharaoh on the cause of things.

There will be a famine. Aristotle would say that the *material cause* of the famine is the weather - water and wind. The weather is the cause of environmental conditions. The *formal cause* of the famine is the change in the weather. This includes the drying up of the Nile and the change of the wind that it comes from the east. These *causes* will bring about a change in Egypt.

But in this verse, even before the material and formal causes are introduced, Joseph gives us the efficient cause and the final cause. He says, "God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do." Pharaoh may be the ruler, but his kingdom is subject to the One who is behind the movement of the wind and the water.

God is the *Efficient Cause*. He is the one who directs both the flow of water and the changes in the wind. As the Efficient Cause, He is behind the changes which will occur. And the reason Pharaoh is given the dream hints at the *final cause*, which is to bring about the purpose of the famine.

The final cause isn't given directly, but we will see it as the story unfolds. And actually, there are several final causes that will be seen. There is the purpose of making Joseph ruler. There is the purpose of bringing Israel down to Egypt. There is the purpose of fulfilling Joseph's dreams.

There is the purpose of freeing Israel from future bondage. There is the purpose of bringing about the Passover. There is the purpose of showing that there is one God and that He controls both the weather and the future. Because the *weather of the future* is being revealed before it comes about.

There is the purpose of picturing Christ in all of these things. And in all of these things there is the ultimate purpose, one ultimate final cause, it is that of *bringing glory to God*. In other words, each final cause is directly related to the Efficient Cause - God.

God causes so that God may be glorified. If you can see this in everything found in the Bible, then you will be able to see it in everything in your own life as well. This is one reason why we are given the Bible. It shows us the state of humans and of humanity.

Humans have a material cause. It is the stuff we're made of. But we're made of the same stuff as other animals. Our formal cause is what makes us humans and what makes other things monkeys, or dogs, or wallabies.

The Bible tells us that our efficient cause isn't evolution, but God's creative effort. But what is our final cause? Why did God make man? King David wanted to know -

"LORD, what *is* man, that You take knowledge of him?
Or the son of man, that You are mindful of him?" Psalm 144:3

This final cause eludes us until we understand who God truly is. He is the self-existent all-glorious Creator. God created so that we could share in His glory and thus bring more glory to Him. This isn't a conceited self-seeking glorification, but the sharing of Himself which should naturally lead us to glorify Him.

And this is hinted at in Joseph's words to Pharaoh. For the ultimate purpose of bringing glory to God, Joseph says these words to Pharaoh - *asher ha'elohim oseh higgid le'pharaoh* - "what the Elohim is doing he caused to be seen by Pharaoh."

Out of 2600 times that the word *elohim* is used when speaking of God in the Bible, less than 400 are used in the way Joseph does here. He calls him *ha'elohim* - the God. In other words, "There is no other God and this God is showing that to you now."

The God is causing Pharaoh to see the future as a demonstration of who He is and that the future is known to Him. Because it is known to Him, then nothing that *will happen* will change what He already sees. Whatever we do is already figured into the future, and *nothing we do* can change the future that He sees.

*You are the God who knows and sees all things
Every wave which beats upon the shore's sandy beach
How many fish are in the ocean, and every bird that sings
Into eternity does your wisdom and knowledge reach*

²⁶ The seven good cows *are* seven years, and the seven good heads *are* seven years; the dreams *are* one.

We don't need to speculate if the cows will eat one another or not. The interpretation is given and the cows symbolize something else, not real cows. The seven good cows are seven years. Likewise the seven good heads are seven years. The two dreams are one.

²⁷ And the seven thin and ugly cows which came up after them *are* seven years, and the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind are seven years of famine.

So, following the first seven years, there will be seven more years; years of famine. These are represented by the thin ugly cows and the empty blighted heads.

²⁸ This *is* the thing which I have spoken to Pharaoh. God has shown Pharaoh what He *is* about to do.

In complete confidence of the interpretation, he says that what he has said he stands on. And he repeats his title for God - *ha'elohim* has shown Pharaoh. *The God* has revealed through Joseph what He is about to do.

²⁹ Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt;

This is the first time that the true significance of the first seven years is noted. They aren't just seven years, but seven years of *saba gadol*, great plenty. And this won't be an isolated boom, but it will be throughout all the land of Egypt. All of Pharaoh's domain will be blessed as the Nile delta floods and the winds are favorable.

³⁰ but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land.

Following on the heels of the seven good years, there will be seven terrible years; years of famine which will be so bad that all the abundance of the preceding seven years will be utterly forgotten. Everything which has flourished will be reduced to less than a memory of a memory.

³¹ So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it *will be* very severe.

Nothing which was gained will remain. The earth will crack and the land will mourn. It will be so bad that the term Joseph uses in Hebrew doesn't have a direct equivalent in English. He says *khaved hu meod* - it will be "very heavy."

The concept of heaviness is given to show that the strain of the weight of those years and the crushing burden they bring will be too much to bear. Thus we translate this as "very severe."

³² And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.

Two more times in a row, Joseph says that it is *ha'elohim*, the God, who has established and purposed what is coming. The term *elohim* is mentioned 9 times in this chapter, but each time He is mentioned in relation to the direct interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams by Joseph, he calls Him "the God."

It is *the God* who has doubled the dream to Pharaoh and the reason for doing so is that the matter is firmly decreed by *the God* and so *the God* will hasten what He has decreed. Like a wave rolling toward a shore, nothing will stop the tide of the prophecy.

IV. Joseph's Wise Counsel

³³ "Now therefore, let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man, and set him over the land of Egypt.

Without a hint from the Bible as to whether he was asked for advice or not, he goes directly from an interpreter of dreams to a counselor of remedies. He was the revealer of disaster and now he is the imparter of hope - because of this, now therefore that.

As the Geneva Bible says here, "The office of a true prophet is not only to show the evils to come, but also the remedies for the same." Joseph shows himself to be a man whom God trusts with His mysteries and one whom God has endowed with His wisdom.

And so as easily as he relayed the interpretation, he now submits counsel - "...let Pharaoh select a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt." Just as the interpretation came from God, this counsel must be His work as well.

Pharaoh could have taken offence at Joseph's advice, as if he were saying he was incompetent. Instead he allows Joseph to continue. The words are taken as they were intended - to protect and continue Pharaoh's kingdom, not usurp it. He recommends a governor who will have authority over the affairs of the land.

³⁴ Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years.

Under the governor of the land, Joseph next recommends officers be appointed. It's obvious that they would be subordinates who would handle given areas and tasks within those areas in order to secure one fifth of the produce.

We don't know how this was collected. It could have been a tax, or it could have been bought. The idea though is that there are seven years of more-than-normal abundance. One fifth of this superabundance would be enough to cover each of the seven years of famine.

³⁵ And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

What Joseph is suggesting has no down-side. If the famine doesn't come about, Pharaoh will still have all of the produce at his disposal and under his authority. If it does come about, there will be more than double gain for every year of the famine.

For Pharaoh, Joseph's words can only be taken as wise counsel. He will lose nothing, but could gain everything.

³⁶ Then that food shall be as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which shall be in the land of Egypt, that the land may not perish during the famine.”

Joseph repeats that there will be a famine and that what is coming will require this action so that Egypt won't completely perish. Again, if the dream was from God, then God intends for the dream to be interpreted. If Joseph was given the interpretation, then God is speaking through Joseph.

The obvious conclusion for Pharaoh is that Joseph is correct and that God's word has been spoken to him and that he must now pay heed to the advice. This is the last verse of the day and it is the perfect spot for us to consider that last premise.

If the Bible is from God, then God intends for the book to be researched. If the research is proper, then it is intended to be applied. Why would God give Pharaoh a dream and then tell him something contrary to what the dream says? He wouldn't.

And why would God give us His word and then allow us to live in a manner contrary to

the word He has given? He wouldn't. If Pharaoh's dreams are true and Joseph's interpretation is correct, then Joseph's advice is sound.

If God's word has proven itself true (and it has), and if proper handling of it is demonstrated, then the advice of the handler should be listened to. Pharaoh now has a choice concerning God's word. We will see how he acts upon it next week.

We have a choice concerning God's word and only time will tell if we act upon it properly or not. I would hope you do. In fact, it is the driving desire of my life. Don't put God on a shelf when you get home, but apply His word moment by moment as you store up heavenly grain in anticipation of future famines.

Applying the word to your life can only be done after getting right with God. And the way to get right with God is to be right with His Son, Jesus.

Closing Verse: *“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord GOD,
“That I will send a famine on the land,
Not a famine of bread,
Nor a thirst for water,
But of hearing the words of the LORD.
¹² They shall wander from sea to sea,
And from north to east;
They shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD,
But shall not find it. Amos 8:11, 12*

Next Week: Genesis 41:37-45 (Prophet, Priest, and King; the Savior of the World)
(102nd Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Joseph's Wise Counsel

Then Pharaoh sent and called
Joseph, and they brought him in a hurry
Out of the dungeon in which he was walled
In a rush they made him scurry

And he shaved, changed his clothing too

And came to Pharaoh after the hullabaloo

And Pharaoh said to Joseph "I have had a dream
And there is no one who can interpret it
Quite a dilemma it would seem

But I have heard it said of you
That you can understand a dream
To interpret it, this you can do
As easily as eating vanilla ice cream

Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying "It is not in me
God will give Pharaoh an answer of peace
He will provide an interpretation, you will see

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph: Behold, in my dream
I stood on the bank of the river and saw this theme

Suddenly there came up out of the river
Seven cows, fine looking and fat
And they fed in the meadow
On the land which was green and flat
Then behold, seven other cows came up after them
Poor and very ugly and gaunt
Such ugliness as I have never seen
In all the land of Egypt, my dream they did haunt

And the gaunt and ugly cows up they ate
The first seven, the fat cows I was shown
When they had eaten them up, I now state
After they had eaten them no one would have known

For they were just as ugly as before
So I awoke from the dream so sore

Also I saw in my dream and suddenly seven heads came
Up on one stalk, full and good, heads of acclaim
Then behold, seven heads, withered, thin, and blighted
By the east wind, sprang up after them

These are what I sighted

And the thin heads did eat...

The seven good heads as if they were a tasty treat

So I told this to the magicians, but there was none

Who could explain it to me, no not a single one

Then Joseph to Pharaoh said

“The dreams of Pharaoh are one

God has shown Pharaoh what lies ahead

What He is about to do, here under the sun

The seven good cows are seven years

And the seven good heads are seven years too

The dreams are one, have no fears

This is what God is showing you

And the seven thin and ugly cows

Which came up after them that you noted

Are seven years, as time allows

The time set by God as I have quoted

And the seven empty heads blighted by the east wind

Are seven years of famine, times when life is thinned

This is the thing, Pharaoh, which I have spoken to you

God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do

Indeed seven years of great plenty are at hand

They will come throughout Egypt, throughout all the land

But after them seven years of famine will arise

And all the plenty will be forgotten

In the land of Egypt there will be demise

The famine will deplete the land from which previous abundance was begotten

So the plenty will not be known

In the land because of the famine which will follow

For it will be very severe as you have been shown

I know it's a bitter pill that you must swallow

And the dream was repeated as if a divine nod

To Pharaoh twice for him to look out
Because the thing is established by God
And God will shortly bring it about
“Now therefore, let Pharaoh select
A discerning and wise man
And set him over the land of Egypt
This is something that you should plan

Let Pharaoh do this, and let him assign
Officers over the land, all its frontiers
To collect one-fifth of the produce by design
Of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years

And let them gather all the food like security
Of those coming good years ahead
And store up grain under Pharaoh's authority
And keep food in the cities, for the famine will be widespread

Then that food shall be as a reserve
For the land for the seven years of dearth
It shall be in the land of Egypt as you shall observe
So the land may not perish during the famine of the earth

God foreknew the troubled times that would come
And He sent Joseph to explain this to Pharaoh
And He knows of our own times of trials
When our hopes are dry and our wallets are narrow

But from God there is a better promise for us
When we will be taken into a broad and spacious place
Yes for any who have called on Jesus
We someday will behold God face to face

Until that day, we live in hope and not by sight
But our faith is what is most valued in God's eyes
It is what restores us to Him, and to His shining light
So let us keep our faith in Jesus, our hearts on the prize

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 41:37-45 **(PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING - THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD)**

Introduction: As a biblical figure, Joseph is somewhat like David in several ways. He was the second youngest of a big family and David was the youngest. Both were raised as shepherds as well. Joseph's brothers rejected him and sold him off as a slave. David's brother Eliab mocked him when he inquired about fighting the great champion Goliath.

Eventually though, both rose to be great rulers who would lead and shepherd their people. They were great men of God who overcame trials and obstacles while maintaining their faith in God's providential care over them.

Although we'll be looking at how Joseph pictures Christ throughout the verses today, we shouldn't forget that he was just a regular person chosen by God to do great things. We may not have the opportunity to interpret dreams for a king, but we do have the opportunity to do great things for the Lord.

Billy Graham dedicated his life to preaching about Jesus and look at what he did. But no less important are the people who moved his podium or set up the sound system. Every person can do something great, even if it's unnoticed. Greatness from a biblical context is being noted as a person of faith and a person who lives faithfully.

Before he was exalted, Joseph was thrown into a prison and he eventually ran that prison, and he did it without losing faith. Your participation in whatever you do, when it is founded on faith, will be rewarded by God. Trust this, have faith in it, and remember this as we look at the details of the life and times of Joseph.

Text Verse: *He made him lord of his house,
And ruler of all his possessions,
²² To bind his princes at his pleasure,
And teach his elders wisdom. Psalm 105:21, 22*

Joseph was given great responsibilities. First in Potiphar's house, then in prison. Both times he handled his duties wisely, even when he could have just given up. Eventually as Pharaoh's appointed ruler of the land, he served faithfully there as well.

We can learn how to handle our own lives in the right way by paying attention to the word God has given us, and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Spirit of God

Unexplained dreams, sound interpretations, and wise counsel have all led to where we are today. After displaying that God truly is with him and showing that he is suitable to understand the times and needs of the people and land under Pharaoh, Joseph will now receive release from the many years of bondage that he has faced.

What seemed only moments earlier to be a life destined for obscurity and meaningless servitude, and even unending imprisonment, will now be replaced with blessing, honor, and rule. The life of Joseph is securely in the hands of God and the dreams he had more than 13 years earlier will not go unfulfilled.

And so we turn to the words of Scripture to show us the exaltation of Joseph and the same story picturing the greater exaltation of our Lord Jesus...

³⁷ So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants.

Joseph's advice was taken as it should have been. Pharaoh didn't count it presumptuous or arrogant, but rather as well-grounded and fully sufficient to meet the crisis anticipated in his dreams. Here Joseph reflects many passages which speak of the coming Christ.

In Isaiah 9, Jesus is called the Wonderful Counselor because of His wisdom and ability to both discern and communicate that wisdom. In Isaiah 11:2, a verse perfectly descriptive of Joseph here and the Lord whom he pictures is found -

The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

Joseph knew when to speak, what to speak, and when to stop speaking. As he now listens to Pharaoh, compliments are bestowed upon him from the ruler of the great house. We have to remember as we go along, that Joseph was dirty, wearing prisoners clothing, and without hope only a few short minutes earlier.

And the same can be applied to many of us in a variety of ways. If we look back on our life, we may see times of trial, times of sadness, times of scratching out an existence, or maybe an issue with our health.

It may have seemed as if the suffering would never end, but it did. Or maybe we're in a low spot now. Can good come out of it? The answer is "Yes." It may come in an unexpected way, or it may come only after we pass on and we receive our reward, but if we are in Christ, all of the hardships will someday be forgotten.

Peter speaks about this in his first epistle. There he says,

"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,..." 1 Peter 1:6, 7

³⁸ And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find *such a one* as this, a man in whom is the Spirit of God?"

Encompassed by his counselors, wise men, magicians, and leaders, this verse almost sounds as much like an accusation from Pharaoh on their inability to interpret his dreams as it is a compliment on Joseph. Where they have failed, he has prevailed. Where they were blind, he was able to see. In the place of incompetence, depth of understanding has arrived.

And what seems even a further indictment on them because of the gods they sought out, Pharaoh says that Joseph is "a man in whom is the Spirit of God." The term is *ruakh elohim* - the "Spirit of God." This is the very first time that this term has been used since the creation of the world as is recorded in Genesis 1:2 -

"The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."

Ruakh elohim can be translated in a plural way as in the "spirit of the gods" but this is not what Pharaoh is referring to. Joseph has already stated several times that only "the" God, *ha'elohim* can interpret dreams. The preciseness of what is written is to ensure we see that Pharaoh understood this.

And so Pharaoh repeats this and says that the Spirit of God is in him. Perfectly picturing Jesus in this sense, the first time that the same term "Spirit of God" is used in the New Testament, it is speaking of the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:16 -

"When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. ¹⁷ And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

The three are being harmoniously tied together in the Bible. The Spirit of God was there at the creation. The Spirit of God resides in Joseph who pictures the coming Redeemer, and the Spirit of God rests upon Christ - the Lord of Creation and our great Redeemer. The patterns are rich, elegant, and carefully woven together.

*The Spirit of God rests upon His anointed
Joseph as he now rules over Pharaoh's land as lord
And the One to whom these things have pointed
Is our Savior Jesus; God's incarnate Word*

II. Presiding Over the Great House

³⁹ Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Inasmuch as God has shown you all this, *there is no one as discerning and wise as you.*

Pharaoh now credits Joseph's ability to God. In his address, he uses the words *ain nabown v'khakam* - none as discerning and wise. This is the Bible's first use of the word for this type of discernment and only the second use of the word for "wise." The first time it was used was speaking about Pharaoh's wise men.

There is the wisdom and discernment from God and there is the wisdom of the world. In 1 Corinthians 1, Paul speaks of this -

For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." ²⁰ Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. (19-21)

This is exactly what's happened here. A message of good news was in fact preached and Pharaoh accepted it. The wise, the scribe, and the disputers of the age of Egypt were made foolish to demonstrate the superiority of the discernment and knowledge which comes from God.

And now, Pharaoh's words of Joseph's exaltation come, each pointing directly to the future Christ so clearly that it is simply not possible to miss if one is looking rightly at what he says. They are reflected in Paul's words in Philippians 2 -

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (9-11)

⁴⁰ You shall be over my house

Joseph is given complete rule over Pharaoh's house. Remember, Pharaoh means "Great House" and is picturing all of God's creation, including heaven itself. This is reflected in several passages from the New Testament.

This one from Hebrews 3 perfectly mirrors the authority Pharaoh has granted to Joseph as reflected in the appointing of Jesus over God's house -

⁴"For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things *is* God. ⁵ And Moses indeed *was* faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken *afterward*, ⁶ but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end." Hebrews 3:4-6

And Jesus' words to the disciples concerning His authority reflects the same type of authority Joseph has been granted -

"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age." Amen. Matthew 28:18-20

Joseph rules over the great house of Pharaoh; Jesus rules over the God's Great House; heaven and earth. He sits as the final authority over all matters.

⁴⁰ (con't) **and all my people shall be ruled according to your word;**

Pharaoh leaves no person who is not subject to Joseph's authority and to his spoken word. The rule is complete and without limitation in person or practice. An interesting phrase is used here by Pharaoh.

In the Hebrew he says, *v'al pika yishaq khal ammi*. This is literally translated as "At your mouth do all my people kiss." In this culture as in others, it was and still at times is customary to kiss something that is relayed from a superior, or is possessed by that person.

We see this in the Catholics who kiss the ring of the pope. It is his supposed symbol of authority and so they kiss it acknowledging that. We see it in other similar displays in the world we live in - both in religious and kingly contexts.

In the context of Joseph, it is specifically referring to the *proclamation of Pharaoh* which would be made into a written edict which would then have been kissed by all who received it. This would symbolize their obedience and due respect for the title and position of their appointed sovereign.

To refuse the kiss would result in banishment, or more probably, death. The parallel to Jesus is seen directly in the Psalm 2 -

¹⁰"Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.

¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.

¹² Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish *in* the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.

Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him." (10-12)

Peter tells us that it is this Son, Jesus, "who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him."
(1 Peter 3:22)

⁴⁰ (con't) **only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you."**

Pharaoh finishes his grant with these words. The throne of the Great House alone is reserved from Joseph's rule. Rather than this being an argument against Jesus' deity in type, it actually confirms it. The parallel is seen in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians - For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under *Him*," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted.²⁸ Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. 1 Corinthians 15:27-28

God is One - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each has a role within the Godhead. Thus Jesus - even though fully God, is subject to the Godhead to which He is a member. We see this in Joseph's rule over the domain of Pharaoh while still being subject to Pharaoh.

In the words "only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you" we find the description of the one who has sole management of all state of affairs, all authority, and all rule. It is a correct and beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus within the Godhead.

*To Jesus is granted all rule and all authority
To Him shall every knee bow and every tongue confess
For only He prevailed over death, gaining the victory
Let us, the glorious and exalted name of Jesus profess*

⁴¹ **And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."**

Joseph is granted rule over "all the land of Egypt." Egypt, meaning "double distress" is symbolic of the fallen, unredeemed world which is in double distress - living without God's law and having no hope. But now there is hope. In Joseph, there is a ruler who will bring that hope, and he pictures the greater Hope found in Jesus.

Jesus has been granted authority over all the world. It includes all rule, all power, all resources. It is His world to direct and His to rule. In this verse then we see Pharaoh's edict which establishes Joseph's rule. Next will come his installation to that same office...

III. Prophet, Priest, and King - The Savior of the World

⁴² **Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand;**

The symbol of Pharaoh's rule and authority is given to Joseph in this act. What Joseph now decides will have the same weight as if issued by Pharaoh himself. No other person in the kingdom could challenge his authority or countermand an order given by him.

This goes right back to Jesus' authority granted Him by God the Father. All rule and authority belongs now to Him and all powers and authorities are subject to Him. He alone rules the domain which has been brought under His hand.

42 (con't) and he clothed him in garments of fine linen

Even today we can look at the immensely precious quality of the linen which was used at the time of Joseph by looking at the garments which mummies were wrapped in. This special linen was worn by the priests of Egypt and so this portion of verse 42 is showing that the priests were not exempt from Joseph's authority.

In fact, because of his rule, he is now not only over the people as a sovereign, but also the priests as their high priest. And in this then we have a picture of Jesus in His three main roles. His role of Prophet is seen in Joseph's interpretation of the dreams.

His role as King is seen in Joseph's granted authority - the signet ring. And His role as High Priest is seen in this verse by the garment Joseph is given. In type and picture, Joseph prefigures Jesus - our Prophet, Priest, and King.

These fine linen garments are called *shesh* in Hebrew and are translated into the Greek Old Testament as *bussinien*, a word used to indicate its extreme whiteness. The writings of Pliny and Herodotus show that these were in fact used by the priestly class. They were of the very finest linen.

In the Hebrew there is an unusual dash at the end of the word. It's believed to indicate that this garment was granted in accord with a set custom. This might seem like too much detail for us to look at, until we read the words of Mark 9 which speak of Jesus' transfiguration -

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. ³ His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them." (2, 3)

The unusual Hebrew of this verse, this extra dash, is a precursor to Mark's vivid description. Jesus' clothes were exceedingly white, such as no launderer on earth could whiten them. This is why these hints are given in the Old Testament. Each points to Jesus, even an unusual dash inserted at the end of a word in Hebrew.

⁴² (con't) **and put a gold chain around his neck.**

Pharaoh also places a gold chain on Joseph's neck. This, like the ring, was a badge of the office. Something similar is seen given to Daniel as a result of his promotion to third highest in the land. Again, this looks forward to Jesus. It's seen in the golden band he wears in Revelation 1-

"Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the seven lampstands *One* like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band." (12, 13)

⁴³ **And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!"**

The symbolism of the chariot ties in to Jesus as well. Psalm 104 says that the Lord makes the clouds His chariot. This psalm is attributed to Jesus in Hebrews 1. Isaiah as well speaks of the Lord and His chariots –

"For behold, the LORD will come with fire
And with His chariots, like a whirlwind,
To render His anger with fury,
And His rebuke with flames of fire." Isaiah 66:15

As Joseph rode in His chariot, it says "they cried out before him, "Bow the knee." The word is *avrekh*. Unfortunately, this is the only time in the Bible the word is used and its not certain what it actually means, but the general consensus is that it refers to bowing. Such would be fulfilled in this verse about Jesus -

"...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth," Philippians 2:10

*Set in highest honor, with all rule and authority
The signet and the chariot, and a golden chain*

*Before Him shall bow each and every knee
Every tongue will confess and none shall refrain*

43 (con't) So he set him over all the land of Egypt.

With the installation complete, Pharaoh's words to Joseph are fulfilled. He is now over all of the land of Egypt. In like manner, Jesus has been ordained as the Lord of Heaven and Earth. And in confirmation of this, Pharaoh speaks yet one more time...

44 Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

The formal procedure of the rite has closed and Pharaoh seals the proceeding with his words. "I am Pharaoh, and these honors I bestow upon you. You have absolute authority over my domain."

The word testifies to the act. This is just what is seen of Jesus in the second psalm and referred to by the author of Hebrews in Jesus' role as both king and priest -

⁷ "I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
'You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give You
The nations *for* Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth *for* Your possession. Psalm 2:7, 8

At the word of Pharaoh Joseph is ordained, and at the word of the Jehovah, Jesus likewise is ordained. Not a single verse has failed to be fulfilled in Jesus as we've travelled through these eight verses. With only one left, will we be able to find Jesus in that one too?

45 And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-Paaneah.

The name Zaphnath-Paaneah is translated by the Christian theologian Jerome into Latin as *Salvatorem mundi* - the Savior of the World. This is an exact description which is used twice by John in his writings about Jesus. In his first epistle, he confirms what he saw and heard concerning the Lord -

"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *as* Savior of the world." 1 John 4:14

Matthew Henry says about this title, "The brightest glories, even of the upper world, are put upon Christ, the highest trust lodged in his hand, and all power given him, both in heaven and earth."

Without a proper interpretation and handling of Pharaoh's dreams, the land of Egypt would have been swept away in famine and drought. In acknowledgment that God sent Joseph to save them, the title has been given indicating that through Joseph the world will be saved.

And the same is true with Jesus, sent by God to save the world when there was otherwise no hope at all. He has been promoted to the highest position of all, to rule heaven and earth.

^{45 (con't)} **And he gave him as a wife Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On.**

In the uniting of his kingly and priestly roles, Joseph is given a wife from the priestly class. She is Asenath, meaning "She who is of Neith." Neith refers to wisdom. Asenath is the daughter of Potiphera, the priest of On. On means "light" and Potiphera means "He whom the Ra gave." Ra being the sun.

All three of these names, Asenath, Potiphera, and On have meaning, and be assured, each name and word is given for a reason. But the main similarity between Joseph and Jesus is seen in the gentile bride each receives.

While Joseph is rejected by and removed from his brothers, he has become a blessing to the Egyptian people and is given this gentile wife. And in the same way, while Jesus is rejected by and removed from His people Israel during this dispensation, He has become the Blessing to the gentiles and has procured for Himself a bride.

This is seen in Acts 15, Ephesians 5, and also in this verse from 2 Corinthians 11:2 -

"For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ."

Paul, speaking to the gentiles of Corinth, confirmed that the church is betrothed as a bride to Christ. We are the wise bride of Christ just as this gentile whose name means

"She who is of wisdom" is the gentile bride of Joseph. And remember, this is a time of his brother's rejection of him. They sold him off to the gentiles, just as the Jewish people sold Jesus off.

And we will see in the coming chapters that Joseph's brothers will in fact come to Egypt, bow to Joseph, and be reconciled to Him. For those who dismiss the Jewish people's role in future history as God's people, all they need to do is to look back to Genesis and the structure of these stories which time and again show us that they are not out. Israel will be reconciled to their Lord.

The time is coming and it probably won't be long. The church age will end and Israel will again be the very center of God's attention. The Bible tells us that patterns in history repeat and it often gives the first of the patterns so that we can recognize the repetition when it comes.

So, let's not make one of two mistakes -

The first would be to say that Israel *is right* with God at this point. Joseph was betrayed and sold and his brothers are out of the picture during that period. This is the same with Israel. Though we should support her, we cannot condone her rejection of Christ. And we cannot waffle on our convictions concerning their need for him.

The second error would be to say that Israel is out and done. This entire panorama of the life of Joseph shows us that this isn't the case. And with their return, we are right at a wondrous time in human history. The spiritual banner will soon pass back to Israel. They will bow to their Lord and shed tears of joy at the reunion.

^{45 (fin)} **So Joseph went out over *all* the land of Egypt.**

Yes, Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt and the message of Jesus has gone out and continues to go out into all the world. Joseph rules; Jesus rules. The patterns are beautiful and the story is marvelous. God chose these short, concise stories to show us that He is in control of time and circumstance.

Every word opens up into another panorama of beauty which speaks of Jesus. And remember, if He is showing us Jesus, then He wants us to know Jesus. If we know every detail and see every picture, but miss the *purpose* of those things, then we have made the biggest mistake of all.

As Paul says in his great discourse on love, "though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." The stories are given to show the love.

The love of God, found in Jesus, is what we see. Egypt is headed for disaster and God sends a deliverer. The sons of Israel will be headed for disaster and God sends deliverance. We are on the path to destruction, and God sends Jesus. If He didn't love us, He wouldn't have done any of it.

But to demonstrate His love, grant us His mercy, and bestow upon us His grace, He condescended to come down to our lowly station and wash our dirty feet. Indeed, what manner of love is this! For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Closing Verse: *"Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."* John 4:42

Next Week: Genesis 41:46-57 (Prosperity and Famine) (103rd Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Savior of the World

So the advice of Joseph was good
In the eyes of Pharaoh as was noted
And in the eyes of all his servants
Yes, each word as Joseph is quoted

And Pharaoh said to his servants
"Can we find such a one as this
A man in whom is the Spirit of God?"
To not listen to him would certainly be remiss

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph words well thought through
"Inasmuch as God has shown you all this
There is no one as discerning and wise as you
Your wisdom and tact I shall not dismiss

You shall be over my house in every affair
And all my people shall be ruled
According to your word as you declare
It shall be that by you my leaders shall be schooled

"Only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you
And Pharaoh said to Joseph "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." The word I
speak is true

Then Pharaoh took his signet ring
Off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand instead
And he clothed him in garments of fine linen
Mazel tov, a blessing upon his head

And around his neck he put a gold chain
In this act he honored Joseph once again

And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had
And they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!"
So he set him over all the land of Egypt, not so bad
From prisoner to ruler almost instantly

Pharaoh also said to Joseph
"I am Pharaoh, and without your consent
No man may lift his hand or foot
In all the land of Egypt, none shall circumvent

And Pharaoh from then on called Joseph's name
Zaphnath-Paaneah
To remember that one, make up a word game

And he gave him as a wife Asenath
The daughter of Poti-Pherah, Priest of On
So Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt
And he was the sovereign ruler from that time on

In a marvelous array of pictures of Jesus
God has shown us Joseph's life and times
These have been given graciously to us

For more than just fun and rhymes

Rather, they are words which show us
Of the majesty pronounced upon the Lord
The one who prevailed over the tomb, Jesus
As is revealed in God's Superior Word

Every detail, every verse we read
Is marvelously and intricately woven by God's hand
So to this precious book, let us ever pay heed
Through it, His heart we can truly understand

God's glory is revealed in its pages, showing us His light
God's grace radiates to His children as we plainly see
Let us exalt this marvelous Lord with all our might
Let us receive the gift of Jesus who paid our debt on the cross of Calvary

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 41:46-57 (PROSPERITY AND FAMINE)

Introduction: In His word, God uses agricultural themes to teach us spiritual applications. There are thousands of them, used consistently and openly, to teach us moral lessons, prophetic lessons, life lessons, and spiritual lessons - pictures of Christ.

Today's passage is one of them. There is abundance and there is famine. There is grain and there is need. There is the wisdom of God and there is the lack of foresight in man. God isn't lording these stories over us to show how stupid we are, but to show us that His wisdom will increase our knowledge and protect our path.

He has given us the most wonderful treasure in His superior word. As I said, each agricultural theme is used to teach us spiritual truths. A perfect one is Jesus standing up and saying, "I am the bread of life" in John 6. Right before that, He had fed 5000 with just 5 barley loaves and 2 small fish. After the meal, they'd picked up 12 baskets of leftovers.

And then, the people came looking for more and for a sign too so they could believe in Him. Here is the exchange -

³⁰ "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" ³² Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

³⁴ Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." John 6:30-34

It was at this point that He told them that He is the Bread of life. Earthly bread doesn't satisfy... only Christ can do that. And we can only find Christ in His word. And yet we trade it for flashy presentations, exciting Sunday mornings, and lives filled with misery. It's not worth it. God's word is a hard study, but that which is of highest value rarely comes easily.

Text Verse: *My foot has held fast to His steps;*

I have kept His way and not turned aside.

¹² *I have not departed from the commandment of His lips;*

*I have treasured the words of His mouth
More than my necessary food. Job 23:11, 12*

We read words like those of Job, we listen to sermons about them, and we often go right on with life without letting them sink in. Job said he treasured the word of the Lord's mouth more than his necessary food. We eat three times a day and we're hungry again in the morning.

How can we expect to be filled with God's word without consuming it just as often? We can't. Please, if nothing else that you take from the next hour of your life as you sit and listen, please take the admonition from me now. Read your Bible. It is God's superior word. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. An Abundance of Grain (46-49)

⁴⁶ Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Joseph's age is given at the start of his rule for several reasons. First, it gives us a reference for how long he was in slavery. He was sold off to Egypt when he was 17 years old. And so now we know that he remained a slave and prisoner for 13 years.

Next, it provides the details concerning His life and how long he will be in this position until his death at the age of 110 years. He will hold his position of authority for 80 years. Thirdly, this gives us the dating of the world from creation. Joseph was born in the year 2259AM and so this is now the year 2289AM. It is about 1700 years before the coming of Christ.

And finally, his age is given to show the parallel between him in his exalted position and that of the beginning of Jesus' ministry. In Luke 3:23, it says, "Now Jesus Himself began *His ministry at about thirty years of age.*"

At this age, it says he "stood before Pharaoh." This is a way of saying that he has been granted access to the royal throne. Only the highest officials of the land could stand before the throne of the king. And so this implies that he is now in such a position.

⁴⁶ (con't) And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

In his high position, he now has access to stand before, and go out from, the presence of Pharaoh. With this authority, we are told that he "went throughout all the land of Egypt." He is the ruler of the land and the one to monitor everything that occurs there. He is granted complete and unhindered access wherever he wishes to go.

⁴⁷ Now in the seven plentiful years the ground brought forth abundantly.

The Hebrew literally says that the earth "brought forth by abundant handfuls." This is a way of saying that either a single stalk produced as many ears as a person could hold in one hand, or the grain from one stalk would fill a hand.

Either way, the reapers would grasp the ears and cut and not bother with the stalk at all. It is an immense harvest which is being described.

*The ground brought forth abundantly to the reaper's cheers
So much grain, such a bountiful harvest
This continued on for seven blessed years
Such were the crops, as the Bible does attest*

⁴⁸ So he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities; he laid up in every city the food of the fields which surrounded them.

"All the food" mentioned here is the one-fifth which he had counseled Pharaoh to collect. That one fifth was gathered up over seven plentiful years and stored in granaries which had been constructed for the purpose.

Each major city had granaries which held the surplus from all of its surrounding fields. Eventually, the amount stored was so immense that it was beyond description as we see next...

⁴⁹ Joseph gathered very much grain, as the sand of the sea, until he stopped counting, for *it was* immeasurable.

The term "as the sand of the sea" is used almost 20 times in the Bible and it is expressive of an uncountable number. Just as it would be impossible to go and count all the grains of sand on the sea, so was the abundance of the harvest stored up by Joseph.

There was so much that he eventually had the bean-counters of his time just stop making records of what was brought in. The Hebrew says that "he left numbering because there was no number." It became a futile endeavor to even bother numbering the surplus.

There came a point where it was evidently enough for any contingency that was anticipated to arise. We have to remind ourselves though that *it was God* who said this would happen, and that *it was God* who brought the flooding waters down into the Nile delta.

And *it will be God* who stops the floods in the time to come. By using the weather in the upper Nile to control the river, and the lower Nile to control the heat and wind, there will be an immense famine coming. And all of it is for the purpose of leading to Jesus through one select group of people whom He has chosen.

If you think it through from this perspective, it shows you how immensely important the redemption of man is to Him. Every drop of rainfall and every gust of wind has been perfectly arranged to get the world *to* Jesus. And so what do you suppose is the depth of the heart of God toward us that we should *call on* Jesus?

In the Psalms, David asked "What is man that You are mindful of him?" The question seems all the more relevant when you consider the amount of time and the incredible care it took to bring the world to the moment when Jesus came. And equally, the same amount of time and incredible care it took to compile the Bible which tells us this marvelous story.

And in that thought, there is a parallel to the seven years of abundance and the seven years of famine in Egypt to that of the world of the end times. In the book of Amos, the Lord speaks about the wickedness of Israel which will lead to famine.

In His words, he speaks of the swelling and subsiding of the River of Egypt, the Nile. But the context isn't speaking of a famine of food as much as it is another type of famine. Let me read you this from Amos 8; listen carefully -

⁸ Shall the land not tremble for this,
And everyone mourn who dwells in it?
All of it shall swell like the River,
Heave and subside
Like the River of Egypt.

⁹ "And it shall come to pass in that day," says the Lord GOD,
"That I will make the sun go down at noon,
And I will darken the earth in broad daylight;
¹⁰ I will turn your feasts into mourning,
And all your songs into lamentation;
I will bring sackcloth on every waist,
And baldness on every head;
I will make it like mourning for an only *son*,
And its end like a bitter day.

¹¹ "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD,
"That I will send a famine on the land,
Not a famine of bread,
Nor a thirst for water,
But of hearing the words of the LORD.

¹² They shall wander from sea to sea,
And from north to east;
They shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD,
But shall not find *it*.

As the end times approach, and they are approaching, there is an abundance of the word like at no other time in the history of the world. The Bible is preached on TV and on the radio. It is preached on the internet. It can be accessed on innumerable sites in a hundred different translations and in 1000 languages.

Bibles and the instruction of God's word will continue to increase right up until the tribulation period... and then there will be a famine. In the end times, the Bible will be removed from the internet. Christian websites will disappear. Any mention of the truth will vanish. We don't need to guess if this will happen, it will.

This is certainly what is being pictured in the grain of Egypt. Throughout the Bible, God's word is considered our food. Without food we will die and without the Bible we are as good as dead. The Bible tells us of Jesus and without Him, there is no hope. One plus one is two... No Bible, No Jesus, No Hope.

*"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord GOD
"That I will send a famine on the land
It will be severe wherever man does trod
The people will suffer for what lacks in their hand*

*It will not be a famine of bread
Nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD
Masses of humanity will remain forever dead
Because of the lack of My superior word*

The abundance of the last seven years before the rapture will be all-but forgotten when the tribulation and the great Day of the Lord comes.

II. The Sons of Joseph (50-52)

⁵⁰ And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him.

Here again in this verse, like last week, we have a picture of Christ. Joseph become a blessing to the gentiles as leader of Egypt and the one to save them from the affliction to come. And at the same time, he obtained a gentile wife. Likewise, Jesus, has blessed the gentiles and in them He has secured a gentile bride.

To this wife, two sons are born. However, the verb for "born" is singular, not plural, and so it is possible and likely that they were twins. In this verse is a multi-leveled play on words. Joseph's name means, "He shall add." In essence the repeater, or the doubler.

He was born to Rachel, the long barren wife of Jacob. Eventually, to her was born a second son, Benjamin, thus doubling in person and in type, because both picture Jesus in their lives. However, Joseph is also the doubler in his own children, by having two, thus picturing Jesus, the Lord of Jew and Gentile.

And finally, Joseph has been chosen as the ruler of Egypt, but he also marries into the priesthood of Egypt, thus doubling the authority in his home. And this also pictures Jesus as the King and Priest of His people. He is the priest on His throne. Zechariah 6:13 and Hebrews 8:1 explain this in type and in fulfillment.

⁵¹ Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: "For God has made me forget all my toil and all my father's house."

The firstborn child is named Manasseh. And the explanation for the name is given. "For God has made me forget." Manasseh comes from the verb *nasha*, which means "to forget." But again, there are multi-levels of word play in this verse.

What seems simple becomes amazingly deep. Unlike most of the sons of Israel, Joseph was named based on two words, not one. Joseph comes from *yoseph* - he shall add. But he was also named based on the word *asaph* - to take away. Manasseh is the same.

In Hebrew, and thus in the Bible, to forget something doesn't mean what we think in English. Something can be forgotten because the memory fades, but the Bible's idea of forgetting is active. It is taking something away. And so Joseph, who was named from the word *asaph*, to "take away", is himself taking away the memory.

So you understand, think of the times in the Bible when God says he will forget our sins. God doesn't forget anything, and so it means that He actively takes away the memory of the sins. When He remembers someone, it doesn't mean He ever forgot them, but that He is drawing them near to Himself to help them in some way.

This is exactly why it says this in Genesis 30 -

²² "Then God **remembered** Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. ²³ And she conceived and bore a son, and said, "God **has taken away** my reproach." ²⁴ So she called his name Joseph, and said, 'The LORD **shall add** to me another son.'"

Joseph named his son Manasseh because he forgot, even though he hasn't really forgotten. The word-play on his name is that he "forgot by taking away."

Having said that about Joseph, the naming of Manasseh takes a new turn. *Nasha* means to forget, but the same word also means "a debt." The Bible's concept of a debt is different than we handle a debt today. In the Bible, when something is lent, it is pushed out of mind. Jesus says this in Luke 6 -

³⁴"And if you lend *to those* from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil." (34, 35)

The idea is that only a person in need would ask for a loan and so the loan should be forgotten. If the debt is repaid, then it is brought back to mind. If it isn't, it is to be water under the bridge. And so as much as the name Manasseh means "to forget" it also means "from a debt."

⁵² And the name of the second he called Ephraim: "For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction."

And again, wordplay comes into the picture on several levels. Joseph's name means "He shall add." He is the repeater, the doubler, the increaser. He has a second son and thus his name is fulfilled in the second son, just as in the first. This time, the son is named Ephraim. As you can see Joseph's name is as important in this account as the naming of his sons in understanding what is occurring.

Ephraim means double fruitful or twice fruitful. But again, there is another connection to his name, which is the word for "ashes." Ashes are emblematic of grief or sorrow, especially for *judgment on sin*, such as when Abraham said, "I am but dust and ashes."

He meant that he is a man made from the dust and one deserving of the judgment of being reduced to ashes. And so the double play on this name isn't just that Joseph is doubly fruitful in the land of his affliction, but that he remained filled *with grief* over being separated from his father and his home *in* the land of his affliction.

As Abraham poetically says it, Joseph is behind "the golden bars of a still dismal cage." In the case of the ruler of the greatest land on earth, he was still mournful, flipping his coin from side to side - from joy to grief as each moment passed.

After the family is reunited, we will read this in Genesis 48 -

¹⁴"Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid *it* on Ephraim's head, who *was* the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh *was* the firstborn."

Jacob is going to adopt these sons as his own, but he will place Ephraim above Manasseh. Again, as happens throughout the Bible, the second is placed above the first, thus picturing the work of Christ replacing the work of Adam.

By knowing this, the naming of the sons, and the wordplay involved in those names will now make all the sense in the world. Manasseh means "to forget" but it also means "from a debt." He pictures Adam, who is the man who owes a debt but whose debt... is forgotten in Christ.

Ephraim means, "twice fruitful", but it also means "ashes." He pictures Jesus. He is twice fruitful in the land of His affliction, prevailing over the law and thus becoming the Savior

of Jew and Gentile, but his work also meant that sin was judged in Him, thus the ashes. Hence, "the land of His affliction." Astonishing.

If nothing else, God is continually bringing us back to the cross of Christ on behalf of fallen man. If there is no other thing that we can get from these many stories in Genesis, we cannot miss this. It is all about Jesus. He removes our sin, forgives our debt, and has been doubly prosperous through His own affliction.

This ties in with what Isaiah says in Chapter 40, the great turning point of the book of Isaiah -

¹ "Comfort, yes, comfort My people!"

Says your God.

² "Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her,

That her warfare is ended,

That her iniquity is pardoned;

For she has received from the LORD's hand

Double for all her sins." (1, 2)

In Christ there is double comfort, full pardon of iniquity, and complete payment for sin, even double so. The warfare is ended.

III. Famine in the Earth (53-57)

⁵³ **Then the seven years of plenty which were in the land of Egypt ended,**

Seven years of plenty was all that they were given to prepare for what was ahead. If the stores were mishandled, or if Joseph was negligent in his duties, then everyone below him would suffer. The book of Proverbs says,

"A good *man* leaves an inheritance to his children's children,
But the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous." 13:22

If we don't prepare for the inevitable, then when it inevitably comes, we will inevitably be found wanting. The famine was foretold and its coming was inevitable. Our death is coming and nothing short of the rapture itself will stand in its way.

And the rapture is meant for those who have prepared in advance for it to come. In other words, be prepared. When Solomon says for you to save an inheritance for your

children's children, he was certainly speaking of worldly wealth. It would be unwise to not save for those who come after you.

But he was building upon a spiritual precept found in Scripture. In Exodus 34, at the great pronouncement of the Lord to Moses, we read this -

⁶ "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, ⁷ keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation." (6, 7)

David, Solomon's father was aware of this precept and put it in the positive when he wrote the 103rd psalm -

¹⁷"But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting
On those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children's children,
¹⁸To such as keep His covenant,
And to those who remember His commandments to do them." (17, 18)

And so, the spiritual picture of the seven years of famine in Egypt, that of the abundance of the Word of God in the world, now comes to an end. From this point on, the Word of God will not come abundantly and freely, but it will cost. For some, it will cost all.

⁵⁴ **and the seven years of famine began to come, as Joseph had said.**

The famine began right on schedule according to the dreams of Pharaoh and the interpretation of Joseph. Joseph has proven himself to be the prophet of God, seeing beyond what could have otherwise been expected.

To guess a few years of bumper crops is imaginable, but to guess seven followed by seven miserable years could only be revealed by God. And so we see the prophet, priest, and king represented in Joseph and thus picturing Christ.

⁵⁴ (con't) **The famine was in all lands, but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.**

"In all the lands" means that this was an immense and wide-ranging famine. Twice in Genesis, there have been localized famines in Canaan with food remaining available in

Egypt, but this time the famine encompasses the whole region. Only Egypt has food and only because they prepared in advance.

This type of famine is so severe, that people will stoop to the lowest imaginable levels to survive. In Egypt in AD1071, records show a famine that was so severe that people ate corpses of people and animals. A dog was sold for five deenars, a cat for three, and a bushel of wheat for twenty.

In Deuteronomy 28, under the blessings and curses that the people of Israel could expect as they followed or failed to follow the Lord, these words show us the horror of famine and hunger -

⁵³ "You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you. ⁵⁴ The sensitive and very refined man among you will be hostile toward his brother, toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the rest of his children whom he leaves behind, ⁵⁵ so that he will not give any of them the flesh of his children whom he will eat, because he has nothing left in the siege and desperate straits in which your enemy shall distress you at all your gates." (53-55)

The words continue on in the next two verses of this chapter to describe something so horrifying that I won't read it to you until we arrive at that passage someday. But we have to remember, when we read things like this, it isn't the cruelty of the Lord, but the self-inflicted wounds of man.

The Lord makes His offer of peace, and man runs from it. Someday, there will be no more running and the famine of Egypt will be realized on a global scale; the self-inflicted wounds of the race of humanity who have so far turned from Christ that there is no remedy left.

The cross teaches us, if nothing else, that God does not tolerate sin and that it will be punished in Jesus, as our Substitute or we will face the wounds and horror because we willingly turned from that offer. If it sounds terrible, it is. But now is the time of God's favor and today is the day of salvation. Jesus' hands are open and waiting for us to choose. Choose wisely.

⁵⁵ **So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread.**

I'm not a survivalist, but if there was one thing other than guns that I'd invest in, it wouldn't be gold or silver. It would be food that lasts and can be eaten cold, like military rations. In the storehouses, the grain would last. The dry climate would have kept the grain from spoiling with no problem.

There are people all over the country who have years and years of food saved up for "just in case." I know a lady here in Sarasota that could probably feed an army for seven years. The fact is, that if the wheels of the economy stopped today, the stores would be empty in two days, and there would be utter chaos in three.

In the 20s, during the great depression, about 80% of the people in America lived in the country and 20% in the cities. That has all but reversed since then. We have set ourselves up for trouble that will be unimaginable. The people of Egypt cried to Pharaoh because bread was scarce.

Imagine how people will cry to the Lord when they realize that they were wrong about Jesus. The calls for the word of God during the famine will be many. In the 119th Psalm it says this -

¹¹ "Your word I have hidden in my heart,
That I might not sin against You."

We should store up the word as we store up food. If bread which satisfies for a day is important, how much more God's Manna which He sent from heaven, the Living Word? And we cannot feast on the Bread of Life unless we have a full supply of that Bread. The book is written and it satisfies fully.

*Oh precious Bread of life, Jesus my Lord
How I cherish knowing you more and more each day
And this blessing comes from knowing Your word
The Bible is my daily meal which my hunger it does allay*

If you spend your time in the word now, there will be no need to call out during times without it. It will be hidden in your heart to fill you any time you need it.

⁵⁵ (con't) **Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, "Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do."**

Pharaoh, the Great House, gives his instructions, "Go to Joseph. Whatever he says to you, do." They are words repeated by a woman who understood who her Son really was. In John 2, we read this account -

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 3 And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." 4 Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." (1-5)

Pharaoh, picturing the house of God, tells us what to do. Go to Jesus and whatever He says to you, do it. The pictures tell the message and the message is clear. We're not going to be fed by allah or buddha or krishna. LIFE APP - GOD ISN'T CONFUSED

There is only one Source of life, and it is found in Jesus. And the famine which will result for those who don't seek Him will someday cover the whole earth as is pictured in the next verse...

⁵⁶ The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the storehouses and sold to the Egyptians. And the famine became severe in the land of Egypt.

There are different thoughts on the world of the tribulation period. Some believe that if you have heard of Jesus and didn't receive Him before the rapture, you cannot be saved. Personally, I believe that to be shallow and vindictive. God is neither.

I would remind you that John 3:16 does not say, For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him before the rapture shall not perish, but have everlasting life. No, it doesn't say that.

But it also warns us to be prepared now. Anyone who feels they have time, or that it will be ok if they enter the tribulation is a fool. The famine will be severe, even in the land of those who have Jesus as their ruler. How much more in the land where they don't!

***⁵⁷ So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine was severe in all lands.**

With the famine in all the earth and with Joseph in charge of the food for all people, the name he was given, Zaphnath-Paaneah, is fully realized. He has become, in his own day, the savior of the world.

All countries of the earth came to Joseph for grain and since the coming of Christ, all countries of the earth have streamed to Him for the true Bread of Life. The patterns are plain and wonderful and the pictures tell the story of Christ to come; each word dripping with hints of His glory and His work.

The message is always about Jesus, either looking forward to Him, or picturing Him, or both. Man's redemption is tied up in this one Man who came to pay our debt and which He will then forget, represented by Manasseh.

And then He became doubly fruitful, saving both Jew and Gentile, represented by Ephraim. But Ephraim gave us a deeper taste of Christ, who bore our judgment. We are but dust and deserve being reduced to ashes, and yet He took our judgment upon Himself.

The cross of Jesus Christ is the hinge upon which all of history rotates. It opens the door of heaven and it also shuts the door of heaven. It is open now through His blood for each person who hears and believes. Come through that door while there is still time. When the door shuts, it will be too late.

Closing Verse: *So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD. Deuteronomy 8:3*

Next Week: Genesis 42:1-17 (The Giver of Grain) (104th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Government Upon His Shoulder

Joseph was thirty years old when he stood
Before Pharaoh king of Egypt
Certainly, things were looking good

And we are told that Joseph went out
From the presence of Pharaoh
To all the land of Egypt he went throughout
Through the broad avenues and side streets so narrow

Now in the seven plentiful years
The ground brought forth abundantly
In Egypt there were many cheers

So he gathered up all the food of the seven years
Which were in Egypt the land
And laid up the food in the cities
In storehouses ever so grand

He laid up the food of the fields
Which surrounded them in every city
And he did it, believe it or not, without a congressional committee

Joseph gathered very much grain
As the sand of the sea it was stored
Until he stopped counting, so much they did obtain
For it was immeasurable, a vastly immense hoard

And to Joseph were born two sons
Before the years of famine came
She the daughter of Poti-Pherah Priest of On
Bore them to him, and Asenath was her name
Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh:
"For God has made me forget
All my toil and all my father's house
As if the payment of an immense debt

And the name of the second he called Ephraim:
"For God has caused me fruitful to be
In the land of my affliction, like a dream
He has multiplied me most abundantly

Then the seven years of plenty
Which were in the land of Egypt ended

And the seven years of famine began to come
As Joseph had said, the abundance was no longer extended

The famine was in all lands, it quickly spread
But in all the land of Egypt there was bread

So when all the land of Egypt was famished
The people cried to Pharaoh for bread
Then Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians
“Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, do as he said.”

The famine was over all the face of the earth
And Joseph opened all the storehouses
And sold to the Egyptians, sustaining them through the dearth

And the famine became severe
In the land of Egypt things had turned austere

So all countries came to Joseph
In Egypt they came to buy grain
Because the famine was severe in all lands
The famine which God did foreordain

We need bread to eat lest we waste away
But there is a greater need than bread from the field
We have the need for Jesus, the Bread of Life
Who through Him our heavenly destiny is sealed

God sent His Son to feed us by giving us His life
There upon the rugged cross of Calvary
And through His blood ends our enmity and strife
Peace with God
Golden streets we'll trod
Fellowship, communion, and the light of eternal glory

Hallelujah and Amen..

GENESIS 42:1-17 **(THE GIVER OF GRAIN)**

Introduction: Symbolism is used throughout the Bible as a common way of teaching us spiritual truths. The elements - fire, water, wind, and earth each point to a spiritual truth. Trees, grain, bread, rocks, rivers, mountains, and so on are all used to reveal spiritual truths from a perspective which we can understand.

Light and darkness do this, types of metal, and the times of the day are all used in a harmonious fashion to reveal other truths. Some are very easy for us to see, others are hidden in such deep little recesses that they can be easily misunderstood or misused.

However, by knowing the overall contents of the Bible, it is much easier to avoid error when evaluating metaphors and other types of symbolism. There is a cohesive, overall message and each symbol will consistently reflect the intention of this message. Do you know what yeast symbolizes? The number 7? How about incense?

When you see such things, make note of them. God is asking us to pay attention. He didn't throw in a lot of unnecessary detail when He gave us this book. Instead, He uses every word as a wonderful display of wisdom and direction for us to follow.

Text Verse: *Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together,
O undesirable nation,
² Before the decree is issued,
Or the day passes like chaff,
Before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you,
Before the day of the LORD's anger comes upon you!
³ Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth,
Who have upheld His justice.
Seek righteousness, seek humility.
It may be that you will be hidden
In the day of the LORD's anger. Zephaniah 2:1-3*

The Day of the Lord isn't always easy to define. It is used to describe calamities of the past, but it is also used for the great final time of judgment on an earth which will be so far removed from Him that judgment is the only option left. When the tribulation comes, it will also be a time of renewal for His people Israel.

They will be purified through the fire of the Day of the Lord before they call on Him and He returns. This isn't mere speculation, or one possible analysis of what may happen. It is what will happen. And God has given us pictures of it in Genesis to confirm that Israel is not abandoned and the church has not replaced her.

Sometimes figuring these things out takes really hard work, but it is in the hard work that the rewards come out. So together, let's get back into the life of Joseph and earnestly work to see what God has placed there for us to see. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Grain in Egypt (1-5)

¹When Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt,

Here we begin chapter 42 with Jacob and his family in the distress of the famine which has swept throughout the land. He hasn't been mentioned since chapter 37 when his sons brought to him the coat of Joseph which had been dipped in blood. He is now reintroduced into the story as the leader of the clan but not the center of focus.

It says that he "saw there was grain in Egypt." This immediately shows us that everything is governed by God and His providential care for His people. Here he is sitting up in Canaan, not Egypt. And yet it says that he sees Egypt has grain.

This means someone told him about it as they passed through. For all we know, it could have been the same group of traders who once carried his son Joseph down to Egypt. By hearing about grain from them, he sees that there is grain down there.

It's common for the Bible to use the action of one thing in place of another. In this case, that of hearing from the people who obtained grain is used in terminology applied to Jacob as if he sees it.

An unusual word for "grain" is used here. The word is *shever* and it comes from a word meaning to break. The idea is either that the kernel of a grain is broken to get out the grain, or that the earth is broken open when the grain sprouts up. The word is used only nine times in the Bible.

The first seven are all in this account. The other two are in Nehemiah and Amos and are both used in connection with the Sabbath day. In the New Testament, we come across this account about Jesus, His disciples, and grain on the Sabbath -

"At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ² And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!'" Matthew 12:1, 2

¹ (Con't) **Jacob said to his sons, "Why do you look at one another?"**

The picture here is one of misery. There's obviously nothing to do. There are no fields to plow and there is only heat and misery from the famine. In a case like this, sitting around looking at one another seems all you can do. It is life in a rut and one without hope or direction that we are seeing here.

² **And he said, "Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die."**

This verse now explains the previous one. Jacob didn't actually see the grain in Egypt, he heard about it, but with the mind's eye he saw it. He now perceives a glimmer of hope and the prospect of eating a full meal again. And so in that hope, he directs the sons to head to Egypt so that they "may live and not die."

This second verse again uses the term *shever* for grain. Jacob is telling them to go buy it for the family to keep them alive. And this is more important that one would realize while flipping quickly through the pages as they read the story.

A famine isn't something that just affects people in the short term. If it were to start raining *that day*, it would still be one full season before food started coming up in useable quantities once again. Other than grass for animals which would come up more quickly, the straights would not go away without action at this time.

*In the Bible there is spiritual food to satisfy
Grain in abundance to fill our weary soul
So may we daily this wonderful word apply
And our lives will stay content, filled, and in always control*

³ **So Joseph's ten brothers went down to buy grain in Egypt.**

Note what it said... Let's read it again. "So Joseph's ten brothers..." Jacob isn't the focus here, is he? Joseph is. He is the picture of Christ and he is the one to whom the brothers

are accountable for having sold him. And so, *Joseph's* ten brothers went down to buy grain. One brother is left as will be explained in a minute.

But a different word for grain is used here. It's not *shever*, but *bar*. You'd never get this in the English. The word comes from another word *barar*, which means to purify, select, or test. It is probably threshed and winnowed grain as opposed to grain in the shell.

Threshing and winnowing is a process of separating grain from the scaly, inedible chaff that surrounds it. The grain is threshed to break the scale and then it is winnowed by throwing the grain into the breeze. The heavier grain falls back down and the scale, which is light and airy, flies off with the wind. Thus the grain is purified.

The process is described for various grains by Isaiah in a beautiful picture of their purification. Here is that passage from Isaiah 28 -

²³ Give ear and hear my voice,
Listen and hear my speech.

²⁴ Does the plowman keep plowing all day to sow?
Does he keep turning his soil and breaking the clods?

²⁵ When he has leveled its surface,
Does he not sow the black cummin
And scatter the cummin,
Plant the wheat in rows,
The barley in the appointed place,
And the spelt in its place?

²⁶ For He instructs him in right judgment,
His God teaches him.

²⁷ For the black cummin is not threshed with a threshing sledge,
Nor is a cartwheel rolled over the cummin;
But the black cummin is beaten out with a stick,
And the cummin with a rod.

²⁸ Bread *flour* must be ground;
Therefore he does not thresh it forever,
Break *it with* his cartwheel,
Or crush it *with* his horsemen.

²⁹ This also comes from the LORD of hosts,
Who is wonderful in counsel *and* excellent in guidance. (23-29)

In Zephaniah 3:9, the word *barar*, which is where the word *bar* or purified grain comes from, is used speaking of the language of the people being purified -

"For then I will restore to the peoples a **pure** language,
That they all may call on the name of the LORD,
To serve Him with one accord."

And so that you can see there is a contrast between these grains, and that they are not being used synonymously, both types of grain, *bar* and *shever*, are used in one verse in Amos 8:5 -

"When will the New Moon be past,
That we may sell **grain**?
And the Sabbath,
That we may trade **wheat**?
Making the ephah small and the shekel large,
Falsifying the scales by deceit,"

If you were here last week, you may remember that Amos 8 was the passage that referred to the famine for the word of God and it used the swelling and subsiding of the Nile as its example. It's not coincidence that the same chapter and passage mentions both grains that are mentioned now in this chapter of Genesis.

From chapter 42 through chapter 45, these two words, *shever* and *bar*, will be used nine times; *shever* 6 times and *bar* 3 times. Each time they're used, I'll try to remember to highlight it in the verse.

After the last time they're used, I'll try to remember to explain what's going on. Each word is used carefully and methodically to point to something else concerning Israel, yet future to us now. To help you, remember that Jesus uses grain in the parable of the sower in Mark 4. The symbolism is perfectly clear if you can make that connection. So you can get a spiritual picture of other agricultural metaphors God is using, listen to what John the Baptist says concerning the winnowing process in Matthew 3:11, 12 -

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹² His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."

To help you think all this through, remember, Joseph is picturing Christ who was sold off to the gentiles. The brothers picture Israel. They are going down to get grain from Egypt where they will meet Joseph. Israel will again meet Jesus. The grain is the word of God. And all of this is happening during the seven years of famine.

These years picture the tribulation period coming in the future. As we continue along, try to keep these pictures in mind. Israel - it is all pointing to Israel after the church age and their divinely appointed meeting with their long-estranged Messiah.

These ten sons are going down to Egypt together for probably a few reasons. The first is certainly for safety. As a group they are much less likely to be robbed. Also, the grain is probably sold by individual and so ten individuals can buy for ten families. And finally, even if any amount could be purchased, ten - along with their servants, can carry much more than one.

⁴ But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, "Lest some calamity befall him."

Jacob lost his favorite boy Joseph. Benjamin is the only son left from Rachel and so he is his only connection to the most important part of his life. Because of this, and in order to spare him from any possible mishap, he keeps Benjamin at home.

He uses a word here that indicates some sort of personal injury. Whatever could happen, he will do his best to keep it from happening. The journey will have to be made without Benjamin. But remember, Benjamin also pictures Christ in another way. His name means, Son of the Right Hand.

⁵ And the sons of Israel went to buy *grain* among those who journeyed, for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

It's apparent that this famine was very widespread because other travelers were heading to Egypt along with the brothers. Unlike other recorded famines which were at times localized, this one covered the land. If it wasn't so, then there would have been no need for the family of Israel to go to Egypt.

Instead, they could have gotten what they needed closer by, like Isaac did when there was a famine at his time. God has ensured that there would be a need to travel to Egypt for a divine meeting with the son who had been appointed as the leader of the land.

And what is more than probable, although not stated here, is that there were more from Jacob's clan than just the ten sons. In the camp there were many servants, there were sisters, grandchildren, and so on. It could have been in the thousands. And so, many servants would certainly have come with them to carry supplies.

II. The Governor of the Land (6-9)

⁶ Now Joseph was governor over the land; and it was he who sold to all the people of the land.

Joseph is called the *governor*. The term is *shalit* and is where the Arabic word we know as "sultan" comes from. Some believe they adopted the title of "sultan" because of the example of Joseph in this story. He is the premier example of such a position.

He is the one who domineers or has mastery over others. In this case, he is the one who has been placed in charge of the sale of the grain to all people of the land.

^{6 (con't)} And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down before him with *their* faces to the earth.

This would have been the customary greeting of anyone who was coming to Joseph for food. Because of his position, and because of his ability which at this point literally controlled life or death, when a customer came forward, they bowed right to the earth in a sign of submission.

Without his favor and the sale of the grain, they couldn't exist, or they would have to pay exorbitant prices from someone else who had already bought grain. And so the brothers came like all others; humbly submitting for their sake and for the sake of their families.

⁷ Joseph saw his brothers and recognized them, but he acted as a stranger to them and spoke roughly to them. Then he said to them, "Where do you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan to buy food."

It has been at least 20 years since the brothers saw Joseph. He was 17 when they sold him. He was 30 when he stood before Pharaoh. That is then 13 years. There were seven years of abundance before the famine started. That is 20 years. And, it's probably even more than a year since then.

By the time he reveals himself to his brothers, it will be two full years into the famine. So this is between 21 and 22 years of Joseph having not been seen by them. He would be clean shaven and adorned as an Egyptian ruler. Further, the brothers would never look directly at him as a sign of respect.

Along with this, he speaks to them through a translator, as we'll see later in verse 23. And so, because of these things, it is not at all improbable that they won't recognize him. There is nothing in the account to suggest that it isn't possible. They would have no idea of who they are talking to.

In this position as a stranger, it says he spoke roughly to them. This wasn't him being vindictive because of what they had done, but to see if they were repentant or not. He will use this harsh demeanor towards them to find out. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 7:10, wrote about this attitude. He said that -

"...godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."

In this position then, and accompanied by his rough manner, he asks them where they are from. Their response is from Canaan.

⁸ So Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.

He probably knew who they were immediately, and when they bowed to him, the memory of the dream may have come right to mind. However, this is not the fulfillment of the dream and he would know that. There are 10, not 11, brothers there before him.

Once he heard them speak, he would be certain of who they were. They are from Canaan and their voices couldn't conceal what the years may have hidden in their faces.

⁹ Then Joseph remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them,

This says what is already certain, "Joseph remembered the dreams." It doesn't mean he suddenly remembered the dreams, but he remembered their substance - there were 11 sons, not 10. In other words, the dreams would have come to mind right away, but the fact that Benjamin isn't there, again recalls them to mind.

And so he sets up a pretext in order to find out about Benjamin. Back in Genesis 37:3, it said "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he *was* the son of his old age." As we saw then, the Hebrew literally says he was a "son of old age to him."

This probably means, "a wise son." It wasn't speaking of Jacob's advanced *physical age*, but Joseph's advanced *mental age*; wisdom and understanding beyond his years. This wisdom has grown with age and he is using it now to bring about the truth of the situation, repentance by his brothers, and the deliverance of his family.

If that doesn't speak of Jesus and His future dealings with the nation of Israel, I can't think of what would. It is all leading to that point in history where they will finally acknowledge Him. The events here only look forward to that great day.

^{9 (con't)} **and said to them, "You *are* spies! You have come to see the nakedness of the land!"**

His reason for holding them in jail is seen in this verse. He calls them spies. By doing so, it will justify how he deals with them. The term "spies" is *meragellim*, a word which means to go about on foot. He says they have come to "see the nakedness of the land." This is what spies do.

They go about on foot, looking for vulnerabilities in cities, in their infrastructure, in their military, and in any other way that would allow their allies to conduct battle against them. When a person is naked, they are left completely vulnerable and will cover their most private parts at the expense of other more vital parts.

This is what spies look for. The grain and gold would be protected and this would leave open areas which are actually more vital, like the Nile River or the city walls which may have weaknesses.

This is what he is accusing the brothers of. Instead of coming to buy grain, it is only a ploy to find other weaknesses. If they brought many servants with them, it would seem all the more probable that they were working as spies among the big group.

III. Bound in Prison (10-17)

¹⁰ **And they said to him, "No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food.**

"No" is their answer. The food is the only thing they're interested in. They aren't walking around on foot in an attempt to find weaknesses. Instead, they have come simply to find food in order to live. They have no other hidden agenda. And to support this, they go on with their explanation...

¹¹ We are all one man's sons; we are honest men; your servants are not spies."

In their defense, they make what would otherwise be an impossible claim. It would be unheard of for ten brothers from the same family to spy like this. If one son got caught, all ten would get caught and there would be no one left to execute the plan.

It would be beyond logic for 10 brothers to all be spies working together at the same time, even if they had other servants who came along with them.

¹² But he said to them, "No, but you have come to see the nakedness of the land."

The wisdom of Joseph is being displayed. Instead of accepting their words, which is completely unnecessary, he continues to accuse them. They are 10 people, born of 3 different mothers. Because of this, they would have had different features and so there is no need to accept their words at face value.

In order to get them to offer more information, which he knows will be forthcoming, he once again says they've come to search out the land and its weaknesses.

¹³ And they said, "Your servants are twelve brothers, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and in fact, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no more."

To support their claim, they give more information, but in giving this they will only dig themselves in deeper. What they think is a full explanation is one which continues to allow Joseph room to accuse them.

They say that they are twelve brothers; no problem there. They are "the sons of one man" back in Canaan. Well, that would explain the different looks. "Sons of one man" implies more than one wife. So, no problem there. But they then claim that the youngest is with the father. This is a problem.

If they had explained *why* he was with the father, such as if he were too young, or an invalid, or whatever, it would be harder to disbelieve them. But why would one brother,

of 12 brothers who are all over 35 years old, not be with them? If they were honest people, he would be needed to buy grain as well.

And finally they almost morbidly finish their statement - *v'ha-echad ainaynu*. Speaking in an elliptical sentence, they simply say "and the one, no."

An elliptical sentence does not mean a sentence with an ellipsis in it. If you don't know what that is, an ellipsis is three periods which symbolize missing information. Instead, an elliptical sentence refers to sentences *with* information missing.

If you ask, "What is a beard?" The complete answer would be, "A beard is the fluffy hair on Charlie's face." But an elliptical would be "The fluffy hair on Charlie's face." It leaves off "A beard is..."

With an inability to state that Joseph is dead, they simply say, "And the one, no." It is inferred that he is dead, but the inference would be, as Joseph knows all too well, wrong. This is just like Jesus who is believed to be dead, but in fact, He lives.

¹⁴ But Joseph said to them, "It is as I spoke to you, saying, 'You are spies!'"

Because of what they said about Benjamin, not Joseph, he can again accuse them of being spies. They don't look alike, they have made a claim which sounds preplanned, and now they have thrown more information in without reasonable substantiation for it.

However, the truth is that he can look into the situation with complete knowledge and no matter what they answer, he will be able to find accusation against them. In this, we have a parallel to Jesus who knows us intimately. There is no place we can go that He isn't aware of, and there is no thing we can hide from Him.

¹⁵ In this manner you shall be tested: By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here.

Many scholars claim that Joseph doesn't believe them about Benjamin, as if they might have killed him too. This is unreasonable. If Benjamin was dead, they would have said that he was dead. There would be no reason to say otherwise.

Joseph would have every reason to believe that Benjamin was home with his father. First, because the dream was specific and he knew it was from God. Secondly, he would

know how important Benjamin was to Jacob now supposing that Joseph was dead. And so he tests them with a vow on the life of Pharaoh.

Again though, an elliptical is used. The Hebrew simply says, "life of Pharaoh." So Joseph is either saying, "by the life of Pharaoh" or he is saying, "as Pharaoh lives." Either way, he is calling on the highest authority in the land as witness that what he now demands will come about or his sentence will stand.

¹⁶ Send one of you, and let him bring your brother; and you shall be kept in prison, that your words may be tested to see whether *there is* any truth in you; or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you *are* spies!"

What Joseph is mandating now would be enough to make the hardest of men groan in terror. There is a dire need for food in Canaan. There is an entire camp of people who belong to Jacob who need to be fed and there is the horrifying thought that Benjamin will be required in Egypt.

If Benjamin isn't sent, they will be doomed to prison and possibly to death. But more so, without Benjamin being sent, there will be no more food to sustain the family. Everything is against them at this point. Without Benjamin, the son of the right hand, they have no hope at all. They are as good as dead. Do you see Jesus in this?

***¹⁷ So he put them all together in prison three days.**

Once, these same brothers threw him into a pit to be sold off to a foreign land. Now in that foreign land, they are bound in prison at his word. The irony of it is amazing. It doesn't tell why he threw them in for three days and we will find out it isn't three full days.

But any part of a day in the Bible is counted as a full day. We do the same thing in English all the time. If we go on a trip from Monday afternoon until Wednesday at noon, we will say we were gone for three days when we were really gone about two days.

And so we've come to the end of today's passage. We've seen a few examples of how to apply these things to our lives, we've seen the beginning of some beautiful pictures of the reconciliation of Israel to their long estranged Messiah, and with that, the coming wondrous period where Christ will dwell in Jerusalem.

Before those things happen, it is our hope that we will be taken out of the world at the rapture. But when Christ comes for His people, it will only be for His people.

Closing Verse: *I will strengthen the house of Judah,
And I will save the house of Joseph.
I will bring them back,
Because I have mercy on them.
They shall be as though I had not cast them aside;
For I am the LORD their God,
And I will hear them. Zechariah 10:6*

Next Week: Genesis 42:18-28 (The Lord Provides the Grain) (105th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

There's Grain in Egypt

When Jacob saw that in Egypt there was grain
Jacob then to his sons said
“Why do you look at one another again and again?”
What kind of thoughts are there in your head?

And he said, “Indeed I have heard
That in Egypt there is grain
Go down to that place, to delay would be absurd
And buy food for us there, our lives to maintain

That we may live and not die
It may be a long shot, but let us try

So Joseph’s ten brothers went
Down to buy grain in Egypt without further dissent

But Jacob did not send Joseph’s brother Benjamin
With them for he said, “Lest some calamity befall him.”

And the sons of Israel went to buy
Grain among those who journeyed too

For the famine was in the land of Canaan so dry
Going to Egypt was the right thing to do

Now Joseph was governor over the land
And it was he who sold to all
To the people, and by his command
To all the people great and small

And Joseph's brothers came
And before him bowed down
With their faces to the earth
To the man in Egypt of great renown

Joseph saw his brothers, yes his eyes were attracted
And recognized them right away
But to them as a stranger he acted
And spoke roughly to them and surely to their dismay

Then he said to them in a manner shrewd
"From where do you come?"
And they said, "From the land of Canaan to buy food."
Would you please sell us some?

So Joseph his brothers he recognized
But to them he remained disguised

Then Joseph remembered the dreams
Which them he had dreamed about
And said to them, "You are spies!
You've come to search us out

You have come to see the nakedness of the land!"
To surely search us out; this I understand

And they said to him, "No, my lord,
But your servants have come to buy food
Please hear the truth now in our word

We are all one man's sons

We are honest men, faithful and true
Your servants are not spies
It's not something we would ever do

But he said to them, "No, but you have come
To see the nakedness of the land
And if attacked whether we would succumb

And they said, "Twelve your servants are
Brothers, the sons of one man
In the land of Canaan, we have traveled far
Only to feed our family is our hopeful plan

And in fact, the youngest is with our father today
And one is no more; truthful are the words we say

But Joseph to them said
"It is as I spoke to you, saying,
'You are spies instead
Watch your words, with fire you are playing

In this manner tested you shall be
By the life of Pharaoh, my words thus sincere
You shall not leave this place ever, you see
Unless your youngest brother comes down here

Send one of you, and let him bring
Your brother; and shall be kept in prison each of you
That your words may be tested in this thing
To see whether there is any truth in you

Or else, by the Pharaoh's life
Surely you are spies, come to bring us strife

So he put them all together in prison three days
They awaited their fate under the guard's gaze

Jesus was three days in the prison of death, so cold
But he prevailed over it because in him no sin was found

And now we can be released from death's strong hold
By calling on Him, eternal life will abound

Let us make the right choice while time is on our side
We know not the number of our days
So let us turn away from our sin and pride
And call on Jesus, and to God give resounding praise

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 42:18-28 **(THE LORD PROVIDES THE GRAIN)**

Introduction: The sons of Israel had sold the favorite son of the father off to the gentiles where he became the ruler of all of the land of Egypt. Now that there has been an extended famine in the land, they are in need of food and so they have been sent to Egypt to find it there.

However, Joseph recognized them and accused them of being spies, throwing them into prison saying that they must remain in Egypt while one of them brings the youngest brother back to prove their story. With the start of our verses, it is now the third day and, all but one of them will be released to carry out the task.

Joseph is using time and circumstance to bring about a change in his brothers before he reveals himself to them. And this is what Jesus has been doing too. Though the time frame is millennia instead of days, the work is being done and a great time of reunion and reconciliation is ahead.

Text Verse: *I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? Certainly not! But through their fall, to provoke them to jealousy, salvation has come to the Gentiles. ¹² Now if their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness! Romans 11:11, 12*

Had Israel not fallen, the promises of the Old Testament Kingdom Age would have been realized immediately. But in His infinite wisdom and to serve the greater good, Israel went into a time of blindness, not seeing their Messiah for who He is.

But that time will end and the healing will come. Eventually, they will see Jesus as the fulfillment of all of their hopes and will confess Him as their own. It probably won't be long now. They are back in their land and the times are coming to their fulfillment, just as His word shows us.

Let's go there again today and see the continuation of this beautiful unfolding story. And so...May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Time to Reflect on Deeds of the Past (18-21)

¹⁸ Then Joseph said to them the third day, "Do this and live, for I fear God:

The last verse we read last week said, "So he put them all together in prison three days." Let's remember that any part of a day in the Bible is considered a day. If someone arrives at 3pm on Monday, that is considered a day. When Christ rose on Sunday morning, that is considered a day.

This is important because we're now told that it is the third day since the brothers were bound in prison. The Bible gave the number and so it is asking us to think on that number. The Jews rejected Christ and they have been in exile for 2000 years.

Consider that their time in prison. The brothers had time for reflection while there, and the Jewish people have had the past 2000 years as a time of reflection while they have been dispersed from their land. Now they can look back on that time and put it in its proper perspective.

The brothers are being prepared for an open meeting with Joseph by what he is doing now. And this looks forward to the coming meeting between Israel and Jesus. Hosea gives us an insight into this -

¹ Come, and let us return to the LORD;
For He has torn, but He will heal us;
He has stricken, but He will bind us up.
² After two days He will revive us;
On the third day He will raise us up,
That we may live in His sight. Hosea 6:1, 2

As a day represents a thousand years, we see Israel will be revived after two days and raised up on the third. They are now revived as a people, after the tribulation period, they will be raised up. This time of the brothers in prison and then being released on the third day appears to be a brief picture of that before the story continues.

And so Joseph now says to them *ha'elohim ani yare* - "**The** God I do fear." He uses a definite article in front of God saying "the God." This would have been a huge relief to the brothers because if this person fears "the God" and not just one of the Egyptian gods, then he would in essence be their ally in the truth.

People swear by God all the time without being honest, but when the governor of the entire land of Egypt speaks to them as fearing *the God* when he had no need to because

of his position and authority, then they can be confident that whatever he does will be completely fair towards them.

¹⁹ If you *are* honest *men*, let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house; but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses.

Because he has invoked "the God" he is now obligating himself to "the God." In response to that premise, he then says, "If you are honest men...." The subtle hint here is that, "I am completely honest because I am accountable to God. Now we will see if you are completely honest because *you* are accountable to me."

And as an offer of good faith in himself and the expectancy of good faith from them, he turns around his original edict which said that one of them would go back to Canaan and nine would stay in jail. Now nine will go back home and one will stay in jail.

The rest are told they can carry grain for their houses because of the famine. There's no doubt he intended to let them go all along because he knew his family would need food, but by keeping them in jail for three days, he'd know it would impress on them that they were completely at his disposal.

He knows the famine will be for seven years, he knows they will need more food, and he knows that there will be one in jail to remind them that they needed to do what he tells them. He is using exceptional wisdom while allowing them to see his mercy and his grace towards them.

*Go and carry grain for the famine of your houses
I know there is a need which must be fulfilled
Take the food to your children, servants, and spouses
The food will sustain you, so do as I have willed*

Jesus is written all over the account. He has protected Israel over the past 2000 years. They rejected Him, but He has kept them as a people, just as He promised throughout the Old Testament. They may suffer hardship, but He will never completely abandon them. He has faithfully provided the grain they need to live.

²⁰ And bring your youngest brother to me; so your words will be verified, and you shall not die."

After his words of release and his implicit vow of integrity towards them, he gives them his explicit warning. The Hebrew says emphatically, "And your brother, the little one, you shall cause to come to me." And as a reminder why - "And you shall not die."

Without Benjamin, there will be no sense in returning to Egypt for more food and they will die. Or, without Benjamin, if they return to Egypt for more food, they will die. Either way, without him being included, they will not make it through the ordeal ahead.

It's a little early to see this, but we should determine why Benjamin didn't come and who he is picturing. Jacob is Israel, the collective Israel of the ages. The brothers are the individual tribes. Rachel, Jacob's beloved wife, pictured the grace of the New Testament.

Joseph pictures Christ as the one to add gentiles into salvation, hence his name - *Yosef*, "He shall add." But Benjamin is also a son of Rachel. He actually pictures Christ in another way. In this verse, he is called *akhikem ha'qaton* - "Your brother, the little one."

Benjamin is the youngest, but he's over 30 years old. He's not a baby. But the term is used to point us to a group of people in the New Testament. Luke 12:32 cites Jesus when speaking to the Jews who were willing to follow Him -

"Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Benjamin then is picturing Christ, but also those who are in Christ from Israel. He is the youngest of Israel and yet the cherished and beloved of Israel because of Jesus. This will be clarified in the sermons ahead.

Later, we'll see that Jacob adopts Joseph's sons as his own. And so it becomes clear. The gentile people who are in Christ are pictured by Joseph's marriage to a gentile. The Jews who are in Christ are pictured by Benjamin - the Jews who have called on Jesus.

²⁰ (con't) **And they did so.**

One is left in prison, the others get their things ready for the trek back to Canaan. But as they do, the events of the past three days come out. What was a time of reflection in prison has become a time of regret and repentance now that they have been released.

²¹ Then they said to one another, “We *are* truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us.”

In the entire book of Genesis, this is the only time that sin is personally acknowledged. Imagine that! This book covers about 2500 years of human history and it contains some of the greatest acts of wickedness in the Bible, and yet personally acknowledging wrongdoing before God is as rare as this one occasion.

Their short time in prison, among other things, has now led to one of the most prominent examples of the power of the conscience in the entire Bible. It's been about 22 years since the time that Joseph was cast into the pit and sold into slavery.

During all of that time, it appears that they had never reflected on what they had done. But the conscience is a powerful force which will eventually find its rightful place. And indeed, everything done by Joseph has been targeted to remind them of what they did.

Genesis 37 says they "conspired against Joseph to kill him." Now in this chapter Joseph has accused them of being in a conspiracy to spy on Egypt. Joseph pleaded with his brothers and they wouldn't listen. Now, they pleaded for food, and Joseph wouldn't listen.

They threw him into a pit and he in turn threw them into prison. The account drips with irony and everything that has happened has been precisely arranged by him to prompt their memories and to hopefully awaken their conscience... and it has succeeded.

Throughout the Bible, there are examples of people who are conscience-stricken over guilt. Then there are people whose consciences are seared to the point where nothing, no matter how wicked it is, bothers them at all. In them the conscience will have all eternity to sort out the actions left unattended in this life.

There are also examples of those whose consciences are clean. Others are shown to have theirs purified. There are those who suffer as if they were wrongdoers and yet they did nothing wrong. Instead their conscience remain undefiled because of right living.

Doing a study on the work of the conscience in the Bible reveals almost every possible scenario one could think of among humans. And this verse here shows us that when we are put into the same position as those we have harmed, it can lead to an understanding of what they went through and a remorse in the conscience.

Yes, the brothers threw Joseph into the pit and then abandoned him to his fate. They have now been thrown into prison and one of them will be abandoned to a sad fate if they don't act rightly. The tables have been turned and now they see the error of their ways.

But more than Joseph's own story is the greater picture of Jesus and Israel. Joseph was in the anguish of his soul and they wouldn't hear; they wouldn't listen. Jesus was in the anguish of his soul and those around Him wouldn't listen as well.

In the 22nd Psalm, the same word for Joseph's anguish at that time is applied to the anguish of Jesus. The parallel between the two is simply remarkable. In these words, we can almost feel the pain of both of them and reflect on how they must have felt -

⁹ But You *are* He who took Me out of the womb;
You made Me trust *while* on My mother's breasts.

¹⁰ I was cast upon You from birth.

From My mother's womb

You *have been* My God.

¹¹ Be not far from Me,

For **trouble** *is* near; (**tsarah**)

For *there is* none to help.

¹² Many bulls have surrounded Me;

Strong *bulls* of Bashan have encircled Me.

¹³ They gape at Me *with* their mouths,

Like a raging and roaring lion.

¹⁴ I am poured out like water,

And all My bones are out of joint;

My heart is like wax;

It has melted within Me.

¹⁵ My strength is dried up like a potsherd,

And My tongue clings to My jaws;

You have brought Me to the dust of death.

¹⁶ For dogs have surrounded Me;

The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.

They pierced My hands and My feet;

¹⁷ I can count all My bones.

They look *and* stare at Me.

¹⁸ They divide My garments among them,

And for My clothing they cast lots.

If it seems as though the connection between Joseph and Jesus, and the brothers and Israel is a stretch, I should note that the same term in this verse is used for both Joseph and what they are now facing.

The verse says, "we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us." Both "anguish" and "distress" are the word *tsarah*. As it was applied to Jesus in 22nd Psalm, so it is applied to Israel in Jeremiah 30:7 -

"Alas! For that day *is* great,
So that none *is* like it;
And it *is* the time of Jacob's **trouble, (tsarah)**
But he shall be saved out of it."

The term "Jacob's trouble" is speaking of the tribulation period which will happen after the rapture of the church. What Joseph suffered, the brothers will now face. What Jesus suffered, Israel will also endure. The parallels should not be missed.

Joseph came through his ordeal and is in the process of being reconciled to His brothers. And Jesus... He made it through as well and is, even today, working towards that great moment of reconciliation with His own brothers of Israel. The tribulation period will refine them and bring them to their Messiah.

*Oh! How this great distress has been brought upon us
For we surely saw the anguish of His soul upon Calvary's tree
When He pleaded but we would not hear - our Lord Jesus
And yet He calls once again to undeserving you and undeserving me...*

It has to be admitted that the distress of his brothers and that of Israel were both self-inflicted, but for both of them the distress will come to an end in the presence of their long estranged brother.

II. The Lord Who Weeps (22-27)

²² And Reuben answered them, saying, "Did I not speak to you, saying, 'Do not sin against the boy'; and you would not listen? Therefore behold, his blood is now required of us."

Reuben never agreed to the deed of harming Joseph. While the others had him in the pit and finally sold him off to the Midianites, Reuben was in the fields tending to his flocks, maybe looking for a way to get him out of the pit and restore him to Jacob.

He has specifically told them not to harm the boy and he gives the reason for it here. He says, *v'gam da-mow hinneh nidrash* - "And therefore his blood, behold it is required." What is he saying?

Reuben remembered the words of God which were spoken to Noah 640 years earlier. The flood was over, the ark was opened, and Noah built an altar and made an offering to the Lord. After this, the Lord said this to him -

⁵"Surely for your lifeblood I will demand *a reckoning*; from the hand of every beast I will require it, and from the hand of man. From the hand of every man's brother I will require the life of man.

⁶"Whoever sheds man's blood,
By man his blood shall be shed;
For in the image of God
He made man." Genesis 9:5, 6

Reuben was certain that divine justice was now required because of what they did. Whether he was dead or not, they had consigned him to whatever fate, including death, a slave would face.

*From the hand of every man's brother
I will require the life of man, for the one dead
Whoever sheds man's blood, the life of another
By man his blood shall certainly be shed*

Reuben pled with them, but they wouldn't listen, but this may explain why another action will be taken by Joseph who, though speaking through an interpreter understood everything they said...

²³ But they did not know that Joseph understood *them*, for he spoke to them through an interpreter.

At this time in history, the languages between the Hebrews, Canaan, Egypt, and Syria were all very similar. Most people could understand others about as well as someone in Florida might understand someone from Boston or another foreign city like that.

And so it could be that Joseph was speaking some royal dialect or pretending he didn't know Hebrew at all. Whatever the situation, they were speaking and had no idea that Joseph understood them. But that was enough for Joseph to finally lose himself...

²⁴ And he turned himself away from them and wept. Then he returned to them again, and talked with them.

Despite his treatment of the past, Joseph's heart never hardened towards his brothers. And now that the truly remorseful words of Reuben as well as the other brothers have come out, he can no longer stand the emotions which have arisen. And so he turned himself away from the moment and broke down in tears.

When Peter heard the crowing of the cock, he went outside and wept, when Jesus rode towards Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives on Palm Sunday, He wept over the city. And in Revelation, when John realized the sad situation that no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll before him, or to even look at it, he wept and wept.

Emotions are the shallowest part of us and yet they show us the deepest seat of who we are at the same time. Joseph's longing for his family never ended and the moment became too much to bear. But Jesus tells us in Matthew 5:4, "Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted."

Joseph's time of mourning will continue, but the end is now in sight. The long night is almost at a close and the joy of a new dawn lies ahead.

^{24 (con't)} And he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.

There is a lot of speculation as to why Simeon was the one who was bound and kept behind. Some traditions say it was he who was the main instigator in tossing Joseph into the pit and selling him. Others say it was because He was the oldest son of those who agreed to the plan. Reuben is the oldest, but he didn't consent to it.

And Joseph heard Reuben's words which cleared him. This then makes the most sense. I would suggest that the name Simeon also gives insight into what is happening. His name means, "He who hears." And so this is a picture of Israel not yet hearing the truth.

Again and again in the New Testament Jesus says, "He who has an ear, let him hear." The brothers were not yet ready to hear, and Israel is not yet ready as well. If it is this, or

some other reason, it says he was bound right before their eyes. This was done to remind them that the last time they saw him was in this condition.

It was also to remind them that they faced the exact same fate if they tried to come back without following through with his command. It is what we might call a speaking act. In other words, the action speaks for itself.

III. What Has God Done to Us? (25-28)

²⁵ Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain, to restore every man's money to his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. Thus he did for them.

There are a few different things happening here that you might not notice in English. First, Joseph commands to fill their sacks with grain, but the word for sacks is *keli*. That would be a completely different type of container than the other sack where the money and animal feed went.

That other type of sack is the Hebrew word *saq*. It's where the word we still use today comes from. Joseph commands that the *keli* for the food be filled with *bar* - purified grain. Then to put the money from each man into the sack along with the animal's fodder. And finally, to give them provisions for the journey.

In other words, they would have the sealed containers for the household grain; they would have the sacks for the animal's food; and they would probably have a take-along bag with prepared food for something to snack with on the way back to Canaan.

In all, he is completely supplying their needs for every step of the journey and doing it without any payment at all. Even though he has been very harsh in his attitude toward them, his care for them as his brothers is still evident.

The obvious question that should arise from this verse is, "Why did he return the money to their sacks?" The Jewish scholar Baumgarten is certainly correct when he says, that Joseph felt "it impossible to bargain with his father and his brethren for bread."

He's right, but he doesn't go far enough in his explanation. The money they brought to him in some way included the money they received for selling him in the first place. I looked and the very last time silver, or *keseq*, is mentioned in the Bible was when Joseph was sold. Listen to this -

"Then Midianite traders passed by; so *the brothers* pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty *shekels* of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt." Genesis 37:28

Wealth is one of those things that remains, even while it is spent. In other words, if we earn fifty dollars, it is added to our wealth. That same fifty dollars is a part of that wealth, even if the same fifty dollar bill is spent on a pair of shoes or food. The fifty dollars remains as a part of what we own, though it's in a different form.

What they think they are buying as food to live on is something Joseph will not sell. It by necessity must be a gift or it becomes an exchange of payment for what he was actually sold for. Do you see a picture of Christ here? I hope so.

²⁶ So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there.

Ok, this is the third time grain has been mentioned in today's sermon. In verse 19, Joseph said, "...let one of your brothers be confined to your prison house, but you, go and carry grain for the famine of your houses."

Then in the previous verse, it said, "Then Joseph gave a command to fill their sacks with grain." And now it says, "So they loaded their donkeys with the grain and departed from there." But in the Hebrew the two different words we saw last week are both used.

First Joseph says to take *shever*, then he gives a command to fill their containers with *bar*, then it says they loaded up with *shever*, not *bar*. *Shever* gives the idea of a kernel that is broken to get out the grain. *Bar* on the other hand is purified. It's been threshed and then winnowed.

What is the sense of using both types of grain in this way unless it is telling us something about the work of Christ for the people of Israel. Both types of grain are mentioned in one verse in Amos 8, so they are not being used synonymously. There is a distinct meaning for using both of them.

And there is also the consideration that it is about a 200 mile journey that they have been on. There would have been many servants with their animals who went with them. This would be a journey to get enough grain to last the entire camp of Jacob for as much as six months, but only the brothers have been mentioned.

God is asking us to focus on them, the brothers of Joseph, who picture the tribes of

Israel. Joseph is already the ruler, he has already endured the pit, and he is now working to be reconciled to his brothers and to care for them. Everything about this points to Israel of today coming back to the Lord Jesus.

The doctrines of preterism and replacement theology which say that prophecy is fulfilled and the church has replaced Israel are so foreign to these pictures that it is incomprehensible that people still believe them. What God is picturing here couldn't be clearer.

²⁷ But as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey feed at the encampment, he saw his money; and there it was, in the mouth of his sack.

The nine brothers are at their first night's stopping place and one of them opens his sack to get out fodder for his donkey. Right there at the mouth of the sack is his money. In Genesis 43 we'll see that because he found the money in his sack, the rest will look and find theirs too, but only one realizes it at first.

In this verse though, a different word for sack is used - *amtakhat*. The word is used 15 times in the Bible and all of them are concerning this story of the brothers *before* they come to know Joseph is their brother. The word *amtakhat* means "to spread out."

²⁸ So he said to his brothers, "My money has been restored, and there it is, in my sack!" Then their hearts failed them and they were afraid, saying to one another, "What is this that God has done to us?"

In utter surprise, he tells the others what happened. After this, the Hebrew says *v'yitse livam* - "their heart went out." Nowadays, we'd say our heart was ready to leap out of our mouth. And believing that it was divine judgment, they ask why God did this to them.

This takes us back to verse 19 where Joseph told them, "If you are honest men..." They must come back with Benjamin to get Simeon and this puts a touch of trouble in that proposition for them.

But the fact is, the Lord doesn't charge for what should be freely received. We see this explicitly noted in both testaments of the Bible. Money can't purchase what God freely offers. Grain makes bread and bread is what sustains us. Isaiah tells us about this in the 55th chapter of his book. A verse on the door of my truck -

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,
Come, buy and eat.
Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.
² Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread,
And your wages for *what* does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is* good,
And let your soul delight itself in abundance.

These brothers are looking to purchase what Joseph offers freely. The money is returned because it *cannot* be a part of the deal. And so it is with Israel. They cannot earn what God has freely offered, nor can any of us. The Bible says we are saved by grace through faith. Works are excluded, lest any man should boast.

It is the constant theme of the Bible. God is pleased to lavish His grace upon us. Joseph is pleased to offer grain to his brothers in anticipation of their presenting Benjamin to him. And the Lord is pleased to continue to sustain Israel until they call on Jesus - the Son of the Right Hand and to defend Him at the expense of their own lives. Something we will see in the coming pages of Genesis.

This is where we have to stop the story today. The brothers received their grain and they also received back their money. It is not money that the Lord wants, but truth, honesty, and a broken and contrite heart. What He offers comes freely when we are ready to receive it.

Closing Verse: *You visit the earth and water it,
You greatly enrich it;
The river of God is full of water;
You provide their grain,
For so You have prepared it. Psalm 65:9*

Next Week: Genesis 42:29-38 (Not Thinking Clearly in the Land of Canaan) (106th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Lord Provides the Grain

Then Joseph said to them the third day
“Do this and live, for I fear God:
If you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined away
To the prison house while off you trod

But you, go and carry grain
For the famine of your houses where you abide
And bring your youngest brother to me when you come again
So then your words will be verified

And you shall not die, it will be well with you
And they did so, the thing they were instructed to do

Then they said to one another
“We are truly guilty concerning our brother

For we saw the anguish of his soul that day
When with us he fervently pleaded
And we would not hear, we turned away
And so this distress has come upon us, his words were not heeded
And Reuben answered them, saying,
“Did I not speak to you, in this way
‘Do not sin against the boy, I am praying
And you would not listen to my words that day

Therefore behold, his blood is now of us required
And to us this terrible trial has transpired

But they did not know that Joseph them he understood
For he spoke to them through an interpreter
Though his Hebrew was really good

And he turned himself away from them and wept
Then he returned to them again and talked
As his composure now he kept

And he took Simeon from them, one of the accused spies

And bound him right there before their eyes

Then Joseph gave a command so they wouldn't lack
To fill their sacks with grain, well supplied
To restore every man's money to his sack
And to give them provisions for the ride

Thus he did for them, showing attentive care
So they loaded their donkeys with the grain
And off they departed from there

But as one of them opened his sack
To give his donkey feed at the encampment
He saw his money had been given back
And there it was, in the mouth of his sack...
A sight of confused enchantment

So to his brothers he said
"My money has been restored
And there it is, in my sack! Oh my head!"
This matter must be explored

Then their hearts failed them, each and every brother
And they were all of them sore afraid
And then saying to one another
"What is this that God has done to us?" So they were dismayed

Such is the nature of a conscience which isn't right
When the memory comes to the troubled mind
The thoughts that chase us and make us uptight
And tell past deeds done to others in a way unkind

And yes, every such thing will be judged by our God
He will peer into our lives and render to us our due
So we should with care and caution in this life tread
Living our lives for Him in a manner upright and true

And when we fail, let us confess
On bended knee with contrite heart

And God will in our moment of distress
Forgive us, yes divine mercy He will impart

Help us in our walk, O Lord, each and every day
To honor You and live for You; never to fall away

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 42:29-38 **(NOT THINKING CLEARLY IN THE LAND OF CANAAN)**

Introduction: Many of the verses we'll look at today are a recapitulation of what we've already seen. But we'll also see Jacob's response to them. This is a man who has seen the Lord at least three times and has heard from him even more than that.

If any person could claim, "Hey, I know the Lord is on my side..." it should be Jacob. Quite possibly the most intimate encounter with the Lord in all of the Old Testament was with Jacob as they wrestled in the night by the Jabbok River. He beheld the face of God in the form of the Man and he prevailed as they fought.

And yet, in today's verses, it's as if he had lived his life entirely apart from God. The Lord has never been mentioned in this chapter and the word "God" has been used only twice. Once it was by Joseph. The second time was by Jacob's son's questioning why God allowed something bad to happen to them.

Not only did Jacob fail to see God's hand in these events of his life, but he also failed to teach his children that the events of their lives were being directed by God for their good. This is a portion of Scripture which demonstrates abject failure and a complete lack of faith in the providence of God by God's people. What can we learn from it about our own lives?

Text Verse: ⁶ *You have laid me in the lowest pit,
In darkness, in the depths.*
⁷ *Your wrath lies heavy upon me,
And You have afflicted me with all Your waves. Selah Psalm 88:6, 7*

This psalmist, like Jacob, was laid in a low pit and felt the heavy wrath of the Lord upon him. But there is a difference between the two. Instead of whining about it, he talked to the Lord about it. Despite the horrors which engulfed him, he still found it possible to talk to the Lord through the trouble.

Jacob, despite being God's chosen man, still has a way to go in the development of his faith and of his walk. It is from the Bible that we learn how to do these things. His Superior Word is what guides us on this path and so let's turn to it again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Recounting the Journey (29-34)

²⁹ Then they went to Jacob their father in the land of Canaan and told him all that had happened to them, saying:

In the curious way the Bible does these things, the name "Jacob" is used five times in this chapter. The only time the name "Israel" is used is when speaking of the sons of Israel. In the next chapter though, the name Israel will be used three times and the name Jacob won't be used at all.

There is Jacob, the deceiver who is also deceived. And then there is Israel who struggles with God. Jacob is still deceived concerning his son Joseph and he has no hope of seeing him again. And as we'll see through the end of this chapter, he is unwilling to let Benjamin go back to Egypt to rescue the family.

It is Jacob, the man of flesh and blood, who is lost in the life of this world. And it is to him that the sons now return. Although it's not always easy to tell the difference, observing why the names Jacob or Israel, or both, are used is always a help in seeing what is going on in the life of the man and the pictures they point to concerning the people Israel.

To their father Jacob, they now take time to explain the details of their long trek south to the land of Egypt...

³⁰ "The man *who is* lord of the land spoke roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country.

The way the Hebrew is constructed in their sentence to Jacob emphasizes their feelings concerning the harsh treatment they received. "Spoke the man, lord of the land, with us hard things." Included in those "hard things" was the accusation that they were spies, something they refuted.

³¹ But we said to him, 'We *are* honest *men*; we are not spies.

This is exactly what happened. Just as things occurred in Egypt, so they are telling their father now.

³² We *are* twelve brothers, sons of our father; one *is* no *more*, and the youngest *is* with our father this day in the land of Canaan.'

And again, this is exactly how it happened with the exception of mentioning the missing brother first and then the youngest being with their dad in Canaan next. They have exactly repeated their conversation with Joseph.

I would suggest that the significance of the ten brothers not being able to satisfy the lord of Egypt, who happens to be Joseph, is that it pictures the current way that Jewish believers *think* they are able to sanctify God in their rituals. What does that mean?

They have a requirement that 10 people are needed in order to make what is known as a *minyan*, or an assembly. This comes from a precept known as the *gezerah shavah*. According to this rule the *gezerah shavah* teaches ... that an "assembly" must be present when G-d is being sanctified." (chabad.org)

What they mean by *God being sanctified* includes, for example, the public reading of the Torah - their Bible. The public reading of the Bible to us would be forbidden under this precept without at least 10 people present. Continuing on in their explanation they say this shows -

"... a great truth: the power of each individual Jew. There can be a group of nine of the greatest Jews, men who complete all of the commandments and understand the depths of the Torah's secrets, yet they do not have the ability to complete a minyan on their own. However, add to the group the simplest Jew, someone who perhaps cannot properly read his prayer nor does he really understand what he is saying, yet when he walks into the room he has now transformed the entire group and made them complete—a minyan. It is because of him that they are now able to recite those parts of the prayer that can be read only with a minyan. Never underestimate the potential of the individual Jew."

This is standard Jewish thought concerning approaching God. But I believe this pictures why the brothers were not accepted by Joseph. It is to show us that this belief is not acceptable. As a Christian and a believer in the finished work of Jesus, we can stand alone with Him and be acceptable before God.

We don't need numbers of ten, a thousand, or a million. When we stand with Christ, we are in right standing with God. The reason I brought this up now is because these brothers, standing before Joseph, picture the Jewish people, and specifically the leaders of the tribes, still not recognizing their Lord.

As a group, the brothers were unable to satisfy Joseph. And the same is true with the

minyan in synagogues to this day. Until they stand with, and acknowledge Christ, they cannot be pleasing to God. Thus, there is the need for Benjamin among them. There is the need for the Son of the Right Hand, Jesus, among the Jews.

We need to keep looking at these verses in the context of the church age. Joseph's brothers picture the tribes of Israel. Joseph pictures the Lord. During the church age, the brothers are separated from Joseph just as Israel is still separated from Him. That will end in the chapters ahead in Genesis and that will end in the days ahead. After the rapture, Jesus and Israel will meet and be reunited.

*Some wonderful day Israel will receive their King
They will call on Him and to them he will be seen
The glorious moment will cause Israel to sing
And all the world will marvel at the glorious scene*

³³ Then the man, the lord of the country, said to us, 'By this I will know that you *are* honest *men*: Leave one of your brothers *here* with me, take *food for* the famine of your households, and be gone.

In this, they don't tell the whole story. They left out what originally happened. At first all of them were to be imprisoned and one would go to Canaan. After three days in prison, only one was left and the rest were allowed to go. And they only said that the brother was left in Egypt, not that he was bound in prison.

You can almost hear their conversation before getting home, "Dad will be so upset. We'd better not tell him what happened or he'll flip his lid." So instead of giving all of the bad details, they tell him the truth without giving all of the information.

Whether it was out of fear or whether it was out of respect for dad, they have been honest and yet circumspect in what they've shared. Most probably, they anticipated what Jacob's reaction would be concerning the youngest son, Benjamin.

If he knew everything that happened to them, he would be even less likely to send them back to Egypt. And this is exactly the bad news they will now share with him...

³⁴ And bring your youngest brother to me; so I shall know that you *are* not spies, but *that you are* honest *men*. I will grant your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.'"

This returns to what Joseph said to them when he told them what they were to do -

"By the life of Pharaoh, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here. ¹⁶ Send one of you, and let him bring your brother; and you shall be kept in prison, that your words may be tested to see whether *there is* any truth in you; or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you *are* spies!"

-Genesis 42:15, 16

With an oath, he vowed that without producing Benjamin, they will be counted as spies, not honest men. With Benjamin, they will have free access to trade. Benjamin, is the key to their survival.

And the same is true with Israel. Someday, Israel is going to be completely isolated in the world. There will be a peace agreement and this will eventually be broken by the antichrist. They will have no defender but the Lord and it will be when they call on Him that He will return and fight for them.

The relationship between Israel and Jesus didn't end in AD70. It was put on hold during their time of exile. God has and He will remain faithful to them. Reconciliation is coming between Joseph and the brothers and it is coming between Jesus and Israel. Benjamin, meaning Son of the Right Hand, is key to both.

II. Ye of Little Faith (35, 36)

³⁵ Then it happened as they emptied their sacks, that surprisingly each man's bundle of money *was* in his sack; and when they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

The brothers already knew the money had been returned. One of them found the money in his sack and later, when they go back to Egypt, they'll admit that they all found it in their own sacks while at the camp. You kind of have to put yourself in their place.

They traveled at least a day before finding the money. They were already overdue, having traveled probably a week, been in prison for a few days, and then on their way back home. Do they return to repay the money or do they go on home? And if they told their dad, no matter what they did, he'd be upset.

So, instead of making the situation worse in either way, they continued on home and didn't say anything about the money until they were there.

³⁶ And Jacob their father said to them, “You have bereaved me: Joseph is no *more*, Simeon is no *more*, and you want to take Benjamin. All these things are against me.”

Jacob seems to imply that he knows that what happened with Joseph is the brother's fault, but it could simply be his old age and weakening emotions. Whatever his state, he now demonstrates a continued lack of faith. The mortal flesh and blood man has forgotten about God's sovereignty.

And so he cries out *alai hayu kulanah* - "all these things are against me." The Latin Vulgate says, "all these evils fall back upon me." It is to him as if the weight of each bad thing has been heaped right back onto his shoulders until the strain has become an unbearable load which will destroy him.

Jacob, not his brother Esau, is the covenant son. Regardless of what happens, God is in control of his past, present, and future. The Lord has appeared to him personally several times and has made unconditional assurances to him.

The last time God spoke to him directly was when he had returned to Bethel after many long years. At that time, God said to him these trustworthy words -

“I *am* God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. ¹² The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land.” Genesis 35:11-12

After that, Joseph had his two dreams which showed that God was with *him* like he was with *Jacob*, but Jacob has forgotten that too.

Since then, as far as the Bible records, the Lord has remained silent. Jacob has taken this silence as abandonment.

But this is the last thing that has happened or could happen. The very things that he feels are against him - every one of them he has mentioned, are actually being worked out for him. Joseph's removal from his life seems to him to be an evil which God allowed to weigh him down.

Instead, God has used that to bring Joseph into the only land that could save them during the time of famine. He then brought him to the only place where he would be secure *from* the executioner because the one he worked for *was* the executioner.

In that house he was falsely accused and placed in a special prison where the king's prisoners would be kept. God, not man, gave the king's prisoners dreams. God, not man, gave Joseph the wisdom to interpret the dreams.

God, not man, gave Pharaoh his own dreams and again, it was God who directed that it would occur in the presence of the once-imprisoned cup-bearer who then told Pharaoh about Joseph.

Again, it was God who gave Joseph the ability to interpret the dreams, and gave him the wisdom which brought him to the second position in all of Egypt. God directed the famine which made it necessary for the sons of Israel to journey to Egypt.

And of all of the city storehouses in Egypt, God led the sons of Israel to the one where Joseph was at on a day that he would be working. And the brother's time in prison allowed them time to reflect on their consciences to the extent that they would feel remorse over their treatment of Joseph.

The continued duration of the famine which came about by God will eventually necessitate a second trip to Egypt with Benjamin, and the events which will lead to reconciliation and the safety of all of Israel.

All eleven brothers will come back and bow before Joseph. Amends will be made, and the family will be saved. Every single detail is being worked out for good, but Jacob only sees the evil because he only sees it *from his perspective*.

Since his dream at Bethel when he fled from his brother Esau, the Lord has always been with him. But all of that is forgotten in the misery since Rachel's death. And isn't that exactly, I mean exactly, what we see in Israel since the death of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

Rachel, if you remember, means "lamb." It's the same word for her name which is used to speak of the work of Jesus in Isaiah 53:7 -

He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a **sheep** before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.

For the past 2000 years, since the death of the Lamb, Israel has gone from one calamity to another, as if everything were against them. But for every calamity, God has been there, and He has been working to bring them to reunion with the King. He gave them safety in one land after another, leading right up to America. And then He brought them home to their promised land.

Here is a list of the things that are recorded about Jacob since Rachel's death -

1. Reuben slept with his concubine Bilhah
2. His father Isaac died
3. Joseph had strange dreams, one showing that his father would bow down to him
4. Joseph was supposedly killed
5. A famine comes upon the land
6. Simeon is taken from him during the trip to Egypt, and
7. Benjamin is now expected to be taken from him to Egypt

These seven things are almost a snapshot of Israel since the death of Jesus. First, Reuben sleeps with Bilhah. Her name means "troubled" and it is carried over into the New Testament as Belial - "wicked." If you remember, she pictures the second exile of the Jewish people. Israel unites not with Christ, but with Belial.

If that sounds harsh, listen to the words of Jesus in Revelation 3:9 which are written about Israel's time during the church age -

"Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you."

Next Isaac dies. Isaac means laughter. The laughter is gone and the laughter has been gone from Israel for these 2000 years.

Next Joseph has his dreams about the brothers bowing down to him. As he pictures Christ, someday Jesus' brothers will bow to Him. After that Joseph is supposedly killed and lost to Jacob, but he is actually sold off by his brothers. Jesus was killed and supposedly lost, but instead he was sold off to the gentiles.

Following that a famine comes upon the land. We saw that the famine pictured the famine of the word of God for the world of the end times. Next, Simeon was bound up.

His name means "He who hears." In Israel, any who would otherwise hear are bound up from their brothers.

Even today, Jewish people are often told "You can't be a Jew if you're a Christian." You can be a Buddhist, a non-believer, a Hindu, or whatever else you want and you get to remain a Jew, but should you convert to the truth of God in Christ, you are shunned from the collective whole.

Now Benjamin is set to be taken to Egypt. Jacob doesn't understand that everything so far has happened for God's good end. And Israel just like them, can't see the truth of what is going on around them. All they can see is the trouble, not the plan.

None of this is stretching the picture which is presented in Genesis. So far, this book has consistently shown us of things which *have* happened but which are also things which *will* happen. Every story is selected by the wisdom of God to show us this exceptional tapestry of human history.

Every name, every location, every number, every detail showed us more about the heavenly drama being worked out in our earthly existence. It is the epitome of beauty and the greatest exhibition of love we could imagine - love for Jew and love for Gentile.

*For who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has become His counselor?
It is only through His wondrous, marvelous word
That we can understand what for us He has in store*

III. Not Thinking Clearly in the Land of Canaan (37, 38)

³⁷ Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him *back to you*; put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you."

Reuben is the same son who tried to save Joseph from being killed by his brothers, hoping to eventually get him back to Jacob. Now, he's actually probably more concerned with getting Simeon released from prison in Egypt than he is about anything else.

Reuben is the oldest and Simeon is second by birth. He is also the full brother of Simeon. In his desire to get him back, he knew that he had to take Benjamin to Egypt. And in order to do that, he makes an incredulous offer. "If I don't bring him back, you can kill two of my sons."

First, he knows that Jacob wouldn't kill his own grandsons if he failed. Secondly, if he did fail, he wouldn't be coming back either because they were already threatened under oath to be proven faithful or they would be counted as spies.

And so, thirdly, he makes this offer, not with the intent of it being carried out, but with the surety that he will perform what he has spoken. It is his promise that Benjamin would be brought back safely. The offer is one of guarantee, but not one of reality.

³⁸ But he said, "My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone. If any calamity should befall him along the way in which you go, then you would bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave."

Jacob is not ready to let him go. The famine hasn't taken its toll. The missing son is not as great a concern as the one he has. The time hasn't reached its fullness. He believes Joseph is dead and so to him he is dead even though he is alive. And so only Benjamin is there to remind him of his beloved Rachel.

The fear of Jacob is tied up in his lack of faith in the promises of God. He is not thinking clearly in the land of Canaan and he is worried about his life, not what the future is promised to hold. And so here, in the troubled Jacob, is a picture of you and me at any given moment of weakness - when we forget God's promises to us.

When we as Christians see God's hand at work in an evident way, when blessings and good things come to us, and when those around us that we love are happy and healthy, we are quick to praise Him and to admit His presence and favor is there with us.

But when things fall apart, we start to question His goodness. What we need to do is to continue to trust Him through these times. That's a lot easier said than done, but it is possible. It's good to just keep reminding ourselves that what we might see as God's severity toward us may actually be His kindness.

If we know with certainty that it is impossible for God to be the cause of evil, then just because something appears evil which is from God, then it cannot be evil. Joseph was taken from Jacob, and Jacob certainly thought that was evil, but from whose perspective?

If a brother, a sister, or a child dies, we might call that evil. "Why did God allow this terrible thing to happen?" But again, is it evil, or are we not seeing the whole picture?

God's goodness cannot be on trial and so our *understanding* of the situation, and resentment towards Him, must be wrong. Listen to these words from Job -

¹⁰ "Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding:

Far be it from God *to do* wickedness,
And *from* the Almighty to *commit* iniquity.

¹¹ For He repays man *according to* his work,
And makes man to find a reward according to *his way*.

¹² Surely God will never do wickedly,
Nor will the Almighty pervert justice. Job 34:10-12

This doesn't mean there isn't wickedness, but that the wickedness has no power to triumph over the good. Proof of that is evident anytime we look at the cross. There was a little baby in a manger who was born without the faults that the rest of us are born with.

There was the law which *pointed out our faults* even more, and which only *increased* His radiant perfection. There were the hungry that He fed and the sick that He healed. He taught people, and freed others from every possible thing that bound them.

And yet He - this marvelous Person was rejected, abandoned, and tortured. And then He was crucified. Was that wicked? The biblical answer is "Yes" and the biblical answer is "No." The Bible says in one verse that the answer is yes and no. Here is Peter in Acts 2:23, speaking of Jesus -

"Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;"

Lawless hands crucified Christ - that was wicked. But it was done by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God - that was good. From Mary's perspective, as she stood looking at her Son bleeding and dying, this was indeed wickedness. But from Mary's perspective when she later realized that His death is what washed away her lifetime of sins, she saw something entirely different, didn't she? She saw wickedness and she saw majesty in one act!

How is it that our faith, after being encouraged so many times through acts of God's love towards us can still be so immensely frail? How can our understanding of Him, even after having the entire plan laid out in the Bible, still be so unsure and wavering.

And how imperfect is our resolve to stand and say, I know that all things in fact do work together for good because I love God and am called according to His purpose? Why is my trust of Him only when I see Him. But when I'm in the darkened valley I suddenly think He's departed from me - like Jacob has in these verses?

When the apostles were out on a boat in Galilee, they got into a bit of a patch, didn't they? Here's what that says -

"Now it happened, on a certain day, that He got into a boat with His disciples. And He said to them, 'Let us cross over to the other side of the lake.'" And they launched out. 23 But as they sailed He fell asleep. And a windstorm came down on the lake, and they were filling with water, and were in jeopardy. 24 And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, 'Master, Master, we are perishing!' Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. 25 But He said to them, 'Where is your faith?'" Luke 8:22-25

These guys had already seen lepers cleansed, paralytics healed, and evil spirits cast out. They'd seen power radiating from Him as He healed multitudes. They'd even seen a widow's only son raised to life as he was being carried to his burial.

And yet, despite the calling, despite the wisdom in His teachings and the explanation of Kingdom matters which included them, despite the miracles, despite the power - they lost their faith as they were tossed about on the sea. Our sea of life is one of high waves and overflows of burdens, but He asks us to trust Him through it all... to have a little faith, even that of a mustard seed.

Let's endeavor to do this and not be like Jacob who had personally seen the Lord and yet allowed his own miseries to overcome the faith he should have possessed. Every week, I give a call for people to receive what they may never have had before, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. But today, maybe you need to receive what you once possessed and have now lost.

If you need Jesus, call out to Him to pardon you of your sins. Be reconciled to God and be free from what condemns. But if you need to renew your walk with Him, call out to Him and let Him know that. Redirect yourself to Him and He will bind up your wounds. Have faith in this wonderful Lord who walked on water and who died and rose again for you and me.

Closing Verse: *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.⁴ But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. James 1:2-4*

Next Week: Genesis 43:1-14 (A Difficult Decision for Israel) (107th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Where is God in All of This?

Then they went to Jacob their father
In the land of Canaan and him they told
All that had happened to them, all the bother
Saying: the circumstances of our journey were uncontrolled

“The man who is lord of the land
He surely spoke roughly to us
And took us for spies of the country
It was a bad situation, we now discuss
But we said to him, in an attempt to subdue
"We are honest men; we are not spies
We are speaking the truth to you
This is honesty from our lips, not lies

We are twelve brothers, sons of our father we say
One is no more, from us he is gone
And the youngest is with our father this day
In the land of Canaan, our words you can count on
Then the man, the lord of the country
Said to us, ‘By this I will know
That you are honest men, thus I will see
If the words you have spoken are so

Leave one of your brothers here with me
Take for your households food for the famine
And be gone, off to Canaan except one detainee
Later, the truth of your words I will examine
And bring your youngest brother to me

So I shall know that you are not spies
But that you are honest men, speaking plainly
I will know your words are truth and not lies

I will grant your brother to you
And you may trade in the land
After I know that your words are true
And you have not dishonestly planned
Then it happened as their sacks they poured out
That surprisingly each man's bundle of money
Was in his sack which without a doubt
To them was something not very funny

And when they and their father
Saw the bundles of money
They were afraid, it was much bother
And life wasn't looking really very sunny
And Jacob their father said to them, "You have bereaved me
Joseph is no more, Simeon is no more
And you want to take Benjamin too I see

....

All of these things are against me
Then Reuben spoke to his father saying
"Kill my two sons if I do not
Bring him back to you as you are praying
Back to this place, yes this very spot
Put him in my hands
And I will bring him back to you
This is the thing father, I have committed to do
But he said, "My son shall not go down with you
For his brother is dead
And he is left alone, this idea eschew
Does this even really need to be said?

If any calamity should befall him there
Along the way in which you go
Then you would bring down my gray hair
With sorrow to the grave, I would perish in woe
Jacob's faith was lacking at this time

And it seems to us more than odd
That a man who had spoken to the Lord
Would waiver in his faith in God

But he is a flesh and blood man
He is another human like any of us
We drown in sorrows when we lose sight of the plan
Which God has revealed in the Lord Jesus
Help us O God to keep our eyes directed to You
Even in the deepest dark valley, that You are there
You are our faithful Protector, yes, we know its true
And in Your hand is our every woe and care

Thank You, thank You O God for Your sufficient grace
Thank You for Your guiding Light of love
You will surely carry us to Your glorious place
To the New Jerusalem in the heaven's above

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 43:1-14

(A DIFFICULT DECISION FOR ISRAEL)

Introduction: Joseph was sold by his brothers in Genesis 37. It is now about 22 years later and in all of that time, and until chapter 42, Jacob is never discussed nor mentioned. In chapter 42, the sum events of his recorded life are no more than a few words.

But it's already evident that the loss of Joseph was never forgotten by him. He has refused to allow Benjamin to go to Egypt even at the expense of another of his sons. But now the food is running low and his decisions will affect not just Benjamin, but the entire family. He can no longer stubbornly refuse to act.

If desperation in God's people is what it takes for God to move them, then desperation is what He will send. Israel today is still stubbornly refusing to accept His leadership. Whether some in Israel are religious, whether some in Israel have called on Jesus, it is irrelevant to the greater plans spoken of in the Bible.

As a collective whole they must call on Him as Lord and acknowledge His Lordship. This isn't a New Testament concept either, but one which travels all the way through the Bible. He has called them and they must acknowledge that. There is Jacob the man of flesh and there is Israel who is spiritually tied to His God.

There is the whole nation of people who strive with God - either for Him or against Him, but they strive with Him. There has been exile and punishment, but the future says there will be restoration and exaltation. In order to bring about the anticipated meeting between Jacob and Joseph, God sent a famine.

And in order to bring about a meeting between Jesus and Israel, God will send the time of Jacob's trouble. The New Testament calls it the tribulation. The people will be refined and they will call out and He will respond. The story of Jacob here follows that same path, foreshadowing the events of the future.

Text Verse: *I have done justice and righteousness;
Do not leave me to my oppressors.*

¹²² *Be surety for Your servant for good;*

Do not let the proud oppress me. Psalm 119:121, 122

The psalmist cried out to the Lord concerning his integrity and asking for relief from his oppressors. In doing so, he asks the Lord to be his surety, his pledge of covenant faithfulness. Jacob has fretted and anguished over the oppressors of chance and circumstance - harsh and oppressive foes whom he cannot control.

Today, he is going to have to let go of his fears and put his trust back in the God who made personal promises to him time and again in years past. He is going to have to petition Him for mercy while at the same time acknowledging that God is God and we are utterly dependent on Him for everything that that comes our way.

The sovereignty of God is something we cannot ignore in the pages of the Bible, and therefore, something we cannot ignore in the world around us. No matter what foe or oppressor we face, real or imagined, we can only place our trust and cares in His capable hands. This is that great truth that we discover in His word. And so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Severe Famine and a Shortage of Food (1-5)

¹ Now the famine was severe in the land.

The Bible has an amazing way of telling us something will happen and then showing the fulfillment of it. Sometimes, what we might think *is* the fulfillment, isn't the fulfillment at all, usually because of the translation into English. And what we might think of as unimportant is actually more important than we thought.

Chapter 43 begins with the words, "Now the famine was severe in the land." Chapter 41 ended with the words, "So all countries came to Joseph in Egypt to buy *grain*, because the famine was severe in all lands." Looking at these two, you'd think it was saying the same thing, but it's not.

Here is why it's important. Earlier in chapter 41, when interpreting Pharaoh's dreams, Joseph said this to Pharaoh -

"So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it *will be* very severe." (31)

When Joseph said that, he used the words *khaved hu meod* - it will be "very heavy." But at the end of chapter 41 it said *hazaq ha'raav*. This means that the famine had

strengthened or grown strong, but it wasn't the crushing burden that Joseph had said was coming.

When the strengthening famine came, Jacob sent his sons to Egypt for food and that made up all of chapter 42. Now other than Simeon, they're all back in Canaan for a while. And it doesn't tell us how long it's been because that doesn't matter. What matters is that whether a few weeks or a few months, the famine hasn't just strengthened, it has become heavy, a crushing burden.

It now uses the same word to describe the famine that Joseph said would come about. Why is this important? It's important because Jacob has to face reality because of the famine. If the famine weren't so severe, Simeon may have been left to rot in jail forever ... Poor Simeon. Jacob may have found some other way to work things out back in Canaan.

But with the famine now in its full force, he no longer has that choice. And why is that important? It's important because God showed in advance that it would be that way. And so then, why is that important? The reason why *all* of this is important is because God has a plan and in order to make that plan happen, He has arranged everything to have an exact and intended effect.

In Acts 17, it says, "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, ²⁷ so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us..." (26, 27)

Every person is in exactly the place and time that God wants them and which He knew is the opportune time and place for them to seek Him out. What we see as arbitrary, actually has a purpose. Your car didn't start and you get angry, but if you had left on time, you would have hit the guy on the bicycle who swerved to miss the lizard that ran in front of him.

You find a quarter on the sidewalk and, if you're like me, you're all excited and put it in your pocket. The quarter was dropped by someone sneezing because of their flu. Later you get the flu and are miserable, but you're home. You look out the window and your neighbor falls off the ladder while cleaning the gutters and he hits the concrete.

You call the paramedics and they come and save the guy. They tell you that he would

have died without your call. Things like this happen all the time. Nothing is random with God. The famine has gone from *strong* to *heavy* and Jacob has choices to make.

The economy is falling apart and we have choices to make. Our health insurance is cancelled and now what do we do? We get frustrated and we get upset, but it all keeps showing purpose. I don't believe anything is arbitrary. If it is, then what is the purpose of life?

My wife and I watched the Ken Burns documentary on the Civil War a while ago. If the word "arbitrary" describes what happens around us, then think of those hundreds of thousands of people that died in battle - some of them as young as 13. Unless there is a purpose for every single one of them, then those gruesome pictures show a very uncaring God.

And that's just one war in a line of wars, plagues, natural disasters, and horrifying accidents that reaches all the way back to the beginning of human existence. As Paul says, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." It just doesn't matter...

If "arbitrary" is a part of our human existence, then Christ may have come or He may not have come. Thank goodness Mary didn't catch some flu bug and die before she had Jesus. Nothing is arbitrary. So as you go about your day, don't be afraid to keep seeing His hand in everything that happens.

It all has meaning. Jacob either never really understood this, or he has forgotten it. He is now a man who is overwhelmed with the events around him. Where there should be trust and faith, there is the man afraid of how things will turn out.

Philippians 4 gives us the remedy for what ails Jacob -

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (6, 7)

*Now the famine was severe in the land
And Jacob is forced to finally act
He has failed to see in this God's divine and purposeful hand
And this is because his faith has slacked*

*Remember the Lord, Jacob... He is right there with you
This is the thing that God asks you to do*

² And it came to pass, when they had eaten up the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, "Go back, buy us a little food."

The time has come where the duration and immensity of the famine has once again brought the household to an immediate need. Nothing has grown and the food has been eaten up to the point where Egypt is the only option left.

The grain is almost gone, but he doesn't tell them to get more grain. Instead, he tells them to go back and buy a little food. Don't misunderstand, the grain is the food, but grain can also be used for planting. Last time when he sent them, it was to buy grain.

Maybe they would eat some, maybe plant some. This time, it will only be used as food; they simply need to survive and nothing more. The words for "grain" and "food" are being used synonymously in one way, but they are also being used to show a distinction.

Joseph did the same thing in chapter 41 when speaking to Pharaoh. There he said, "And let them gather all the food of those good years that are coming, and store up grain under the authority of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities."

He said "grain" and "food" synonymously. The grain is food because it will be good for nothing else. It won't grow during those seven years of famine. Jacob finally has to face the inevitable, but instead of facing it directly, he will try to get around it.

³ But Judah spoke to him, saying, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.'

At the end of the last chapter, it was Reuben who tried to convince Jacob that Benjamin was needed. He said to Jacob, "Kill my two sons if I do not bring him *back* to you; put him in my hands, and I will bring him back to you." That didn't work and Jacob refused.

Judah now steps forward. He is the one in line for the birthright because his three older brothers all committed offenses which removed them from that right. Now he, in this position, reminds Jacob what came about in Egypt.

He says they were given a solemn warning - *ha'ed he'id*, "did warn, solemnly warn" that without Benjamin, they were not to come back. It would be pointless to even try and certainly life-threatening if they did. Which leads to verse 4...

⁴ If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food.

If Benjamin is with them, they will go down to buy food. The people will eat, the family will survive, and there is always the prospect of a future... *if* Benjamin will go too.

⁵ But if you will not send him, we will not go down; for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.'"

But... if no Benjamin, no go. He speaks in a way which will preempt Jacob from coming up with some other scenario. There is none which will work in this instance. Either Benjamin goes, or there will be no meeting with Joseph.

It's a good time to stop and remember who these each represent. Joseph pictures Christ the Lord. The brothers picture the people of Israel, all the tribes. Judah is the tribe of Judah but who speaks collectively for the Jewish people today. Benjamin is Christ and those Jews in Christ.

*Without Jesus, we cannot approach the Lord
It doesn't really matter what we like or choose to believe
Only Jesus can save as is recorded in His word
Only Jesus can wash our sins and only He our burdens can relieve*

II. Judah Will Bear the Burden (6-10)

⁶ And Israel said, "Why did you deal so wrongfully with me as to tell the man whether you had still another brother?"

Five times in the last chapter, the name Jacob was used. The name Israel was used only when speaking of the sons, not the man. Now in this chapter, Jacob is never used and Israel is used three times. The last time the name Israel was used for *Jacob the man* was back in chapter 37 when he sent Joseph up to look for the other brothers.

In that chapter, 15 sermons ago, Joseph left the family circle and now he may lose Benjamin as well. There is Jacob and there is Israel. There is reliance on self and there is

reliance on God. There is each of us... are we walking in the Spirit or walking in the flesh?

The Bible is asking us to look at this man and decide how we will conduct our own lives. He is already a member of the covenant community, but will he live as a faithful one or not. And you? How will you act when adversity looks you in the face? Where is your trust? Jacob is going to now have to trust God.

He asks, "Why did you deal so wrongfully with me as to tell the man whether you had still another brother?" It is his note that he knows Benjamin must go, even though he doesn't actually say it yet. The irony is almost dripping from the moment.

"He who is my only hope of holding on to the past is now my only hope of having a future." And though he doesn't know it, the one who he is so afraid of losing is the only one who can bring him back to the presence of the one he believes he has lost. Irony abounds.

⁷ But they said, "The man asked us pointedly about ourselves and our family, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Have you another brother?' And we told him according to these words. Could we possibly have known that he would say, 'Bring your brother down'?"

The man asked and they answered. It never would have dawned on them that one thing would lead to another. There was no evil intent in what they said, just matter of fact questions and answers. He also asked about their father and they answered accordingly.

How could they possibly know that he would ask for Benjamin to come down? He didn't ask for Jacob to come down. It is all just the way it turned out and the fault can't be placed on them.

⁸ Then Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones.

With the explanation complete, he makes his petition again and gives the reason for it clearly and completely - "Send him with me and we will go. This involves our very lives and the lives of the children. Benjamin needs to go."

What actually makes this surprising is that Benjamin is upwards of 30 years old by this point. It's not like he's a little boy anymore. This shows the obedience of the family to

their father and the immense passion Jacob still feels even after all the years since Rachel's death.

⁹ I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.

In chapter 37, Judah is the one who recommended selling Joseph when he was in the pit. In chapter 38, he was the one who traded his signet, cord, and staff for a tryst with a prostitute. In both of those pictures, Judah pictured the Jewish people.

Now this same Judah offers himself as the pledge for Benjamin. The situation is completely reversed from what it once was. Again, if there's anything we can learn from things like this, it is that God's divine favor isn't dependent on our past, but on our present.

The things we've done can't be changed. If our past is all that God judges us on, then when would there ever be a time that we *could* get right with Him? It would never happen! In other words, there is no thing that you *have done* that will keep God from forgiving you because there is always right now.

Only when "right now" ends at your death is the chance lost. God is always extending His hand out to you. And as a demonstration of that, he says that if he doesn't bring Benjamin back, then let me bear the blame forever. In Hebrew, *v'khatati lekha kal hayammim*, "I shall be a sinner against you all the days." I make myself liable as a sinner forever.

Benjamin is the key. If you have Benjamin all is good. If you have the Son of the Right Hand then God is on your side. Stop dwelling on your past and look to the future. If God forgives you for your past, then your past is forgiven. After that, the only bonds on you are the ones you impose.

*Be freed from your guilt, you are free from your sin
Jesus washed it all away on Calvary's cross
Look forward now, forgetting what is past because of Him
Don't fret and have another moment of loss*

*Eyes on Jesus! Fix them on your eternal life ahead
Because of Him you too have been raised from the dead*

¹⁰ For if we had not lingered, surely by now we would have returned this second time."

Two things can be inferred from this short verse. The first is that of a mild scold to Jacob. "If you had let us go when we asked, we would have returned *from the second trip* already. Time is wasting, stop being so stubborn." The second is exactly the opposite.

"If you had let us go when we asked, *we would have returned* from the second trip already. Benjamin will be fine, stop worrying."

III. A Present for Pharaoh (11-14)

¹¹ And their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: Take some of the best fruits of the land in your vessels and carry down a present for the man—a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.

Proverbs 18:16 says -

"A man's gift makes room for him,
And brings him before great men."

Solomon may have remembered this story when he wrote that. Israel is looking to pacify the ruler and to show that what the sons told him originally was true. If they were spies, they could bring anyone along and claim he was their brother.

But going the extra step was intended to convince him that they had been straight with him all along. It was also a gift to pacify him before they dealt again over whatever matters would arise. This worked for Jacob when he finally met up with his estranged brother Esau many years before.

Before meeting him, he sent a sequence of extravagant gifts to him in order to soothe any continuing bitterness. And it worked. Esau met him with hugs and kisses. He is hoping this gift now will bring about peace as well. And so he tells them to take along six special things, balm, honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.

Sending along something like this would be all the more special considering that with the famine as harsh as it is, it would be that much less for them to eat if things got worse. It is truly a gift of faith, regardless of the size or amount of the gift.

¹² Take double money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was an oversight.

Jacob's instructions to "take double money" can mean one of two things. In Hebrew, it says "money of a second." So it could mean the same amount as the first time, not twice as much as the first time. Or, it could mean twice as much as the first time.

If he meant "double" then he may want them to buy more than the first time, or he may have expected the cost to have risen because the famine has continued. I always assumed it was the same amount as they took the first time, but people debate...

Along with that money though, he tells them to take back the original money too, thinking that the return of the money may have been an oversight. He uses a word, *mishgeh*, which isn't found anywhere else in the Bible. It means "something caused to wander" which implies "a mistake." It was an unintentional oversight.

This term recalls to mind the words of Peter to Israel in Acts 3:17, "I know you did this in ignorance..."

¹³ Take your brother also, and arise, go back to the man.

What was implicit before is now explicit, Benjamin will go. The future keeps unfolding in the present and there is nothing we can do to stop it. We can wring our hands, fret and stamp our feet, but time keeps moving forward. At times like this, we're much more fortunate than Jacob.

He was an ancestor of Jesus and had personal dealings with Jehovah, but he lacked the wise words that we can refer to anytime we start to forget that it will all work out. When Jesus came, He told us this -

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. ²³ Life is more than food, and the body *is more* than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? ²⁵ And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? ²⁶ If you then are not able to do *the* least, why are you anxious for the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸ If then

God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more *will He clothe* you, O *you* of little faith?" Luke 12:22-28

And Paul gives us a briefer, but equally important, insight into the things we can't control -

"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." Romans 8:28-30

God cares for the birds and he has clothed mere grass in unparalleled beauty. And even more, He has wisely taken everything that happens and woven it together into a tapestry of goodness for His called people.

His child who died on the battlefield of Antietam was already glorified in His mind before the rifle bullet ended his life. Nothing is random chance with God.

¹⁴ And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin.

El Shaddai, God Almighty, has been named only four times so far in Genesis. The first was when He spoke to Abraham in chapter 17 at the time of the covenant of circumcision. Then in chapter 28 when Isaac blessed Jacob before he went away, he blessed him using the name El Shaddai.

After that in Genesis 35, El Shaddai appeared to Jacob at Bethel. In each of those accounts, a blessing for fruitfulness and a multitude of descendants is promised or pronounced. Now, as a hope that those blessings include Simeon and Benjamin, Jacob invokes the name once again.

"May this great God who made these promises to our people and to me personally show us this mercy." He is placing his trust in the providence of God to restore to him those whom he has lost. And in fact he has already lost both Simeon and Benjamin. The moment they left they were lost.

The moment our children walk out the door for the school bus, they are, in essence lost to us. The last time we saw someone was the last time because we no longer see them. There are no guarantees that the separation won't be permanent.

We don't normally think this way, but eventually everything has a last time. Jacob's calling on El Shaddai is for mercy that this loss won't be permanent. But God is God and Jacob has now faced that. And in acknowledgement of it, he says...

14 (con't) If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!"

Adam Clarke translates this as "and I, as I shall be childless, so I shall be childless." When the sons walk out the door, he will in fact be childless. "If God decides that is how it shall be, then that is what I must accept."

There are things that are simply beyond our control and all we can do is petition God and wait on His answer. Esther realized this before she had to face the king over the preservation of the Jews. It was this same attitude of resignation to forces beyond her control that she said this to Mordecai -

"Go, gather all the Jews who are present in Shushan, and fast for me; neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. My maids and I will fast likewise. And so I will go to the king, which *is* against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" Esther 4:16

And the young man went off to battle, hugging his mom and kissing his little sister. "If I return, I know not, but God does."

There are few real assurances in life and so when one comes along, we should hold onto it, even cling to it. Of those few available assurances, the one that matters most is found tied up in the same God whom Jacob just petitioned, God Almighty.

He is the one who sits on heaven's throne and superintends over the spinning of billions of galaxies. And yet, He also watches over the souls of men. The God who cares about the flitting sparrow cares much more about the destiny of those souls. He cared enough to send His Son to restore us to harmony with Him.

Closing Verse: *Like a swallow or a crane, so did I chatter; I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward; O LORD, I am oppressed, be thou my surety. Isaiah 38:14 (ERV)*

Next Week: Genesis 43:15-25 (Peace To You, Do Not Be Afraid) (108th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

If I Am Bereaved, I Am Bereaved

Now the famine was severe in the land
Things in Canaan weren't lookin' too grand

And it came to pass, when...
They had eaten up the grain
Which they had brought from Egypt, then
Their father said to them, "Buy us a little food, Go back again."

But Judah spoke to him, he did express
Saying, "The man solemnly spoke
You shall not see my face unless
Your brother is with you. This is no joke

If you send our brother with us, that is good
We will go down together and buy you food

But if you will not send him along
We will not go down; this we will not do
For the man said to us, in a manner strong
You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you

And Israel said, "Why did you deal
So wrongfully with me as to tell another
To the man why did you squeal?
Whether you had still another brother?"

But they said, "The man asked us with care
About ourselves and our kin
Asking, 'Is your father still alive over there
Have you another brother?' Tell me therein

And according to these words him we told

Could we possibly have known
That he would say, as from his tongue the words rolled
"Bring your brother down, let him be shown

Then Judah said to his father Israel
"Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go
That we may live and not die as you know well
Both we and you and our little ones also

I myself for him will be surety
From my hand you shall require him, I the guarantee

If I do not bring him back to you and him before you set
Then let me bear the blame forever
You shall never forget

For if we had not lingered it's true
By now we would have returned this second time to you

And their father Israel to them spoke
"Then do this if it must be so
Take some of the best fruits of the land to that bloke
In your vessels, carry down a token and go

A little balm and a little honey
Spices and myrrh take along too
And some pistachio nuts and almonds
Take these for the journey, this you shall do

Take double money in your hand
And take back in your hand the money
That was returned in the mouth of your sacks
Perhaps it was an oversight, but it seems kind of funny
Take your brother also, and arise
Go back to the man, do as I advise

And may God Almighty give you mercy...
Before the man, that he may release
Your other brother and Benjamin

So that this difficult ordeal will finally cease

If I am bereaved, I am bereaved
If my son dies my heart will be forever grieved

God sent His Son on a mission too
But He knew the outcome from the start
And still He sent Jesus for me and you
To show us the depth of the love in His heart

This is the love of God in Christ our Lord
And the beauty of the good news for each of us
There we see it recorded in His superior word
The marvelous majesty of our King, Jesus

And so with a song of thanks and praise
Let us hail our great God for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 43:15-25 **(PEACE TO YOU, DO NOT BE AFRAID)**

Introduction: Jeremiah 31:3 says this concerning Israel, "The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you."

There is the loving relationship which is seen throughout Scripture between the Lord and Israel. But there is also the truth that God cannot compromise His very nature, even for those He loves. God is not like a man where He changes or where He overlooks fault.

Every wrong must be judged, and every act of rebellion carries a cost. How God deals with these things is perfectly fair and yet it is always perfectly executed to bring about the most propitious outcome for the objects of His affection.

If we sin against God, our sin must be judged. But God has made it such that our sin can be judged in a perfect Substitute. And so our wrongs *will* either be judged in us or in Him, our Substitute, Jesus - but either way, they will be judged.

In order to bring His people Israel to the point where they realize this, He has had to refine them through the fire of time and exile. These punishments were told to them in advance, so they can't claim that their treatment has been unfair.

And during the time of exile, any Jew, just like any Gentile, has had the opportunity to seek out Christ, come outside the camp, and bear His reproach individually. But national Israel, the collective group of people who bear that name, are treated differently. Yes, each must come to Christ, but collectively they must also do so.

There must be a national awakening before He will return to them to rule among them. In preparation for that time, God is working out His plans to bring them to the point where it will actually happen. And it isn't an "if" but a "when." The Bible is already written and it says it will come about.

Joseph is working out a plan in hopes of reconciliation with his brothers. This plan, and especially the words and terms used in the Bible, give us insights into how God is doing the same thing towards those he has loved with an everlasting love.

He *is* drawing them with chords of lovingkindness, woven into the fabric of human history, to bring them back to Him.

Text Verse: *I will give you the treasures of darkness
And hidden riches of secret places,
That you may know that I, the LORD,
Who call you by your name,
Am the God of Israel.
⁴ For Jacob My servant's sake,
And Israel My elect,
I have even called you by your name;
I have named you, though you have not known Me. Isaiah 45:3, 4*

God spoke to Cyrus, the King of Persia, through the hand of Isaiah, telling him that He would give to him the treasures of darkness and the hidden riches of secret places. But then He tells *why* He was doing this. It was for the sake of Jacob; for Israel His elect people.

He used a pagan ruler to bless His people and return them to their land. He used him to fund the rebuilding of the temple of God in Jerusalem. And how did this come about? Isaiah wrote his words, naming Cyrus by name almost 200 years before he was born.

King Cyrus was read a copy of the scroll of Isaiah and when he heard that the Lord had called him this way, he responded in stunned awe - authorizing the rebuilding of the temple, exactly as the word spoke. The letter Cyrus wrote to approve the construction is so important that it's recorded at the end of 2 Chronicles and again at the beginning of the book of Ezra.

Astonishingly, God used His word, spoken in advance of the occasion, to bring about the events of the future which His word predicted. And the same thing is hinted at in today's passage. There is treasure in the sacks of the brothers of Joseph which points to the treasure which is hidden in God's word about Israel's future.

All they need to do is *go to the word* and search it out. When they do, *the word* will effect the changes that are predicted in the word. Yes, this is the immensity of what God has and continues to accomplish through His word. It's all to be found there and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. A Second Trip to Egypt (15-18)

¹⁵ So the men took that present and Benjamin, and they took double money in their hand, and arose and went down to Egypt; and they stood before Joseph.

It might seem trivial, but the term "the men" *ha'anashim* was never used in the previous chapter. When speaking of the sons of Israel, they are either called just that - "the sons of Israel," or pronouns are used about them like "we" or "they."

In fact, because I was curious, I went back and checked and found that the only other time they have been called "the men" was in Genesis 34 when they found out that their sister Dinah was raped. No other instance of the term is applied to them since then. That was 23 sermons ago - almost 6 months of sermons.

But in this chapter, starting with this verse, they are called "the men." They will be called this seven times before the chapter is out. It is as if the Bible is making the entire account as impersonal as possible concerning them. Every move they make is being evaluated with a cautious eye.

It's as if a time of testing is being foreshadowed before they can again be considered a part of the covenant community. If you can see the connection between them here and the people of Israel now, it explains why the impersonal term is used about them.

What did Paul say about being a true Jew or not? We read his words in Romans 2 -

²⁸"For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God." (28, 29)

The brothers have been alienated from Joseph while he has reigned over the land of gentiles. The Jews have been alienated from Jesus as He has built His gentile church. Now, these brothers are being readied for the unveiling of Joseph's true status and Israel is being readied for the same in Jesus.

In Galatians 2, we see that God shows favoritism to no man. He is perfectly fair, perfectly righteous, and uncompromising in His very nature. The brothers are Joseph's kin, but he is not going to accept them until he knows that they have truly had a change in heart.

And the Jewish people, Israel, are God's covenant people. They are the blood kin of Jesus. But until they are right with Him, they will not be accepted by Him. This isn't a cold and uncaring God. If He were, they would have been abandoned eons ago. He is the covenant-keeping, always faithful, and loyal Lord.

But He is also just, righteous, and holy. He cares enough to allow them to choose or reject, and He cares enough to refine them in the process, leading them to repentance and leading them back to Himself.

*One is not a Jew who is one only outwardly
Nor is circumcision that which is in the flesh of the life they trod
He is a Jew who is one inwardly, in the heart and the Spirit
Whose praise is not from men, but from God*

This story of Joseph is merely prefiguring the greater love story of Jesus working towards reconciliation with wayward Israel. Little terms like "the men" show us that there is an impartial evaluation going on.

In due time, they will have to prove their faithfulness as will Israel in the future. They are taking along a present and their brother Benjamin. They're also bringing restoration money and more purchase money and they are heading to Egypt. There, they now stand before Joseph.

¹⁶ When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Take these men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for these men will dine with me at noon."

"When Joseph saw Benjamin..." His eyes fixed on his younger brother. They were told to either bring Benjamin or don't come back, but they have brought him. With no comment to them at all, he simply instructs the steward to take "the men" *ha'anashim*, to his personal residence and slaughter an animal.

In Hebrew it says *teboakh tebakh* - "slay a slaying." It is to be a great feast and not just a meal. Everything will be prepared as if for a banquet and the time is set for noon. The Hebrew for noon is much a more descriptive term than in English. The word is *ba'tsahorayim* - at the double lights.

In the heat of the day, at the double lights, when the sun is the strongest, the people would break and go indoors to have a meal.

17 Then the man did as Joseph ordered, and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.

At one time, this was Joseph's job. What the master of the house ordered, Joseph simply obeyed and performed his duty. Now Joseph is the one in authority, having risen from the lowly position of servant to the highest position in the land... sounds like Jesus.

And for the third time in three verses, the brothers are called *ha'anashim*, "the men." Everything is as impersonal as it can be, not just from Joseph's mouth, but from the perspective of the Bible itself. Instead of "them" or "they" we read "the men."

There is an evaluation being made and we have been allowed to participate in it. The words used are selected for us to see it and pay attention and to learn from it. The words of Zechariah 13 reflect the evaluation that will come upon Israel in the future -

⁸ And it shall come to pass in all the land,"
Says the LORD,
"That two-thirds in it shall be cut off *and* die,
But *one*-third shall be left in it:
⁹ I will bring the *one*-third through the fire,
Will refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them.
I will say, 'This *is* My people';
And each one will say, 'The LORD *is* my God.'" (8, 9)

The brothers of Joseph are being tested, though they don't know it yet. And the people of Israel will be tested as well. They will be refined and purified. They will be taken through the fire and those who survive the ordeal will be brought out, forgiven, and spotless.

The curious thing though is that the brothers didn't know who Joseph was and they had nothing to hint to them about it, but Israel has it all clearly laid out in their Scriptures and they still don't see it. None are truly so blind as those who simply refuse to open their eyes and look more closely at what is before them.

This is the astonishing thing about Israel today. If there is any evidence that there is a God and that He is continuing to work in history, it's not the church; rather it's Israel.

That's where the evidence lies. The church has divided, fallen away, and failed to live up to the great Name that established it.

On the other hand, Israel has remained throughout eons of persecution, they have had their ancient language reborn on the tongues of the people, they have been planted in God's land once again. And all of this was predicted in advance, in detail. Even the church has in large part failed to see this.

And Israel has attributed their current state to Jewish greatness, luck, chance, whatever... but rare is the Jew who says, "The Bible showed it would happen and sure enough, the Bible was right." Until they see the God who caused these things for who He is, they will continue to face difficult ordeals that the Bible says will come.

¹⁸ Now the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house;

Adam Clarke relays to us that, "A guilty conscience needs no accuser." The Geneva Bible amends that a little bit and explains just Who their accuser really is. Speaking of the brothers, their commentary says, "So the judgment of God weighed on their consciences."

God gives man a conscience and it will eat away at us slowly, but completely. The exception is the person who has allowed his conscience to become completely seared, but the sons of Israel are not at that point. Instead, they are facing the consequences of bad decisions of the past and their conscience is eating away at them.

They had considered what they did to Joseph the last time they were in Egypt and now they have the added burden that they didn't turn back when they originally found the money in their sacks as they headed home. These things have them frightened because of the importance of the place they have been brought to.

They are shepherds and had always lived as shepherds. To stand in a large home, maybe for the first time in their lives, would be intimidating and unnatural. Their life has been spent in tents and in the open fields, not in plush mansions. It is an overwhelming situation for them which is exacerbated by events...

¹⁸ (con't) and they said, "It is because of the money, which was returned in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may make a case against us and seize us, to take us as slaves with our donkeys."

The wisest course of action when they left the last time, though obviously a difficult one, would have been to return and mention the money immediately. But with Simeon in prison, they would have been scared to even do that. Here in this verse, they use a term we would be unfamiliar with.

We translate it as "he may make a case against us," but what they say is, *l'hithgolel aleinu* - "that he may roll upon us." It's a metaphor which is taken from the sport of wrestling. When one person overturns the other, he will roll on top of him to pin him down. This is essentially what they are saying now.

They're scared that because of the money, he could accuse them and leave the blame on them. In fact, as the ruler, he could turn them into slaves. Job uses this same term when speaking of his afflictions and the attitude of the people toward him -

"As through a wide breach they come: In the midst of the ruin they roll themselves upon me." Job 30:14 (ASV)

The brothers are afraid they will be pounced upon, made into slaves, and even have their donkeys taken from them. As the donkeys are the only way of transporting the grain back to their family, it would be a complete calamity for the all of the covenant people, even those back in Canaan.

*Lord, let not those who hate me roll upon me
Be my strength in this great battle of life
In You alone shall I trust and speak confidently
Only You can carry me through the times of strife*

II. Resolving the Issue of the Money (19-22)

¹⁹ When they drew near to the steward of Joseph's house, they talked with him at the door of the house,

The Bible notes here that they talked with the steward at the door of the house. It's as if they want to convince him they've done nothing wrong, pay what they owe, and get away before Joseph comes. If they can resolve this now, even before entering the house, they could avoid what they fear when lunchtime arrives.

The door of the house is the last spot before they are consigned to their fate and so they linger there, and there they make their case.

²⁰ and said, "O sir, we indeed came down the first time to buy food;

In the Hebrew's expressive way of explaining something, this verse literally says, *bi adoni yarod yaradnu* - "O sir, coming we came." Repetitions like this are missed in the English translations and we lose some of the beauty of the dialogue.

*Coming we came, O sir, to buy food
What transpired after that has us worried and in a fret
It was an event which truly soured our mood
And our conscience isn't clear of it yet*

"Coming we came to buy food when this side issue arose..."

²¹ but it happened, when we came to the encampment, that we opened our sacks, and there, each man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight; so we have brought it back in our hand.

So here they are getting the chance to explain how they ended up with the money they originally paid. And each time they use the word "sack" it's a different word than what was originally used to describe the sack.

The word here is *amtakhat* and it's only used 15 times in the Bible and all in this story between Genesis 42 and Genesis 44. The word comes from a root *mathakh* which means to spread out. Just as the sack is spread out to reveal the money, the story is spread out to reveal the hearts of the brothers.

Joseph is using the unfolding events to discern the condition of his brothers' hearts, and in the same way, Jesus will use the unfolding events of the tribulation period to discern the spiritual condition of His people Israel. The Hebrew words *within the text itself* give us insights into how God deals with them.

What the brothers tell the steward now doesn't really reveal everything though. They explain that they received all their money back and that they've brought it again to Egypt to make things right, but it doesn't really prove they're honest, just that they're hungry and don't want this to interfere with getting more food.

But next they show they've gone an extra step towards making things right...

²² And we have brought down other money in our hands to buy food. We do not know who put our money in our sacks.”

So not only did they bring the original money back, but they brought back more for the food they want to buy. And their explanation is that they have no idea how they got their original money back. They've done everything they can to convince this guy *before* Joseph shows up and holds a trial against them.

All they can do now is hope that their story will be accepted. They've told the truth and the story is so unlikely that they are either very poor liars or they are somehow actually telling the truth about what happened. This is a principle that Jesus will expand on in the New Testament. In Luke 12 He says -

⁵⁸ When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. ⁵⁹ I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite.” (58, 59)

III. Preparing For the Banquet (23-25)

²³ But he said, “Peace *be* with you, do not be afraid.

The steward of Joseph's house has been taught both the customs of the Hebrews and to fear the true God. This verse shows us both. In response to the explanation given by the brothers, he uses the Hebrew term *shalom lakhem* - "peace to all of you."

*Shalom lekhem - Peace to you my friends - all is well
God is in control, there is nothing you need to worry about
The future is safe in His hands, surely you can tell
There is no need to fret, to worry, or to pout*

The words *shalom lekhem* are given less as a greeting, which they also are, and more of a note of encouragement. In essence, he says, "Don't sweat it. Don't worry about it at all." And then he proceeds to explain why as verse 23 continues...

²³ (con't) Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks; I had your money.”

In order for him to say this, he had to know who their God and the God of their father is. If nothing else, Joseph has schooled him in the matter and explained to his servant about the true God. And it is this God that has accordingly given them treasure.

In this, Joseph is an example to any believer in the true God. We can't convert people to believe the truth, but we can at least tell them what the truth is. Whether it's people we work for, work with, or who work for us.

Or whether it's simply people we see from time to time, it's our responsibility to at least let them know what we believe and why we believe it. Joseph took the time to do this for the steward in his house. With all of his other responsibilities, he took the time to share the good news.

And this steward now tells the brothers some good news, "Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks." The thing is, that when they leave again with more grain, the money will again be put in their sacks along with something else.

The silver, or "treasure" as he calls it, actually pictures something else. The word is *matmon* and is described as a word which "portrays the preciousness of an item which is greatly desired." It comes from a root word which has the "specific nuance of hiding by burial." (HAW Theological Wordbook)

If the grain is picturing the word of God as we clearly saw it is in a previous sermon, then the silver is picturing that which is hidden in the word. Remember, the brothers are picturing Israel. They have the word, but they've missed what the word points to.

The treasure they have is, as the steward says, from your God and the God of your father. He has given them this treasure in His word and the treasure is in the *amtakhat*, that unusual word for "sack." The treasure is discovered when the word is "spread out."

It is all about Jesus, and Israel has been given this treasure. It is something they cannot buy, but which is offered to them freely. The connection here shouldn't be missed. Jesus is there, everywhere in it, if they would simply look.

Since we started these Genesis sermons, we have uncovered hundreds if not thousands of hidden references to Christ; treasure in our sacks. And Israel simply needs to look, understand, and accept. God is preparing them for their meeting with the Lord. It's all seen in these unusual words that keep popping up in the story.

And so the steward finishes his explanation with the words, *kaspekhem ba elai*, "your money comes to me." This isn't a lie, he did get the money and he simply refrains from telling them that after it was received it was also returned to their sacks.

23 (con't) Then he brought Simeon out to them.

Finally, in this verse as a tangible evidence that everything will be ok, Simeon is returned to the brothers. This had to be the biggest relief of all because if the intention was to arrest them, they would have left him in prison. But instead, he is brought out to join them.

Simeon means "He who hears." It is almost time for the brothers to hear the truth of the situation and it is almost time for Israel to hear the truth of what they have missed for so long.

24 So the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave *them* water, and they washed their feet; and he gave their donkeys feed.

With the matter of the money and their brother Simeon resolved, the steward brings them into the house. But once again, the Bible calls them *ha'anashim*, "the men." The Bible is continuing to make an impersonal evaluation of them as it seeks to reveal their heart and motivations.

But, what they had only a moment ago feared and tried to stave off is now a welcome gesture as they stop to wash their feet while the steward fed their donkeys. Water is brought to them to prepare them for a relaxing and enjoyable meal in Joseph's house.

The washing of their feet is equivalent to us taking someone's hat and coat and telling them to relax. The roads were dirty and the traveling was tiring and so to have water to wash up was to make a guest welcome and comfortable for their visit.

To neglect this would be considered a breach of etiquette and is something that's actually seen in the Gospel of Luke. For a short diversion to read some of the New Testament, let's take a moment to look at that memorable account -

³⁶ Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. ³⁷ And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, ³⁸ and stood at His feet behind *Him*

weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped *them* with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed *them* with the fragrant oil. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw *this*, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman *this is* who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." ⁴⁰ And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." ⁴¹ "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon answered and said, "I suppose the *one* whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." ⁴⁴ Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped *them* with the hair of her head. ⁴⁵ You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. ⁴⁶ You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. ⁴⁷ Therefore I say to you, her sins, which *are* many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little." ⁴⁸ Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

-Luke 7:36-48

²⁵ Then they made the present ready for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they would eat bread there.

The present that their father had put together before they left is brought out and made ready for the arrival of Joseph. This included balm, honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds. These were the best of the fruits of the land and would be a worthy gift even to the king.

And so they prepare for noon when they will dine with the great ruler of the land of Egypt. The waiting must have made them anxious as they tried to anticipate what would transpire in the hours ahead.

This is where the passage ends today. Next week, we'll finish chapter 43 and we will come closer to the brother's date with the destiny which Joseph is planning for them. They still have some interesting trials to go through before he is revealed to them, but the same is true with Israel.

Individually, Jews are coming to Christ daily, but as a people, it is just a small portion who have had their eyes opened. There is a future meeting coming between them when

they will have their collective eyes opened to the truth. Until then, we need to continue to pray for Israel.

But Christ isn't just the Lord of a nation, He is the Lord of individuals. No country has title to Him and no denomination has a claim on Him. He is the Lord who needs to be approached individually. And it must be with empty hands and open hearts.

We cannot buy our way into heaven, nor can we earn our eternal home through good deeds. The only way to be reconciled to God is through faith in the work of Jesus.

Closing Verse: *Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸ while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18*

Next Week: Genesis 43:26-34 (Rejoicing in the Presence of the Ruler) (109th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Peace To You, Do Not Be Afraid

So the men took that present and Benjamin
And they took double money in their hand
And arose and went down to Egypt
And they stood before Joseph just as planned

When Joseph saw Benjamin with them
To the steward of his house he said
Take these men to my home
And slaughter an animal and make ready our daily bread

For these men will dine with me at noon
Prepare things now, the time is coming soon

The man did as Joseph ordered then

And into Joseph's house he brought the men

Now the men were more than a bit distraught
Because into Joseph's house they were brought

And they said, "It is because of the money we have this fuss
Which was returned in our sacks the first time
That we are brought in so that he may make a case against us
To seize and take us as slaves with our donkeys for this perceived crime

When near to the steward of Joseph's house they drew
They talked with him at the door of the house as their fear grew

And said, "O sir, we indeed came down
The first time to buy food from here
That it happened, when we came to the encampment
That we opened our sacks, and behold, what did appear

And there, each man's money was in the mouth of his sack
Our money in full weight
So in our hand we have brought it back
And we have brought down other money
In our hands to buy food, so we have no lacks
And to us the matter wasn't funny
We do not know who put our money in our sacks

But he said, "Peace be with you, do not be afraid
Your God and the God of your father
Has given you treasure in your sacks, I have not gone unpaid
I had your money, please about this matter don't bother

Then he brought out to them Sime-on
And alleviated their worries, now there was none

So into Joseph's house he brought the men
And gave them water as a friendly deed
And they washed their feet there and then
And he also gave their donkeys feed

Then they made the present ready
For Joseph's coming at noon
For they heard that they would eat bread there
And the time was approaching soon

The Bible continues to show in each story
The wonderful details of redemption and grace
Every word points to the majestic glory
Of God's plan to restore us to the favor of His face

Lord, help each of us to want to know you more every day
And help us to walk in the noble and righteous way

May we not depart from seeking out the treasures of Your word
And pursuing You through fellowship and prayer
By these things may we bring glory to our Lord
Until we are brought to You in the heavenly palace over there

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 43:26-34 **(REJOICING IN THE PRESENCE OF THE RULER)**

Introduction: The Bible shows that Jesus was rejected by His own people and that the message of Christ then went to the nations. However, both testaments of the Bible then tell that Israel would be - as a nation, called back to their land, and that they would again build a temple in Jerusalem.

Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah specifically speak of these things. Other prophets give hints of it as well. And Daniel 9 gives an exact timeline of what would occur and how it would happen. Daniel shows clearly that there are 7 years left for them until they have finally met the six requirement he mentions.

They are:

- 1) To finish the transgression,
- 2) To make an end of sins,
- 3) To make reconciliation for iniquity,
- 4) To bring in everlasting righteousness,
- 5) To seal up vision and prophecy,
- 6) And to anoint the Most Holy.

During that period, which encompasses much of the book of Revelation, a temple will again be built. The Jewish people will go worship the Lord without even realizing who He truly is. This is pictured in today's verses concerning Joseph and his brothers.

Open eyes don't necessarily equate to eyes that see. This is true with the sons of Israel in the presence of Joseph and it is true with the people of Israel in the presence of Jesus. As astonishing as it seems, everything that is coming in the future for Israel has already been laid out in the past.

All they need to do is open their eyes and believe in their hearts. But instead, Jesus is hidden from their eyes even though He is right there in front of them, just as Joseph is right in front of his brothers and yet remains unrecognized. He speaks to them; Jesus speaks to Israel - but the ears cannot hear, and the eyes cannot perceive.

Text Verse: *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Romans 10:3, 4*

Christ is, in fact, the end of the law for all who believe. But Israel went about seeking to establish her own righteousness and has not submitted to the righteousness of God. When the temple is built, they will make offerings and observe feast days. Even though these were fulfilled in Christ, they'll fail to see what is in front of them.

This is the journey we will continue on today as we open, ponder, and seek out the pictures and patterns in God's superior word. And so let's turn to that word now and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Fulfilling the Dreams of Joseph (26-28)

²⁶ And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which *was* in their hand into the house,

This goes back to verse 16. When they met up with Joseph on their return to Egypt, he said "Take *these* men to my home, and slaughter an animal and make ready; for *these* men will dine with me at noon."

While he finished up the business of the morning, overseeing the giving out of bread, they were brought in and prepared for the coming meal. Now that he has arrived, the first thing they do is to bring out the present they had brought at the behest of Jacob.

This consisted of six things - balm, honey, spices and myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds. Even though the steward had already tried to pacify them about the money in their sacks and being brought into the house, it's evident that they were still unsure and wanted to placate him as much as possible, as soon as possible.

The great biblical numerologist and scholar E.W. Bullinger defines the number six in this way - "Six is either 4 *plus* 2, i.e., man's world (4) with man's enmity to God (2) brought in: or it is 5 *plus* 1, the grace of God made of none effect by man's addition to it, or perversion, or corruption of it: or it is 7 *minus* 1, i.e., man's coming short of spiritual perfection. In any case, therefore, it has to do with *man*; it is the number of imperfection; the human number; the number of MAN as destitute of God, without God, without Christ."

If you can see this then in the gift, you can understand the parallel to modern Israel. The brothers are without knowing who Joseph is while he is standing right there in front of them. To him, the ruler, they offer a gift involving six things.

It is picturing works in order to please God, but God is only pleased with faith and faith can only be pleasing if it is in *what God has done*. In other words, the brothers don't recognize Joseph just as Israel doesn't recognize Jesus. All of the gifts in the world will never satisfy God if they lack faith in what God has done.

We have to keep remembering what is being pictured. Joseph pictures Jesus the Lord. The brothers picture the leaders of Israel. They still don't know who He is, but there will be a reunion between the two. This is where we are in the Joseph stories now.

These brothers have been brought into Joseph's house. The Jews will come into the house of the Lord. They will make offerings, but they still won't recognize who this Lord is. This is the picture that is soon to be fulfilled in Israel. This isn't a stretch of the picture, it is exactly what is prophesied in both testaments of the Bible.

*A present to pacify the ruler from the sons of Israel
But a present isn't what the ruler wants or needs
The Bible is clear of the message it does tell
We are saved by grace through faith and not external deeds*

²⁶ (con't) **and bowed down before him to the earth.**

This is finally the fulfillment of the dream that Joseph had more than 20 years earlier. In Genesis 37, this was what was noted –

⁵Now Joseph had a dream, and he told *it* to his brothers; and they hated him even more. ⁶So he said to them, “Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.” ⁸And his brothers said to him, “Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?” (5-8)

In fact, though they despised the thought and rejected even a notion of it, it has come to pass. And this isn't just a dream fulfilled in Joseph, but a dream which is fulfilled in Jesus. There is no knee, Jew or Gentile, that won't bow before Him as the Bible tells us.

The day is coming when Israel will see, understand, and accept. The story of Joseph and his brothers looks forward to that time. The time of separation from Joseph is close to ending and the time of exile and separation from Jesus for Israel is, *in our lifetime*, close to ending as well.

They will bow to the Lord without even knowing who he truly is at first. Only afterwards will they understand that the Lord they have bowed to is the Brother they sold off to the gentiles.

27 Then he asked them about *their* well-being, and said, “*Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke?*”

The Hebrew says that he asked them about their peace. Then he asked "is there peace to your father?" The word is *shalom* and is more than just well-being, but it means prosperity, health, soundness in mind and spirit, and so on. It is an all-encompassing thought concerning their well being and the well being of the father, as he calls him "the old man of whom you spoke."

27 (con't) *Is he still alive?*”

Without even giving them a chance to reply about their shalom or dad's shalom, he asks if he is even still alive. Jacob was born in the year 2169AM and it is now around the year 2299AM, making him right at 130 years old.

At such an advanced age, every day is precious and he wonders if there is still good news concerning him. Jacob delayed in allowing the brothers to return to Egypt and in that amount of time, Joseph was uncertain if he was still alive. But good news is just ahead...

28 And they answered, “Your servant our father *is* in good health; he *is* still alive.”

Joseph actually had two dreams when he was young, not one. If you remember, the second dream went as follows -

"Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers, and said, “Look, I have dreamed another dream. And this time, the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to me.”¹⁰ So he told *it* to his father and his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, “What *is* this dream that you have dreamed? Shall your mother and I and your brothers indeed come to bow down to the earth before you?”¹¹ And his brothers envied him, but his father kept the matter *in mind.*”(Genesis 37:9-11)

Although there is no literal fulfillment of this dream recorded in the Bible, there is still a symbolic fulfillment in this verse. Jacob sent a present with the sons for the ruler and upon giving it to him and answering his questions, they said, "Your servant our father..." It is an implicit bow by Jacob because of the term "servant." The dream of the sun bowing to Joseph sees its initial fulfillment in this statement. However, the ultimate fulfillment is only realized in Jesus where the tribes of Israel, including Judah the lawgiver (which is the sun) and the law which Jesus fulfilled (which is the moon) all bow to Him.

The main thing in this verse is that Jacob, though being Joseph's father, is made subordinate to him without them even knowing it. And this is exactly what has come about with Israel. Christ came from them and yet they have been subordinated to Christ. But they, to this day, don't realize it. The time is coming though.

It is so wonderful to see how these small narratives keep pointing us ahead. One after another, each continues to show us marvelous pieces of later history - history that may be fulfilled in our lives!

*Israel is still alive and remains in good health
God has kept him for an appointed destiny
To him will come blessing and spiritual wealth
When to him is revealed his greatest Son's identity*

28 (con't) And they bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves.

Once again the brothers bow to their own brother without realizing it. Not only was the dream of his youth fulfilled, it is repeated. What they hated and refused to believe, is done without their even realizing it. The brothers have bowed to Joseph.

And although Israel still hasn't recognized Jesus, just as the brothers don't yet recognize Joseph, they will implicitly bow to Him before they realize who He is. How? Well, the law and prophets all testify to Jesus and He is the fulfillment and embodiment of them.

The Bible shows that a temple will be built again before Jesus is revealed to the nation. By building the temple, enacting the sacrificial system, and pronouncing the law on which they are based, they will be bowing to the One who has, in fact, fulfilled that law already. The picture is interesting and exact.

II. Eyes That They Should Not See (29-31)

²⁹ Then he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your younger brother of whom you spoke to me?"

To lift one's eyes from a biblical standpoint doesn't just mean to see something or someone, but it is to notice them and to mentally acknowledge them. Joseph has already seen Benjamin with his eyes, but now there is the mental acknowledgement of him.

He has set his gaze on him in a way that he hadn't before. It is both acknowledging who he is and how he is related to him as the Bible then explains by saying "his mother's son." All eleven of his brother's are there, but only Benjamin is the son of His mother. He knows it is him, but to feign a lack of knowledge, he asks if this is the one they'd told him about in the past. And then, without giving them a chance to answer he goes on as the verse continues...

²⁹ (con't) And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son."

By speaking without allowing them to confirm that it is Benjamin, he is implying to them that he believes them to be honest. In other words, he could have interrogated them in some way, he could have asked for some type of proof, or whatever.

But instead he goes from the question to the confirmation of his belief without hesitation. It is, for all of them, a proof that they are safe. And not only safe, but reassured as well. His words to Benjamin are "God be gracious to you, my son."

The words to Benjamin are welcoming words that the brothers needed in order to feel at peace about having come to Egypt again, about having brought Benjamin, about having to face the ruler, and about having been brought into his house. Any tensions which preceded the moment are gone in this blessing upon Benjamin.

³⁰ Now his heart yearned for his brother;

Imagine the emotion he felt. After more than 20 years of being separated from his brother, the son of his own mother, he wanted to shout out who he was. It was probably an overwhelming desire, but instead he held it in so that the emotion welled up to tears.

I can't help but see the parallel in Israel today. They are back in the land, they are preparing to build a temple, they will be initiating sacrifices, reading the law, and engaging in the feast days that the law requires. They will be standing, literally, in the presence of the Lord not knowing that He is the One who is their true leader.

And His heart will yearn for them as they do these things. Joseph wanted to cry out, "I am your brother," and Jesus wants them to know the same. But the time isn't yet. What He embodies must be given time to be tested and proven true before He is revealed.

The 9th chapter of Daniel has granted 7 more years to Israel to recognize these things. It will be a time of testing and difficulty, but they are coming. Joseph won't yet be revealed to his brothers and Jesus won't immediately be revealed to His people. Instead, Jesus will certainly remain in a state of sadness as they endure what lies ahead. This is seen in the continuation of verse 30...

30 (con't) so Joseph made haste and sought *somewhere* to weep. And he went into *his* chamber and wept there.

In order to avoid being seen in this state, he turned and headed for his chamber. The ruler of all the land of Egypt is overwhelmed by the moment and the situation. Despite the rule and authority he has been granted, he is also a human with a heart that beats in him.

And Jesus, despite being ruler of heaven and earth, fully God in all ways, also remains a Man. The emotions of the Lord certainly didn't change after the resurrection. He wept at Lazarus' tomb, He wept over Jerusalem, and He surely weeps over His people today.

How difficult it must be to sit on heaven's throne and withhold Himself from shouting out, "It is I, your Brother." I cannot even imagine. Joseph was pained; Jesus is pained. But the time for the eyes to be opened hasn't come. Paul writes about it in Romans 11 -

⁸ "God has given them a spirit of stupor,
Eyes that they should not see
And ears that they should not hear,
To this very day."

*Joseph went into his chamber to weep
Seeing his brother the second son of grace
Jesus' pains and sorrows are certainly so deep*

As His brothers see Him but fail to recognize His face

³¹ Then he washed his face and came out; and he restrained himself, and said, "Serve the bread."

His tears were more than he could excuse as an allergy or a passing fly getting stuck in his eye. He really lost it to the point where he had to wash his face and get himself composed. After which, he came out and gave the servants their orders - "Serve the bread."

Bread in this context is inclusive of the whole meal. Bread, being the main staple, is used to represent everything else. It's an expression still used today in some places, just as rice is used in this way elsewhere. The Lord's Prayer is a good example of this.

III. The Son of Grace (32-34)

³² So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that *is* an abomination to the Egyptians.

In the dining hall, there are at least three separate tables, or at least three areas for dining and maybe more tables. Joseph is set by himself certainly as a sign of his position and authority. But there is still another separation, that of the Egyptians and the Hebrews.

The Egyptians dining there may have been rulers and given high seating as well, though subordinate to Joseph. But regardless of their position, there is a separation because, as it says "every shepherd *is* an abomination to the Egyptians."

Around the time of Joseph, a group of shepherd kings known as the Hyksos, invaded and almost ruined the land. Because of this, they held all shepherds in utter contempt.

Along with this, the ancient writer Herodotus said that "a native of Egypt will not kiss a Greek, use his knife, his spit, or his cauldron, or taste the flesh cut with a Greek knife." To them all foreigners were unclean, and because of this, they refused to eat with them.

Their detestation of the Hyksos eventually permeated so much that the same attitude was displayed toward all foreigners. Though Joseph is Himself a foreigner by birth, his position dictated that the customs be upheld now and so the Bible notes it.

I would suggest that the separation in the meal, although interesting, is otherwise unnecessary unless it is telling us of a picture of something else. In Romans 14 and 15, Paul writes in detail about "disputable matters" including the eating of foods.

He expands on this in 1 Corinthians 8, speaking very clearly about the eating of certain foods and what is and isn't allowed and what should and shouldn't be done. As an all-encompassing note concerning these things, he says in Romans 14:23, "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *he does not eat* from faith; for whatever *is not* from faith is sin."

As sin is an abomination to God, and as the brothers are picturing Israel still under the law, prior to accepting Christ, then they are still applying dietary restrictions which have been set aside in Christ. They are eating not from faith, but from obligation.

The separation of the meal in this verse then is a picture of this. The temple will stand, they will participate in the ritual offerings and meals, but they will not truly be eating with the Lord as we do in our communion.

Not until they recognize and accept Christ will they be in a true covenant relationship where the sharing of a meal is acceptable.

They are there, bowing to the Lord and serving the Lord, but they don't realize who He is and what He has done. They are still trying to live out the law which He has already fulfilled.

³³ And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked in astonishment at one another.

Without ever clueing in that their brother is the ruler of Egypt, he designates a seat at the table according to their age and status. It is his way of letting them know that he knows who they are and an extra confirmation that he has acknowledged Benjamin as their true brother as well.

When it dawns on them that they are seated in this particular arrangement, they are astonished. The fact is that they came from four mothers and some were born very close in time because of this. The chances of anyone guessing their age and birth order, particularly 11 of them in sequence, would be unimaginable.

And yet, he has done it. John Wesley writes this about this verse -

"He placed his brethren according to their seniority, as if he could certainly divine. Some think they placed themselves so according to their custom; but if so, I see not why such particular notice is taken of it, especially as a thing they marvelled at."

There is always a reason for "such particular notice." The Bible doesn't waste words and it never introduces superfluous details. If there's one thing that is evident from the previous 108 sermons, this is a certainty.

What seems an exacting parallel of the arrangement of the brothers in this verse is found in the sealing of the tribes of the sons of Israel in Revelation 7. Since the destruction of the temple in AD70, the tribe of each individual Jew is actually unknown and yet 12,000 are sealed from each tribe according to the list given there.

Though it seems impossible to truly determine who is who, nothing is impossible for God. Joseph has demonstrated a wisdom they didn't realize and the Lord has all the wisdom that those who don't know Him could fully grasp. The pattern is set and the sealing of the tribes will happen, just as the Bible records.

And moreover, it will happen during the tribulation period, a period of time which is actually being prefigured by the time of famine here in Genesis 43. It isn't arbitrary, nor is it superfluous, instead it is a picture of the future, given in the distant past.

***³⁴ Then he took servings to them from before him, but Benjamin's serving was five times as much as any of theirs.**

Of all the scholars I study for each sermon, only Scofield *hints* at what we've already noted during several previous sermons. Benjamin as well as Joseph are types and pictures of Christ. I was so elated to see someone else come to this conclusion and they finally did so in this verse.

Unless there is someone else who sees the same type or picture, it's like being out on a limb and wondering if it will break. Each picture is a continuous unfolding of what God is doing and will do in history. And so if one part of a picture is misinterpreted, then everything after it will have a flaw.

Seeing Scofield's note was an assurance that the limb we are already out on concerning Benjamin was, in fact, not off base. Benjamin finally takes a prominent position in the story. It has been hinted at for a while, but now it becomes more than apparent. As Scofield says,

"Joseph is peculiarly the type of Christ in His first advent, rejection, death, resurrection, and present exaltation among the Gentiles, but unrecognized of Israel. As the greater Benjamin, 'Son of sorrow,' but also 'Son of my right hand,' He is to be revealed in power in the Kingdom."

And this is exactly what we have been working towards since the introduction of Joseph. Through all of these stories, including that of Judah and Tamar, everything has continued to unfold in the exact pattern of the second exile of the people of Israel. And the culmination of the stories has consistently pointed to Israel's return, finding favor with God, the tribulation period, and eventually their recognition of Christ as Lord. It is a sweeping panorama of history which is exciting to see has been noted by someone else.

In the mentioning of Benjamin in this last verse of the day, something peculiar is brought into the story. It says "Benjamin's serving was five times as much as any of" his brothers. There are six more times in the Egyptian stories that the number five is mentioned.

*In Genesis 41:34 it says, "Let Pharaoh do *this*, and let him appoint officers over the land, to collect one-fifth *of the produce* of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years."

*In Genesis 45:6, it says, "For these two years the famine *has been* in the land, and *there are* still five years in which *there will be* neither plowing nor harvesting."

*In Genesis 45:22, it says, " He gave to all of them, to each man, changes of garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred *pieces* of silver and five changes of garments."

*In Genesis 47:2, it says, "And he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh."

*In Genesis 47:24, it says, "And it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh."

*In Genesis 47:26, it says, "And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt to this day, *that* Pharaoh should have one-fifth, except for the land of the priests only, *which* did not become Pharaoh's."

In the Bible, and as is seen in these seven examples from the Egyptian years, the number five consistently is used to symbolize grace. In particular, it notes God's gracious act of redemption. There is the three-fold mystery of the Godhead - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then there is the fourth mystery, Creation. And this is followed by the fifth mystery, Redemption.

The pattern of creation followed by redemption literally permeates the Bible. The Ten Commandments in Exodus are based on Creation. Those given in Deuteronomy are based on Redemption. The book of Revelation time and again uses this pattern as it unfolds its prophecies.

And the same is seen in the created man Adam and the redeeming Man, Christ. Now, this is noted in Benjamin who is given five times as much as his brothers at the meal. Joseph will continue to picture Christ, but he won't be revealed to his brothers until they are willing to speak out for Benjamin - the son of the right hand.

Joseph grants five times as much food to Benjamin to show them that he is the favored brother even though he is the youngest. He is a son of Rachel, who consistently has pictured God's grace. The grace bestowed upon him in the meal which is five times that of the brothers is hinting at this very thing.

Joseph is using an object lesson to instruct his brothers and God is using these stories to instruct us - Jew and Gentile alike. The entire time that Joseph has been removed from his brothers, Benjamin has been there. He, is the son of Rachel the lamb of grace.

Benjamin was called "Son of My Suffering" by Rachel and called "Son of My Right Hand" by Jacob. This same son has always been there with them but in the chapters ahead they will be faced with acknowledging him or losing him forever.

But what does it mean that Benjamin has always been there with them? How does this point to Israel of today? How could Jesus have been there with them without them recognizing it? The picture is seen in the Jew who carries the message of the church.

Which noted apostle was from the tribe of Benjamin? Paul, the apostle to the gentiles. And what is his consistent message? Grace. The grace of God in Jesus Christ to the gentile people. And not only Paul, but all Jews who have received Christ as Lord. Each is a faithful witness to the righteous remnant preserved by God.

This is what the brothers must defend and this is what Joseph is actually hinting at in this meal. Christ is Lord of all; Christ is the Son of the Right Hand; and Christ is the Son who suffered, fulfilling the law and granting us grace - all pictured by Benjamin.

And this is what Joseph is showing to his brothers, though they don't yet understand it. The writings of Paul have been available to the Jewish people all along. He, from

Benjamin, testifies to the Son of the Right Hand, Jesus. Israel will have to defend this truth in the future just as the brothers will have to defend Benjamin in the verses ahead.

*Oh precious grace, beautiful and wonderfully sublime
Bestowed upon His children, though so unworthy of it
God's grace is past measure, beyond space or time
Found in such great abundance when to Him they do submit*

³⁴ (fin) **So they drank and were merry with him.**

The chapter finishes with these words. There was food and there was drink and they got *drunk*. The word for "and were merry" is *v'yishkeru*. It means to be intoxicated and is always used this way, either literally, or symbolically.

But, as happens routinely, translators and scholars inject personal thoughts into their theology and say that of course this one time the word doesn't mean what it means. Why? Because these are the covenant sons of Israel and they would never, ever get drunk.

But let's let the story be told as it has been given. The brothers had a great time, they got drunk, and they had a good meal. This is neither a verse which condones being drunk, nor does it indicate that anything was done wrong in their drinking.

It is a part of the unfolding events of the life and times of Joseph and his brothers, and it points to a time of great festivity in Israel, probably around the building of the temple in Jerusalem. They will be in the presence of the Lord, rejoicing, doing their thing, and not even aware of the nature of the Lord in whose presence they are.

Once again, we've arrived at the end of our verses and we're left hanging about what the future holds for the brothers and for Joseph. But this is what the Bible does, it keeps us in suspense as to how it will all turn out. It shows us the overall picture, but it leaves out many details.

Like heaven itself, we only get a glimpse of what is coming, but it is coming. God has prepared a wondrous place of fellowship and delight for His people. It is offered freely to those who call on and receive Jesus. Without Him, there is no hope, but in Him there is the sure promise of eternal life.

Closing Verse: *To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,...*

-Ephesians 3:8

Next Week: Genesis 44:1-17 (The Cup and the Judgment) (110th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

In the Presence of the Ruler

And when Joseph came home, to him they did bring
The present which was in their hand
Into the house they presented the thing
And bowed down before him to the earth as planned

Then he asked them about their well-being
And said, "Is your father well
The old man of whom you spoke?
Is he still alive?" Please I beg you, do tell

And they answered, "Your servant our father
Is in good health; he is alive still
And they bowed their heads down and prostrated themselves
In this act, Joseph's dream they did fulfill
Then he lifted his eyes to behold
And saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son
And said, "Is this your younger brother, that you told
Of whom you spoke to me? Is this the one?"

And he said, "God be gracious to you, my son
I have been told of you, that you are the youngest one
Now his heart for his brother yearned
So Joseph made haste and sought somewhere to weep
And he went into his chamber, there he turned
And wept there with a mourning so deep
Then he washed his face and came out
And he restrained himself, and said
It's time for a meal no doubt

It's time to serve the bread

So in a place by himself, him they set
And them by themselves were set too
And the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves
All this because of the Egyptian's worldview
Because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews
And for this there is a specific explanation
For to do so to them as Egyptians
Was considered an abomination
And before him the firstborn they sat
According to his birthright, believe it or not
And the youngest according to his youth, imagine that!
And the men looked in astonishment at the seating places they got

Then he took to them from before him each serving
But Benjamin's serving was as much, times five
As any of theirs, as they were observing
So they drank and were merry with him, a good time to be alive
Again we see the life and times of Joseph unfold
In a marvelous display of pictures of Jesus
This is why these stories have been told
And why God so carefully detailed them for us

And so let us to each story and verse pay special heed
And search out the mysteries of Christ our Lord
In Him is wisdom and knowledge, it must be agreed
It is all about Jesus, God's incarnate Word

How beautiful and precious is Your word O God
May we always cherish it as on this, your world, we trod

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 44:1-17

(THE CUP AND THE JUDGMENT)

Introduction: Today's 17 verses could be, and probably should be, two separate sermons. There will be a lot of details that we'll have to skip over in order to finish everything today. And this may be a bit longer than other sermons, but what is hidden here is so wonderfully revealed in the New Testament that it is amazing.

As far as I know, no one else has ever come to these conclusions that you'll hear today, so I hope you'll enjoy them and that you will be blessed in them. God did a mighty work in Jesus Christ and that has been available to all people of the world. But for the most part, Israel rejected His plan.

However, in His great way, He has worked things out to reconcile them to Himself once again. As the church age winds down, the time for Israel's reconciliation is coming nearer. A major portion of that plan is seen in these verses.

Text Verse: *I will bring the one-third through the fire,
Will refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them.
I will say, 'This is My people';
And each one will say, 'The LORD is my God.'*” Zechariah 13:9

In order to be Lord of Egypt, Joseph had to suffer first. But after the suffering came the exaltation. And before he reveals himself to his brothers, he will put them through a test to refine them. And this is exactly what Jesus will do for Israel before He is fully revealed to them. It is all to be found in this majestic and superior word and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Cup of Divination (1-5)

¹ And he commanded the steward of his house, saying, “Fill the men’s sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man’s money in the mouth of his sack.

This happens on the same day as the feast in Joseph's house. During the feast, there was a lot of drinking going on. This is what the Hebrew implies. While the brothers are in a rather happy state, Joseph prepares them for a test of their character.

The steward of the house is given his instructions. The sacks are to be filled with food, even an abundance of food. As it says "as much as they can carry." And once again, the money that they brought for the grain is to be returned.

Once again, like the last time, Joseph will not accept money from their hand for the grain needed to sustain them. Just like before, the food is by necessity a gift. In the past, they had sold Joseph and received money for him.

If he accepted their money it would imply an exchange of payment for what he was actually sold for. If you see Christ in this, you are right. He paid the debt and the Bread of life is offered freely. How could he receive payment for what is a gift of grace? And more so when the money they have partly came from His sale.

² Also put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his grain money."

This silver cup was certainly used by Joseph at the meal. The brothers would have seen him using it and so what is coming has been prepared in advance. The implication is that the cup was in sight of them, *they all saw it*, and one of them must have it.

However, if this was all there was in the sack, it would have been convincing evidence that it was stolen by Benjamin. But it's not all that was in there, for Benjamin or for any of them. They all have their money back in their sack. And so they could come to a certain conclusion - that Benjamin was innocent.

***The cup Benjamin has is *not one he stole*. Instead, it was a cup he bore even though it wasn't his to bear. A picture of Jesus is to be seen in this action if you understand His work...

Also in this verse, instead of using the term "food" like he did in the previous verse, it says "grain." It is the word *shever* which has been used five times so far to describe the grain being bought and sold by the brothers. It implies breaking, or a fracture, or a breach. These different words for food and grain will soon make sense.

The cup that's referred to here is the Hebrew word *gabia*. It comes from an unused root word which conveys the sense of elevation or roundness, like a hill. Thus it is a goblet or bowl of large size. While we go through these verses, I want you to try to think of where this cup, *gabia*, may be connected in the New Testament.

² (con't) **So he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.**

The steward complied with the instructions and did exactly as Joseph had directed. Every step of the process here shows a careful and methodical plan to determine what he wants to know. It is all intended to lead to how he will ultimately deal with his brothers and it is all centering on Benjamin, the Son of the Right Hand.

³ **As soon as the morning dawned, the men were sent away, they and their donkeys.**

It is early the next day, the day after the big feast, that they are sent away. The Hebrew says, *ha'boqer ovr* - "The morning, light, and the men were sent away." It implies the time when the light first comes out. This is the only time this exact expression is used in the Old Testament and it corresponds with what Matthew 28:1 says -

Now after the Sabbath, as the first *day* of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. Matthew 28:1

Also, it specifically notes, "and their donkeys." The story is giving every necessary word in order to highlight what is happening. They had a great day of feasting, they are loaded up, and they are heading out early with everything they had come for and the animals they had come with. They are packed for the journey like a family on a vacation, and nothing is lacking.

⁴ **When they had gone out of the city, *and* were not *yet* far off, Joseph said to his steward, "Get up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good?"**

Completely aware of when they left and probably estimating the amount of time it would take for them to just get out of the city, Joseph, gives the order to bring his plans to a climax. This steward would certainly have had guards with him.

There are 11 men and, although not mentioned anywhere in the story, there would probably have been servants with them as well. When he caught up with them, he is told to ask them why they repaid evil for good.

This is a common biblical theme, seen from the Garden of Eden all the way through its pages. And it's a part of the human condition ever since as well. Someone does something good and another turns and does something wicked in return.

The ultimate example of it, of course, is God sending Jesus and He being crucified, and then even that work being rejected. Proverbs shows that the penalty for this is only more evil -

Whoever rewards evil for good,
Evil will not depart from his house. Proverbs 17:13

Thus Israel found much evil in their house for their rejection of Jesus. It has gone on for 2000 years. But God, who is patient and forgiving has brought them back home and is preparing to restore them. And this is all what is being pictured in the life of Joseph. Thank God for His great mercy.

*Why have you so repaid evil for good
What is it that makes man act in such a way?
In the gift of Jesus it must be understood
That His life was given for our sins to pay*

*And so to turn from Him and malign what He has done
Is to repay evil for His greatest good
Yes, God gave to us Jesus His Son
But we crucified Him, nailing Him to a cross of wood*

The cup which is now in Benjamin's sack is a special one and it has a special purpose - one which points to something which is fulfilled in Jesus. Let's take a look at the continuing details...

⁵Is not this *the one* from which my lord drinks, and with which he indeed practices divination? You have done evil in so doing.'"

There is a lot of speculation about the wording here. Almost every translation says that the cup is used for divination or telling the future. But among scholars there are a which variety of other possibilities which have been submitted.

Some say that he would have "diligently looked for the cup," rather than that he would have used the cup for divination - it is an action by Joseph to find the cup, rather than a

use by Joseph of the cup. Others say that he would have consulted diviners in order to find the cup. And another translates the word instead of divination as "testing."

In other words, "he used this cup to test you and you have failed the test." This seems the most likely based on the surrounding text. It is the cup from which he drank and the cup he would have had with him the day before. He is using it to test his brothers.

And another thing, it cannot go unexplained that the word for divination is *nakhash*. It is the verb from which is derived the same word in noun form, *nakhash*, meaning "serpent."

It is the same word used for "serpent" in the Garden of Eden and also the bronze serpent which was held up in the wilderness to save the people when they were bit. This serpent is referred to by Jesus in the New Testament in John 3:14, 15 -

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

Is anybody seeing the connection? Has anyone placed the cup, *gabia*, yet? Keep thinking. It is all to be found in Christ.

II. In Whomever Lies the Guilt, Let Him Die (6-13)

⁶So he overtook them, and he spoke to them these same words.

Just as he was instructed, so he relayed to the brothers. They have been given the words of Joseph and now comes their denial...

⁷And they said to him, "Why does my lord say these words? Far be it from us that your servants should do such a thing.

There is the immediate protestation of innocence. "We haven't done what we have been accused of. It is simply not correct." As we read this account, we have to remember what it's picturing. Joseph pictures Jesus and the brothers are the tribes of Israel.

They have been accused of a crime and they are denying they have committed one. They are actually unaware of the guilt they now bear. As you know possession is 9/10ths of the law.

⁸ Look, we brought back to you from the land of Canaan the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house?

In their defense, they remind him that they brought back the money from the previous trip, even after having been out of the reach of Egypt's authority, so why would they try to take a cup made of silver in a place where they could be caught?

Especially for something that probably wasn't worth the same weight in the silver they brought back. And as a further defense, they mention both silver and gold. In other words, we could have stolen silver or gold. Why would we steal a silver cup? To further their claim they continue speaking...

⁹ With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves."

What is said here is such a close reflection of what happened to their father Jacob many years ago, that the similarity shouldn't be missed. When Jacob fled from his father-in-law Laban, Rachel took his household gods. When Laban accused Jacob, his response was -

"With whomever you find your gods, do not let him live. In the presence of our brethren, identify what I have of yours and take *it* with you.' For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them." Genesis 31:32

In fact all of them *except Benjamin* were with Jacob at that time, though most were very young, but it was probably remembered by them as they spoke now. Jacob didn't know that Rachel had stolen the gods and none of them now realize what is in their possession.

¹⁰ And he said, "Now also *let it be* according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and you shall be blameless."

This verse perplexes scholars because of what seems like a dismissive or misunderstanding steward. The proposal was that the one who had the cup would be

executed and the rest would become slaves. Instead, the steward says basically, "Ok, the one who has it will be my slave and everyone else is free to go."

It doesn't make sense. But one scholar says that instead of being an agreement, the steward made it a surprised question, "Is that right according to your words?" In other words, fair justice only demands the punishment of the thief. This is what makes sense.

And it's what makes Bible reading interesting. By reading different versions and thinking things through, we can come to acceptable answers concerning hard to translate passages, of which there are many. In his words we see that the one who has the cup will be *punished in place of all the others*. Do you see a parallel to Jesus?

¹¹ Then each man speedily let down his sack to the ground, and each opened his sack.

The challenge is accepted and the sacks are opened...

¹² So he searched. He began with the oldest and left off with the youngest; and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

The old saying, "They that hide can find" rings true here. The steward hid the cup and in a dramatic and suspenseful way he finds it, having gone from one brother to the next, from the oldest to the youngest in the process.

Another connection to the search by Laban in Genesis 31 is made in this verse. The word for "So he searched" is *v'happesh*. The first time it was used in Scripture was during the search by Laban for the idols in Rachel's tent. But they weren't found.

This is the second time this term, *v'happesh*, is used in the Bible and this time, what is looked for *is* found. This isn't a coincidence, but the accounts are being drawn together to show us the contrast between them. If you missed that sermon, or if you've forgotten it, it would be worth going back and checking it out.

The order of that search was carefully described and yet perplexing, but ultimately it pointed to the people of Israel and the work of Christ. This search is no different. It goes through the sons of Israel and ends with Benjamin, the Son of the Right Hand.

And the cup which belongs to Joseph is now in Benjamin's sack. Both of them are sons of Rachel and are the last sons to be born to Jacob. Rachel pictures grace, not the law.

These are the sons of grace. That story, all the way back in Genesis 31, is showing us this pattern. It's being contrasted with what we now see here.

Israel *has been* in exile because they missed the grace. Now the grace must be revealed. None of this is chance or coincidence. It is given to show us details of the Messiah. *The cup* is in Benjamin's possession. What is this telling us? Another curiosity is that the word for sack used here is a special word *amtakhath*.

It's used only 15 times in the Bible. All 15 have been in the story of Joseph and his brothers, starting in chapter 42 and ending right here. The word has been used 7 times in this chapter alone and this is the last time it will be used in the Bible. It comes from another word, *mathakh*, which is used only once, in Isaiah 40:22 -

It is He who sits above the circle of the earth,
And its inhabitants *are* like grasshoppers,
Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
And **spreads them out** like a tent to dwell in. Isaiah 40:22

And why has Joseph ordered this scenario to happen? Why has it come to this point? The answer is that he wanted to know their attitude towards Benjamin, the second son of Rachel. Did they hate him like they hated Joseph?

If so, it would now become evident because they'd have a reason to simply leave him to be a slave and head back home. This is why the steward changed the conditions of the agreement from death for one and slavery for all to just slavery for one. Will this happen, or will they have a change in attitude towards their father's favorite son? The next verse begins to tell us...

¹³ Then they tore their clothes, and each man loaded his donkey and returned to the city.

"They" implies all the brothers. They collectively tear their clothes as a sign of the deepest distress. They are in true anguish over the chain of events and the situation in which they have found themselves. And without note of hesitation or consultation, they surrender themselves collectively to whatever fate awaits them.

They load the sacks back onto the donkeys and return to face the ruler of Egypt once again.

III. The Man in Whose Hand the Cup was Found (14-17)

¹⁴ So Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house,

Judah is now highlighted. Why? It is because he is the one who vowed to his father these words in the previous chapter -

⁸"Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you *and* also our little ones. ⁹I myself will be surety for him; from my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him *back* to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever." (Gen 43)

What was vowed is now expected and Judah is specifically named in the Bible to reflect this. Other than Benjamin, none of the other brothers are named in the entire account. It is up to Judah to make things right. Judah is where the term "Jew" comes from. Judah is representative of all Jews in this regard; he will speak for all Israel.

¹⁴ (con't) and he *was* still there; and they fell before him on the ground.

Joseph never left the house as one might expect of the lord of the land who directs the selling of the grain. This is the moment to which everything has been pointing and he has remained to see it through. When the brothers arrived, rather than bowing, they simply and completely prostrate themselves.

Along with the torn clothes, they have wholly humbled themselves in his presence. Jesus the Lord (Jehovah), whom Joseph pictures will be there in the Lord's house - the temple - in Jerusalem when they come to their moment of distress too. This picture is exact.

¹⁵ And Joseph said to them, "What deed *is* this you have done? Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?"

Joseph, the ruler of Pharaoh's house, gives them questions which have long been anticipated. And then he follows up with a rhetorical question, "What thing have you done? Don't you know I can look into matters in a way you can't even perceive."

Here he uses the term *nachesh v'nachesh* - "divining can divine." But again, this doesn't mean he is using mystical interpretations. Instead, he implies that he can make a trial

into a matter or discern truth in some way. The emphatic nature of it implies that he has the complete ability to find out the truth.

16 Then Judah said, "What shall we say to my lord? What shall we speak? Or how shall we clear ourselves?"

Judah's words imply that nothing they say can clear their guilt and nothing they say will be effective to do so. One commentator on this verse said, "The address needs no comment" and then he went on for a full page commenting on it. The heartfelt nature of this account cannot be left without our deepest consideration.

16 (cont') God has found out the iniquity of your servants;

Here in this verse the term *ha'elohim*, "the God" is now used by Judah. Until this point, the sons have never said this. He admits their iniquity without specifying what he means. But it is certainly referring *not to the matter of the cup* here, but that of having sold their brother more than 20 years earlier. The Geneva Bible says -

"If we see no obvious cause for our affliction, let us look to the secret counsel of God, who punishes us justly for our sins."

He knows that God's secret counsel is behind what is happening and so he resigns them to their fate...

16 (cont') here we are, my lord's slaves, both we and he also with whom the cup was found."

In acknowledgment of what they deserve, he offers all of them as slaves for their deeds of the past and the supposed misdeed of Benjamin.

*** 17 But he said, "Far be it from me that I should do so; the man in whose hand the cup was found, he shall be my slave. And as for you, go up in peace to your father."**

Joseph is now ready to test the sincerity of the brothers personally. In response to their offer, he makes his own claim, and it is on Benjamin, the Son of the Right Hand. "He will be my slave and the rest of you are free to go in peace, back to your father." The word "slave" here means a servant.

This is our last verse today, but the story must be looked at in a way which will reveal

what is going on. It is, as every story thus far in this cycle of Joseph since he was sold off to Egypt, pointing to the work of Christ and His ultimate reconciliation with Israel.

From this perspective, and before I give my personal analysis, I'd like to read you the comments of Jamieson-Faucett-Brown -

"Joseph's behavior must not be viewed from any single point, or in separate parts, but as a whole—a well-thought, deep-laid, closely connected plan; and though some features of it do certainly exhibit an appearance of harshness, yet the pervading principle of his conduct was real, genuine, brotherly kindness. Read in this light, the narrative of the proceedings describes the continuous, though secret, pursuit of one end; and Joseph exhibits, in his management of the scheme, a very high order of intellect, a warm and susceptible heart, united to a judgment that exerted a complete control over his feelings—a happy invention in devising means towards the attainment of his ends and an inflexible adherence to the course, however painful, which prudence required."

As they see it, Joseph is working out an exceptional scheme which is intended to produce one ultimate goal - reconciliation with his brothers. Viewing Joseph as a type of Jesus, the same must be considered in the history of the Jewish people as they are led directly to their meeting and reconciliation with Him.

In order to see that this is, in fact how God works, I want to read you a passage from 2 Samuel 14 which says exactly this. It is spoken to King David by a woman from Tekoa as she attempts to reconcile the king to his estranged son Absalom -

¹⁴ "For we will surely die and *become* like water spilled on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Yet God does not take away a life; but He devises means, so that His banished ones are not expelled from Him."

What Joseph has done toward his brothers, and what God has done towards Israel is perfectly summed up in this idea. Now, here are my thoughts on today's verses.

The brothers have been in the presence of Joseph, in his house, celebrating - and yet not recognizing him. This points to the Jewish people in the end times, back in Israel, back in the temple, in the presence of the King and not even recognizing Him.

Until they acknowledge Him in his past and present role as the suffering Servant who now sits at God's right hand, He will not reveal Himself to them. They must acknowledge the Jesus they rejected in order to have Him return and save them.

This is so clearly laid out elsewhere in the Old Testament, that it is astonishing that people miss it. It's even spoken by Jesus Himself in a verse I often quote from Matthew 23:37-39

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under *her* wings, but you were not willing! ³⁸ See! Your house is left to you desolate; ³⁹ for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the LORD!’”

Joseph orders that they be given as much food as they can carry and he returns their money. The food is the word of God. It is both testaments of the Bible. They have the full supply spread out before them.

The money is returned because there can be no payment made for what is grace, especially when they had sold their brother 20 years earlier. That money would have been included in their wealth. What is free cannot be paid for. It is pointing to the grace of God in Christ, something that cannot be earned.

This is why the word *amtakhath* has been used again and again for describing their sacks. It means "to spread out." It pictures God spreading out the story filled with the grain, the word. It is the spread out and fully revealed word of God. It reveals what is hidden; it shows what has been concealed, represented by the silver which was twice hidden in their sacks.

At first, their sacks were called *sak* - implying sackcloth. They had only the Old Testament which showed the law, woe, and suffering, not God's fully revealed plan. But all during this series of stories, since chapter 42, *amtakhath*, not *sak*, is used.

And in the Bible it is only used in the Joseph stories - an account pointing to the future reconciliation between Jesus and Israel. The grain in the sacks is called *shever*, meaning cracked or a breach, instead of *bar* meaning purified. There is a breach between their understanding of the word and what the word actually says.

This isn't a stretch here because only one more time is grain going to be mentioned in relation to this account and the term *bar* -purified grain, not *shever* will be used. And it will be *after the revealing of Joseph* to his brothers. Only in the Hebrew, not English, can this be seen.

Into the sack of grain, the *shever*, of Benjamin's bag is placed the cup, the *gabia*. And so we need to remember what Benjamin pictures. At his birth, he pictured Christ. If you missed that sermon, you should go back and watch it.

He was named Ben-Oni by his mother, meaning Son of My Suffering. Jacob renamed him Benjamin, Son of My Right Hand. Like Christ, before the exaltation there was suffering.

Benjamin here pictures Christ who first bears the cup. But there is a multi-level play on words in this cup. In the New Testament, there is a word, used only one time, which is exactly brought into the gospel records, being specifically named in both Greek and Aramaic by John. Let me read you the account -

"When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha).."

-John 19:13 (NIV)

I used the NIV for that because it is an Aramaic, not a Hebrew word as many versions incorrectly translate it. The cup, *gabia*, is named from a root word conveying the sense of elevation or roundness, hence a goblet. The word Gabbatha means an elevated place, a knoll - hence a rounded area like a goblet. Like Benjamin with the *gabia*, there at Gabbatha, Jesus was charged and committed to His execution, just as we saw with Benjamin here.

So now, I now want to read you all of John 19:1-30. As I read, think about the Jewish people as they sold Jesus off to His death - Ben-Oni, the Son of My Suffering, just as the brothers sold Joseph off to his fate. Remember as I read also what I said earlier about the cup in Benjamin's sack.

They have been accused of a crime and they are denying they have committed one. They are actually unaware of the guilt they bear, but they are guilty, even though they don't realize it. They sold off Joseph, whom Benjamin is now picturing - the suffering Son.

And after his suffering Joseph was exalted, thus Benjamin again pictures Jesus, the Son of My Right Hand. Israel has missed this for 2000 years, but the story shows us that the time to be revealed has come - maybe in our lives! Read John 19:1-30

I said there was a multi-leveled play on the word "cup." It is pointing to the trial at Gabbatha, but it is also the cup which Jesus prayed to be taken from Him while in Gethsemane. There, in the garden, He said "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me." The cup *is* the trial, and the trial *was at* Gabbatha.

And the cup *was the wrath of God*, poured out in full strength upon His own Son; His Son of Suffering. This is why Benjamin has the cup and why the brothers will have to defend him and be willing to trade places with him before Joseph will reveal Himself to them.

This is what Jesus said to Israel, under the Law "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Luke 9:23

These are the things that the Bible says are coming and it has been shown in advance so that we don't err by saying that the church has replaced Israel. Instead, the church, pictured by Joseph's gentile wife, is referred to between the accounts of Joseph's brothers.

And this is why Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph's sons, will later be adopted by Jacob. How can we deny what God is so clearly showing us? This is why the servant asked "Why have you repaid evil for good?" God sent His Son for the good of all mankind, but they rejected what He did for them.

And this is why the word for "divination" was used as it was. It indicates "testing." In other words, the cup was their test and they failed the test. They didn't accept His work. That cup was the cup of God's wrath - His trial at Gabbatha, and the cross. And God's way of proving it to us is that from the same word *nakhash*, "divination" comes the word which means "serpent."

It is the same word for "serpent" in the Garden of Eden and also the same word for bronze serpent which was held up in the wilderness to save the people when they were bit. That serpent is the one referred to by Jesus in the New Testament -

¹⁴ "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:14, 15

One serpent tested man. He failed and was condemned. One serpent was used to prefigure the cross of Jesus where man is pardoned. One results in God's wrath; one results in God's healing grace. One brought death; one brings life. This is why the servant said, "*Is not this the one from which my lord drinks?*"

Yes, He did drink from it. Jesus drank it down to its dregs for you and me - and for His brothers Israel too. The question is, will they defend Benjamin so that Jesus will be revealed among them in power in the coming Kingdom Age? We'll see in the sermons ahead.

There is so much in these 17 verses which pointed to the work of Christ. These hidden and amazing details show what He has done and what He will do. I've tried to give you enough of them to show God's amazing plan for Israel. They are back in the land and the time is coming, certainly soon.

In the end, it all points to Jesus and His love for all people - both Jew and gentile. It also shows us His faithfulness to Israel. Despite being sold off by them, Joseph develops a plan to test them and bring about reconciliation. And Jesus has done the same, showing us the details in these stories. He is the ever-faithful, merciful, and full-of-grace Lord.

Closing Verse: *Thus says your Lord,
The LORD and your God,
Who pleads the cause of His people:
"See, I have taken out of your hand
The cup of trembling,
The dregs of the cup of My fury;
You shall no longer drink it. Isaiah 51:22*

Next Week: Genesis 44:18-34 (Judah's Impassioned Plea) (111th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Cup and the Judgment

And he commanded the steward of his house, saying
"Fill the men's sacks with food to take back
As much as they can carry, to you I am relaying
And put each man's money in the mouth of his sack.
Also put my cup, the silver cup I implore you
In the mouth of the sack of the youngest, an unknown token
And his grain money, put that in too
So he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.
As soon as the morning dawned
The men were sent away
They and their donkeys who brayed, as the men yawned

When they, out of the city had gone
And were not yet far off, but still near
Joseph said to his steward "Come on
Get up, follow the men before they disappear
And when you overtake them, say so it's understood
'Why have you gone and repaid evil for good?
Is not this the one from which my lord drinks
And with which he indeed practices divination?
You have done evil in so doing methinks
So he overtook them, these eleven folk
And to them these same words he spoke
And they said to him, as together their voice did ring
"Why does my lord say these words?
Far be it from us that your servants should do such a thing

Look, to you we certainly brought back
From the land of Canaan the money
Which we found each in the mouth of our sack
How then could we steal silver or gold
From your lord's house? We are honest men as we before told
With whomever of your servants it is found
Let him die, to you this we speak
And we also will be my lord's slaves, remaining bound
Even if our future were to remain so bleak

And he said, "Now also let it be
According to your words in your address
He with whom it is found shall be my slave
And the rest of you shall be blame-less
Then each man let down his sack with speed
To the ground and each opened his sack
Showing he was not a man of greed

So he searched as each man did unpack
He began with the oldest and left off with the youngest
And the cup was found in Benjamin's sack
Then they tore their clothes, filled with remorse and pity
And each man loaded his donkey
And so they returned to the city

So Judah and his brothers each and all
Came to Joseph's house, surely making a mournful sound
And he was still there and they did fall
Before him there on the ground
And Joseph said to them by and by
"What deed is this you have wrought?
Did you not know that such a man as I
Can certainly divine, and see that which I have sought?
Then Judah said, certainly trembling and weak
"What shall we say to my lord?
What of value to you shall we speak?
Or how shall we clear ourselves, by what word?
God has found out the iniquity of your servants this day
Here we are, my lord's slaves
So both we and he also with whom the cup was found will stay

But he said, "Far be it from me
That I should do so in this matter so grave
The man in whose hand the cup was found, only he
Shall be kept here and he shall be my slave
And as for you, go up in peace to your father
I will keep only him here and not another
What Joseph has done involves a detailed plan
To finally bring reconciliation between his brothers and he

And it is no different than God's redemption of man
He has devised ways to reunite us and bring about harmony

He works in our lives in ways we cannot perceive
But it is for an intended purpose and goal
His plans are meant to bring us to where we believe
That He alone can save our wayward soul
In demonstration of His great love and unending care
He has worked in history to reconcile us
And there in the Bible is the place that where
We find the story of His plan, all centered on Jesus

Yes Lord, thank You for all this wonder that You have wrought
And carefully recorded in the Bible, so that we can be taught

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 44:18-34 **(JUDAH'S IMPASSIONED PLEA)**

Introduction: When a man and a woman come together as husband and wife, one traditional part of the vow they take is that they will be with each other from that day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death parts them.

This goes back to the premise that they are now one flesh and that nothing should separate that bond. On the other hand, there is no vow to be taken for becoming a son or a brother. These things come by nature and are often beyond our control. But the bond of family members should be as strong as the bond of the parents.

Marriage is chosen by man in the presence of God, but family is given by God for one another. And yet, throughout the Bible, we see warfare, not protection, between family members. Cain slew Abel. Esau threatened to kill Jacob. Absalom killed one of his brothers and then overthrew his father, King David.

And these are but a few of the many examples found in Scripture. Where love and harmony should prevail, jealousy, hatred, and bitterness arise. Joseph was Jacob's favorite son and because of this, his brothers hated him and sold him off as a slave.

But every time someone follows through with such an action, the Bible shows a response from God. He is not unaware of what occurs among the sons of men and He never lets such an offender off without justice being served. Each receives the consequences of his own actions.

Judah participated in selling Joseph and he along with the brothers are now reaping the consequences of what they did. But he, as the spokesman for them, now has the chance to make things right - even if it costs him his own freedom.

Collectively, the Jewish people, whether they know it or not yet, have and continue to reap the consequences of what happened to Jesus 2000 years ago. Individually, they can - as Hebrews says - "go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach." (13:13)

But as a nation, they will eventually have to make a choice to stand for Christ, even if it seems that it will cost them everything. We don't have the finer details, but we do have the overall picture. They will, in fact, do the right thing in the end.

Text Verse: *For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy through their disobedience,³¹ even so these also have now been disobedient, that through the mercy shown you they also may obtain mercy.³² For God has committed them all to disobedience, that He might have mercy on all. Romans 11:30-32*

This is the richness of God's work in human history. He called Israel as a people for Himself. Eventually, through disobedience they were set aside so that the mercy of Christ might come to the Gentiles. Someday, we will be taken out at the rapture and God's mercy will again be extended to Israel.

That time is certainly drawing near as we can tell from events in the world we live in, all centering on Israel. We are a people in anticipation of great things because we are a people who stand on, and trust in, the promises and the prophecies of God's superior word. We have more pictures of what lies ahead in our sermon verses today and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Without Benjamin, You Shall Not See My Face (18-23)

The words which will now be spoken by Judah are beyond proper description. Any comment on their substance will lack in conveying the emotion, in grasping the humility, or in comprehending the magnitude of what he will speak.

And the reason for this is that they now picture a moment in history which has been anticipated, truly, since the fall of man, but more especially since the naming of Israel there on the bank of the Jabbok River as he traveled back to Canaan from Padan Aram. It is Israel who strives with God - either for God or against God, but yes, Israel strives with God. Later, there was the selection of Judah as the kingly line. It is Judah who speaks for all Israel and it is Israel's King, Jesus, who descends from Judah who has authority over them as they strive with God.

Scholars have struggled to properly put into words their feelings about the next 17 verses, but here are some of their comments -

It is "one of the masterpieces of Hebrew composition" according to Kalisch. It is "one of the grandest and fairest to be found in the Old Testament" states Lange. Lawson says it is, "A more moving oration than ever orator pronounced." Inglis remarks that it is, "One of the finest specimens of natural eloquence in the world"

Jamieson, Faucett, Brown says that, "...consisting at first of short, broken sentences, as if, under the overwhelming force of the speaker's emotions, his utterance were choked, it becomes more free and copious by the effort of speaking, as he proceeds. Every word finds its way to the heart; and it may well be imagined that Benjamin, who stood there speechless like a victim about to be laid on the altar, when he heard the magnanimous offer of Judah to submit to slavery for his ransom, would be bound by a lifelong gratitude to his generous brother, a tie that seems to have become hereditary in his tribe."

This is a truth that has been and continues to be revealed. Judah is speaking on behalf of Benjamin to Joseph. And in all three, there is the relation to Christ. Jesus descends from Judah. Joseph pictures Christ as the Supreme ruler, and Benjamin pictures Christ, first as the suffering servant and then as the Son of the Right Hand.

It is Judah, picturing the Jews, who is now offering himself to the One who once took their place. Joseph has claimed Benjamin as the one who will serve him in this gentile land and it is Benjamin from whom the apostle Paul came who wrote the words which speak of the authority of Christ who rules, even over the gentiles.

Everything overlaps and everything points to the supremacy of Jesus Christ. And now, there is the sudden transition where Judah speaks out to be made captive to the One he once agreed to sell off as a slave after having first thrown Him into the Pit. It is Judah and Joseph; it is the Jews and it is Jesus.

¹⁸ Then Judah came near to him and said: "O my lord, please let your servant speak a word in my lord's hearing, and do not let your anger burn against your servant; for you *are* even like Pharaoh.

The burning anger of the Lord against Israel when they stray is noted from Exodus all the way through to Malachi. Judah is making a petition to Pharaoh that his anger not burn against him as he spoke. Remembering that Joseph pictures Christ will help us keep this passage in perspective.

Judah notes that Joseph is "even like Pharaoh." The deity of Christ cannot be missed here. Pharaoh means "Great House" and it is a picture of the rule and authority of God from heaven. Thus, as the Geneva Bible says, Joseph is "Equal in authority" to Pharaoh.

The Pulpit Commentary notes that he is "invested with the authority of Pharaoh, and therefore able, like Pharaoh, either to pardon or condemn." Thus, this passage, given by

God in His word, is meant to show us, very clearly, an early picture of both the deity of Christ, and to imply the doctrine of the Trinity.

Albert Barnes, who doesn't speak of the connection between Joseph and Christ, still shows us that the deity and humanity of Christ are both pictured in Joseph. On this verse he says that Judah "will surmount the distinction of rank, and stand with him on the ground of a common humanity." Surely the Incarnate Christ, fully God *and* yet fully Man, is the picture we are to see here.

*Let your anger not burn against your servants, O Jesus
For though You are God, you are also a Man
We appeal to You to have mercy upon us
Our weakness You shared and so surely... You understand*

¹⁹ My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?'

Much of what we will see in the next verses is a repetition of what has already been seen in the preceding passages. It is recounted by Judah, speaking on behalf of all of Israel, to Joseph. As we go through these verses, keep remembering who each person pictures.

It is the Bible's early hints to us that some great day, Israel will stand up for and defend the Servant who once suffered for them. There will be a change in heart which seems impossible in our world today. And yet as surely as lemons make you pucker, it will happen.

They will have to be brought to such a state that there is no other option left, but to call out and defend their once-crucified Messiah. Judah now reminds Joseph that when they first met, he had asked if they had a father or brother.

If I were to give my best attempt at clarifying what this is pointing to, it would be a debate in Israel, after the rapture of the church, concerning a group of Messianic Jews - Jews who had accepted Christ; meaning the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation.

Remember, Judah and the brothers don't know who Joseph is, but they are being asked to defend Benjamin - their youngest brother. He then pictures those who are in Christ. These Messianic Jews would be those who have received the gospel of Christ, but only those after the rapture.

²⁰ And we said to my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a child of *his* old age, *who is young*; his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him.'

"Yes, we have a father. He is old." In this picture, Jacob is Israel, but not the individual tribes. He is the collective Israel - throughout the ages and of all who have issued from him, including Joseph and Benjamin. He is the people who strive with God.

Judah says, there is one child of his old age. But the term he uses isn't the same one which once described Joseph. That was *ben zequmin hu* - "a son of old age to him." That pictured Jesus, the wise Son. In this verse, Benjamin is called *yeled zequnim qatan* - "child of his old age, a little one."

This then is surely speaking of the Messianic Jews of the tribulation period, a little group who have called on Jesus as the Son of the Right hand, again pictured by Benjamin. Also in this verse, Judah tells Joseph that his brother is dead, when speaking of Joseph.

This is a complete misunderstanding of the situation - both of Judah speaking to Joseph and the Jews of the future speaking of Christ. Because they misunderstand that Joseph is actually alive, he says that Benjamin "is left of his mother's children, and his father loves him."

Both Joseph and Benjamin were born of Rachel. Throughout the stories of her life, she pictured New Testament grace. Judah believes Joseph is dead and so only Benjamin is left and his father loves him. It is Benjamin - those Jews who received Christ during the future tribulation, that are beloved and favored in Israel.

Judah, picturing the Jews, doesn't yet believe in Christ, but will they be willing to stand up for these believers who are a part of the nation of Israel, at the expense of their lives? This is the test of the tribulation period. And this is what Israel of the future will face.

²¹ Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.'

Judah glosses over the accusation Joseph made that they were spies and speaks only about Benjamin and his favor in Joseph's sight - "Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him." To set one's eyes on another actually means to grant them favor and care.

And this is what the Bible shows us about the 144,000 in Revelation. There it says in Revelation 7:4 - "And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred *and* forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel *were* sealed:" Then in Revelation 9:4, speaking of a plague of locusts on the earth it says, "They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads."

Joseph has determined to care for Benjamin during the famine, Jesus will, during the tribulation, care for those whom He as sealed. Again, it is all pointing to Jesus and those in Israel who belong to Him.

²² And we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for *if* he should leave his father, *his* father would die.'

This verse becomes clear when viewed from the lens of prophecy. Israel would in fact die if something were to happen to Benjamin. Without a faithful remnant, there would be no Israel, but God has promised there always would be one and He will save those faithful Messianic Jews of the tribulation period.

²³ But you said to your servants, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more.'

It was Joseph's plan to test his brothers through Benjamin. And God will test Israel through the Tribulation period, ensuring the safety of His sealed Jewish servants. Israel will never know the truth of who Jehovah is, meaning Jesus, unless Benjamin is safe among the brothers. It is only through accepting Christ that we can know God.

Without Benjamin then, he says "you shall see my face no more." If you consider this from the cherished high priestly blessing of Israel, it makes all the sense in the world

The LORD bless you and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26

*The LORD bless you, and you may He keep
This is my prayer for the Lord to do
May His face shine with a light on you with, a light radiantly deep*

And may His grace your soul renew

*May the countenance of the Lord upon you be lifted up
And may His peace be found in your heart and soul
May you forever have an overflowing cup
And may you remember that surely the Lord is in control*

Only in Christ is this possible because only Christ is the Lord.

II. The Father's Love for Benjamin (24-29)

²⁴ “So it was, when we went up to your servant my father, that we told him the words of my lord.

Judah explains that the brothers passed on what they were told to say. They didn't hide or try to circumvent the situation, but made it plainly clear to Jacob. But, Jacob dismissed the matter at first...

²⁵ And our father said, ‘Go back *and* buy us a little food.’

Instead of telling the whole story, Judah tells where Jacob simply wanted them to return to Egypt for more food. When he said this, he used the term "grain" not "food." There was no point in calling it grain because there was *only* a need for food, not grain to plant.

But food comes from grain and the grain is the word of God which speaks of the Bread of Life, Jesus. They are tied together in the Bible. Without the word, there is no Jesus and without Jesus there is no life. This is what we see pictured here and they tell their father as much...

²⁶ But we said, ‘We cannot go down; if our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we may not see the man’s face unless our youngest brother *is* with us.’

We can't be sure what will cause the nation of Israel to protect the Messianic Jews in the Tribulation, but they will. Maybe it will be the two witnesses mentioned in Chapter 11 who will convince them. Whatever it is, they will know that this group must go with them as a nation. Without them, they will not again meet the Lord.

This is dealing with something which will really happen someday. We're looking forward and it's difficult to pinpoint the specifics, but the overall message is clear. It is key to understanding the reconciliation of Israel and their long-estranged Messiah.

Once again, the Incarnation of Christ is also pointed to in this verse. Judah calls Joseph "the man" in his presence. Instead of calling him the lord of the land, the governor, or the ruler, he calls him the man. This then isn't used to diminish him, but rather to exalt his manhood. Again and again, it is all pointing to Christ.

²⁷ Then your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons;

Judah relays to Joseph what Jacob told them. In essence, he says, "Sons, you know about Rachel and you know about her two sons." Again, Rachel pictures New Testament grace and both sons picture Christ and His work, immediate and on-going.

Joseph, whose name comes from two words - *asaph* and *yoseph*, pictures Jesus' work of taking away the reproach of the Law and adding in Gentiles to the people of God. Benjamin pictures Christ in His suffering and then Christ in His exaltation. Together, these two contrast, and yet they confirm the work of Christ.

²⁸ and the one went out from me, and I said, "Surely he is torn to pieces"; and I have not seen him since.

Anybody? Isn't this verse the work of Christ in a nutshell. "The one went out from me, and I said 'Surely he is torn to pieces.'" This is exactly the passion of Christ. He was torn for our healing. He was crucified for us. But for Israel collectively, they "have not seen Him since." There isn't a word which doesn't shout out Christ. It is all about Him.

In this verse, Judah uses the term *tarof toraf* - "torn, torn." It is the exact same expression used in Genesis 37:33 which was 17 sermons ago, when Joseph's bloodied garment was presented to Jacob. The heartache never diminished, the memory never faded, and the picture of Christ endures 2000 years later. How Israel longs for his Son...

²⁹ But if you take this one also from me, and calamity befalls him, you shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow to the grave.'

Judah finishes his quoting of Jacob with the pitiful sound of his father's voice still ringing in his ears. "If I lose Benjamin, I will die." This old man will go to the grave in death as a result of a broken heart. This is Judah's appeal to the humanity of the ruler of Egypt.

"Though you are great on the earth, you are also a human. Please hear my concern for our father."

*You shall bring my gray hair with sorrow to the grave
Should I lose Benjamin my beloved son
Only through his protection will you, my life save
He is the life of Israel, yes he is the one*

*Without a faithful remnant of those who trust Jesus
Israel will perish and God's promises would fail
But there is hope in the Son of the Right Hand for us
In Him we are secure and against us nothing can assail*

III. Let Me Stand in the Place of Benjamin (30-34)

³⁰ "Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father, and the lad is not with us, since his life is bound up in the lad's life,

Judah is preparing to make his final appeal and he sets it up with these words. If I come back and Benjamin isn't with us. And if my father's very life is tied to Benjamin... then... then...

The words of this passage are so striking and real to us that it is as if we are in the room with the actors as the dialogue is spoken. One scholar of the Bible, Dr. Jackson, says this about the account -

"For it is plain that every circumstance is here related with such natural specifications, as if Moses had heard them talk; and therefore could not have been thus represented to us, unless they had been written by His direction who knows all things, fore-past, present, or to come."

In other words, either this story is completely false and made up, or it could only have been uttered by the Holy Spirit who so carefully revealed the words to us that we seem to live them as they come to our own senses. And if the Holy Spirit uttered them, as He in fact did, then they were selected and passed on because God wants us to see Jesus in them.

This is the only possible explanation for the detail and the specific wording which would actually be otherwise unnecessary to give for the overall meaning of the account. The

life of Jacob is tied up in the Son of the Right Hand - Benjamin. Without Him, there is no hope and only the expectation of death. As we will now see...

³¹ it will happen, when he sees that the lad *is not with us*, that he will die. So your servants will bring down the gray hair of your servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

If Benjamin doesn't return to Israel, there will be no Israel. It is that clear. It is clear in this account when speaking of Jacob, and it is clear in the Bible when referring to Israel the nation. In Christ, there *is life*, without Christ there is only the grave, which in Hebrew is the word *sheol* - the place of the dead.

The term *sheol* is used only four times in the book of Genesis and all four are referring to Jacob and his sorrow concerning his sons - first Joseph and then Benjamin. This use of the word *sheol* these four times is not coincidence.

The number four in the Bible consistently speaks of God's creative works. He is known by the things that are seen. But four times, it has been revealed that without the Son, there is no revelation of God through sight. There is only the absence of it in death.

Not until the book of Numbers will the word *sheol* be used again. We have been given a specific look into the work of Christ in creation and also the resulting *lack* of that type of revelation in death right here in this passage about Jacob and His sons Joseph and Benjamin; about Israel and Jesus.

³² For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him *back* to you, then I shall bear the blame before my father forever.'

Judah promised and Judah will now work to make good on his promise. Someone must bear the blame for all evil actions. The sentence will be carried out in either the one who causes them or in a substitute, but the Bible shows that justice must be served.

Judah said that if evil befalls Benjamin, he will bear the blame and he will do so for, as the Hebrew says it, *kal ha'yammim* - for all the days. It is a term which means as long as the days last he will bear the blame.

It is a picture of salvation. We can either stand for the Son of the Right Hand or we must face the blame on our own. There is no middle ground in Christ and there is no partial

admission into heaven. It is all Christ or it is no Christ. Judah must stand for himself or stand for Benjamin. Which will he do?

³³ Now therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers.

The great Bible scholar of the 18th century, John Gill, had the imagery right in this verse, but he had the actors wrong. Here are his comments -

"In this Judah was a type of Christ, from whose tribe he sprung, who became the surety of God's Benjamin's, his children who are beloved by him, and as dear to him as his right hand, and put himself in their legal place and stead, and became sin and a curse for them, that they might go free, as Judah desired his brother Benjamin might."

John Gill rightly saw the substitution, but he missed the overall picture and therefore he misinterpreted *who* was the type of Christ and who Judah was picturing. It's probable that he had no idea that Israel would ever be a nation again or that they would be back in the land God promised them.

Christ descends from Judah, and He fulfilled the law as a Jew. But it is Joseph and Benjamin who are the sons of Rachel and thus the sons who picture Christ.

Benjamin is being made the substitution for the wrong they had done - Gill got it backwards. They sold off Joseph and it was Benjamin who received the cup, not them. *They*, not he, are now under the test to take responsibility for their own wrong actions.

What Judah is proposing now is in *defense* of Benjamin, not the other way around. Jesus has already stood in defense of them. They now need to acknowledge that. Matthew Henry rightly saw Christ in Joseph in his thoughts about this passage -

"Jesus, the great antitype of Joseph, humbles and proves his people, even after they have had some tastes of his loving-kindness. He brings their sins to their remembrance, that they may exercise and show repentance, and feel how much they owe to his mercy."

Once the actors are rightly identified, then the pictures start to become clear. It's all about Jesus and His many roles in redemptive history. At this time, the church age has ended and it is all focused on His relationship with Israel. The exciting thing is that we are living in the time when these final pictures will be fulfilled.

³⁴ For how shall I go up to my father if the lad *is* not with me, lest perhaps I see the evil that would come upon my father?"

Judah finishes up this most beautiful monologue with these words. In essence, "I would far rather stay here as your slave than face what catastrophe will come upon my father if Benjamin isn't there with me."

His eyes couldn't bear, his heart couldn't endure, and his mind couldn't accept the misery that his father would display at the loss of Benjamin. This is his final plea and this is where his words end. Now it will be up to the ruler of the land to decide his fate, the fate of Benjamin, and that of Israel.

For two thousand years, the Jewish people have looked to their own righteousness as codified in the Talmud. There is no room for Christ because they believe righteousness comes from self before God, not from God upon undeserving self.

But Judah's actions in this passage today show that the Jews will someday get it. They will speak on behalf of the Son who is of greater affection to God than they are. It is not about the Law; the Law can save no one. It is about Christ who fulfilled the Law.

*It is all about Christ who fulfilled the law for me
I know that I have no righteousness of my own
But because of Him I am saved forever, eternally
And so to the world my desire is for His glory to be known*

Judah was determined to sacrifice his own freedom for the sake of Benjamin and Jacob. And the Jews as a nation will someday be willing to do the same. When that day comes, Jesus will appear to them in all His glory. This is what we will see when we look into the next chapter of Genesis.

Time and time again, we see one common theme running throughout the Bible - whether it is Israel or the Gentiles, God continues to pursue us even when we turn from Him. Among other reasons, the book of Genesis is given is to show us how we got into the mess we're in and then to give us pictures of how God will work in history to get us out of it.

Without understanding these pictures, we can still be built up in our faith, but when we see *why* God chose each story and the many details and words He selected to tell them, we get a fuller understanding of His immense wisdom and control over history.

And we also get a sense that all of that wisdom and power is being directed toward securing a group of people for Himself, from Jew and Gentile - to be a praise and glory to Him for all eternity. If you haven't yet called on Jesus and if you aren't sure of your eternal destiny, let's settle that today.

Closing Verse: *Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy,
That we may rejoice and be glad all our days!*

¹⁵ *Make us glad according to the days in which You have afflicted us,
The years in which we have seen evil.*

¹⁶ *Let Your work appear to Your servants,
And Your glory to their children. Psalm 90:14-16*

Next Week: Genesis 45:1-15 (The Lord is Revealed) (112th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

An Impassioned Plea

Then Judah came near to him and said:
O my lord, please let your servant speak
A word in my lord's hearing, instead
This is an unusual situation, one quite unique

And do not let your anger burn against your servant
For you are even like Pharaoh
In this I am observant

My lord asked his servants, saying
Have you a father or a brother too?
And we said to my lord, the matter portraying
We have a father, an old man, as we then told you

And a child of his old age, who is young;
His brother is dead, and left alone is he
Of his mother's children, who from her sprung
And his father loves him with great affection, you see

Then you said to your servants

Bring him down to me
That I may set my eyes on him
Yes, bring this young absentee

And we said to my lord "The lad cannot his father leave
For if he should leave his father he would die
And thus we too would grieve

But you said to your servants
Unless your youngest brother comes down with you
You shall see my face no more
These words I speak are true

So it was, when up to your servant my father we went
That we told him the words of my lord
The message you had sent

And our father said, making us frown
Go back and buy us a little food
But we said, "We cannot go down
This course of action is just not good

If our youngest brother is with us in that place
Then down we will go
For we may not see the man's face
Unless our youngest brother is with us, as you know

Then your servant my father to us said
You know that my wife two sons to me bore
And the one went out from me, he is dead
I know that I shall see him, nevermore

And I said, "Surely he to pieces is torn"
And I have not seen him since
I saw the bloodied coat that he had worn

But if you take this one also from me today or on the morrow
And calamity befalls him as his older brother
You shall bring down my gray hair with sorrow

To the grave in my affliction, not that of another

Now therefore, when I come to your servant my father
And the lad with us is not
Since his life is bound up in the lad's life
I know he will be completely overwrought

It will happen, when he sees that the lad is not
With us, that he will die in that spot

So your servants will bring down
Of your servant our father the gray hair
With sorrow to the grave
His body we will bury there

For your servant became surety
For the lad to my father, saying in this endeavor
If I do not bring him back to you, then surely
I shall bear the blame before my father forever

Now therefore, please I speak this word
Let your servant here remain
Instead of the lad as a slave to my lord
And let the lad go up with his brothers once again

For how shall I go up to my father
If the lad is not there with me too?
Lest perhaps I see the evil that would come
Upon my father, this I plead to you

The heartfelt plea of Judah has now been spoken
The words of a caring brother and loving son
In them is the sure and blessed picture and token
Of the Jews when they call out to the Righteous One

He is the Son of the Right Hand of God
The One who first suffered on the hill of Golgotha
And we remember Him every moment as on this earth we trod
And anxiously we call out Come Lord, yes, Maranatha

Even so we call out, Come Lord Jesus
As we live our lives in anticipation of that glorious day
When He shall return and receive those of us
Who have trusted in Him for our sins to pay

Praise be to thee O God, all hail Jesus' name
We will for all eternity Your glorious work proclaim

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 45:1-15 **(THE LORD IS REVEALED)**

Introduction: For weeks and weeks now, we've been looking at the coming reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers and between Jesus and Israel. There have been so many matching patterns that it is obviously something God does not want us to miss.

It is a central theme here and it continues to be a central theme throughout the entire Bible. But what we could and should ask is why? Who cares if God and Israel are reconciled? The Jews are about one percent of one percent of the population of the world. They are an insignificant number in comparison to the multitudes of people on God's green earth.

And of the Jewish people of today, the vast majority are not right with God. This is completely apparent. So why is this plan which is pictured in Genesis, expanded on throughout the Bible, and shown to be fulfilled in Revelation so important to Him and to us?

The answer is painfully clear when we understand God's character, and it is exceptionally important in how we perceive our relationship with Him. Concerning His character, He has spoken a set of promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and so on.

If these promises are truly from Him, and if the Bible is truly His word, then His very integrity is tied up in this book and the promises it contains. If even one of His promises were to fail, then He isn't God and we have our faith in the wrong place.

And that brings us to the second point - how we perceive our relationship with Him. If we believe the Bible is true and was given to us by the God who cannot lie, if we really believe that... then there are promises that we can hold to and there are obligations imposed on us.

If God's promises to Israel fail, then the promises to us aren't trustworthy either. And the responsibilities we have then aren't really that important. Going and making disciples doesn't really matter if God doesn't keep His promises. Other than making a lot of money through a false religion, there really is no imperative to do what Jesus said.

And this is exactly why the church, so long ago, absconded with the promises to Israel. Israel was destroyed. There were only a few scattered Jews and it seemed to be that those promises had failed. Unless... well unless they now belong to the church. But many of them were very specific - places, names, and so on.

And so not only did they assume that the promises must be for the church, but that they were spiritual or allegorical. Or, even more stupidly perceived, that they were already fulfilled - "Yes, this is speaking of the past..." When in fact they had never been happened. The Lord says in Amos 9:15 -

"I will plant them in their land,
And no longer shall they be pulled up
From the land I have given them,"
Says the LORD your God."

That obviously has never happened, because that was written about 750BC and they were cast out of the land from AD70 until 1948. So how could the church make such a stupid claim? It's because they know the God of the Bible is the true God and so these things must somehow apply to the church, even though they really don't.

This is why these stories and their fulfillment are so important. Because our very understanding of God, history, integrity, and our religion are tied up in them. When you turn away from the importance of Israel, especially Israel of today, you turn away from a sound relationship with God.

And along with that goes your solid foundation in those promises which have been made by Him to you. This is the importance of Israel. Everything is tied up in God's promises to Israel.

Text Verse: ²⁵ "Thus says the LORD: 'If My covenant is not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, ²⁶ then I will cast away the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, so that I will not take any of his descendants to be rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will cause their captives to return, and will have mercy on them.'" Jeremiah 33:25, 26

Either the Bible is God's word or it is not. If it is, then it is absolute truth, even the things we may not like or the things which we dismiss because we don't understand them. But by continually digging into this word, we will be molded into a right understanding and a

right relationship with God. So let's go to the word now and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. I Am... (verses 1-5)

¹ Then Joseph could not restrain himself before all those who stood by him,

In the previous chapter, Judah, picturing the representative of all the Jewish people, made an impassioned plea for his brother Benjamin. He offered himself in exchange for him because he knew that without him, his own father would die in the anguish of his soul. After hearing his words and seeing that there was truly a change in him, it says Joseph couldn't restrain himself.

The word is *le'hitapek*. It is the same word used to describe him in Genesis 43:31 when he controlled himself after weeping over Benjamin at the meal they shared. There it said, "Then he washed his face and came out; and he **restrained** himself, and said, "Serve the bread."

This time the opposite occurred, instead of being able to restrain himself any longer, he lost all control of his emotions. The Hebrew is emphatic and it shows us he was without any emotional restraint.

^{1 (con't)} and he cried out, "Make everyone go out from me!"

When we read this verse, because of the way it's worded, we can't help but get a mental image of the situation, and we are prone to make intuitive guesses as to why he made everyone leave the room. My thought was always that he didn't want any of his servants to see him reduced to a state of tears.

This is certainly true, but the Geneva Bible added in another reason I hadn't before considered. They said it was, "...because he wanted to cover his brother's sin."

That is now two reasons. And a third which comes to mind is that his true identity was only known to a select few around him. Revealing himself in the open would then reveal who he was to those who were not supposed to know. The question is, "Would that serve a positive or a negative purpose?"

Would knowing he was a Hebrew, and once a servant, help or make things worse. If you can see this in the light of the tribulation period, the whole world will be coming after

the Jews as never before. Connecting them to Jesus in this intimate way would only serve to increase the troubles, not lessen them. The world has already rejected Christ and they hate Him.

The intimacy of this meeting serves several purposes and is intended as a picture of the future as much as it is of the reconciliation of these brothers in the distant past.

The tribulation also serves several purposes. One is to destroy the wickedness on earth just like the Flood of Noah did. One is to bring reconciliation between God and Israel. Another is to usher in the Kingdom Age where Christ will sit on the throne and rule over the earth from Jerusalem. Each step of Joseph's revealing of himself parallel's this unveiling, or revelation, of Jesus Christ.

^{1 (con't)} So no one stood with him while Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

And so, with only the sons of Israel present, Joseph is made known to his brothers. Remember, there is a famine in the land. The word of God is available, but it will come at a cost. But to Israel, there will be a special revealing of the Lord.

As this meeting is in Joseph's house, I'm guessing that the same thing will happen in the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. The Bible makes is perfectly clear that there will be another temple in Jerusalem. And so it is probable that what we are seeing here is something that will be revealed *in that future temple*.

The details aren't clear, but the overall picture of what is coming has been given. He will reveal Himself in a way which only Israel will hear, but as Jesus says in Luke 8:17, "For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor *anything* hidden that will not be known and come to light." The message will go out...

² And he wept aloud, and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it.

The opening word of this verse is *v'yitten*. It signifies giving something, or putting something out. The literal translation then would be "And gave forth his voice in weeping." In other words, loud cries went out.

It was more than merely sobbing out loud, but it was the deep gasps of air which are followed by loud groans which simply cannot be restrained. Joel 3 is written not about the past, but about the future. The first few verses of that chapter make this certain.

Later in the chapter, we read the following which sounds like an incredible parallel to Joseph's revealing of himself to his brothers -

The LORD also will roar from Zion,
And utter His voice from Jerusalem;
The heavens and earth will shake;
But the LORD will be a shelter for His people,
And the strength of the children of Israel.
¹⁷ "So you shall know that I *am* the LORD your God,
Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain.
Then Jerusalem shall be holy,
And no aliens shall ever pass through her again." Joel 3:16, 17

Joseph's weeping was heard by Pharaoh, the Great House, picturing heaven, and by the Egyptians, picturing the gentiles. The roar of the Lord will be so great that both heaven and earth will shake. The message will go out to the world at that time. And again, in Revelation 14:10, we see the same thing -

"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people— ⁷ saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

³ Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I *am* Joseph;

The astonishing revelation is now made. Until this point, they only knew him as Zaphnath Paaneah, the Savior of the World. But suddenly the connection is clear. *Joseph* is the Savior of the World. Put yourselves into the place of the Jews at the temple when this revelation is made. "*I am Jesus.*" Jehovah is revealed for who He truly is. The Lord of Creation is their own brother in the flesh.

Concerning the words, "I am Joseph" Matthew Henry shows the connection all should make - "Thus, when Christ would convince Paul, he said, I am Jesus; and when he would comfort his disciples, he said, It is I, be not afraid. When Christ manifests himself to his people, he encourages them to draw near to him with a true heart."

The speaking of the name is the revealing of the person. In the case of Joseph and in the case of Jesus, the connection sparks the emotions of the soul. Israel will hear and their eyes will be opened to what they had so long been blinded to.

³ (con't) **does my father still live?"**

His first question isn't "Are you surprised?" Nor is it, "Why did you do this to me." Instead, to direct them to something relevant and thus indicate his good will toward them, he asks about dad. And although it is formed as a question here, John Gill interprets this rather as a statement of fact.

It would be like us saying "Isn't it great?" Saying that actually means "It is great." The words are, *ha'owd abi khai* - "Yet my father does live." Gill's comment says that "he puts this question not through ignorance, or as doubting but to express his affliction for his father, and his joy that he was alive"

In a prophetic sense then, this is seen as a positive statement from Jesus to those in the temple. "I am Jesus *and Israel* is still alive. There is hope and I am here to provide it to you." This is certainly the message being conveyed here.

³ (con't) **But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed in his presence.**

The word dismayed is appropriate. They were literally shocked at what they now perceived. First, they were in shock at who Joseph was and the position he filled, and secondly they remembered their past crimes against him.

The comparison to Jesus is perfect. Those Jews who had for so long resisted Him, but who knew the story of how he had been crucified... *were all true*. This Christ isn't just a Jew, but the ruler of all things, and they will feel the guilt of the crimes of the past.

I have not come to destroy you, but to call you back, you see

What is past is past, it is over and done

I am Jesus your Messiah, come unto Me

I am your Lord and your Brother, I am God's own Son

⁴ **And Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near to me."**

The words of James, writing to the 12 tribes, so closely match those of Joseph, that the Holy Spirit must have had this particular verse from Genesis in mind. Listen, and

compare it to what Joseph just said, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded." James 4:8

What James says is so perfectly represented here and is so exactly showing what the future holds for Israel, that it cannot be coincidence. Joseph asks his brothers to come near and Jesus does the same. In the act, the hands are cleansed, the hearts are purified, and the minds become clear.

⁴ (con't) **So they came near. Then he said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.**

Whether Jesus actually speaks the words or not, the implication from the entire New Testament and the past 2000 years is that "I am Jesus your Brother whom you crucified and then sold off to the Gentiles." Every sentence spoken is showing us what is coming.

⁵ **But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life.**

This verse, right here, is one of the finest examples of God's sovereignty and providence in the entire Bible. God never authors evil, and Joseph isn't implying that God was the cause of the evil committed, but God uses the free-will choices of men, which include evil, to effect His purposes.

The brothers sold Him, but Joseph says that God sent him ahead to preserve life. What man does, God knows will happen. And so He uses these things to bring about His overarching will. His brothers sold him off as a slave, but God sent him as their savior. Jesus is written all over the story.

*Do not be angry with yourself, repentant sinner
Though your sins were counted in the pain of the cross of Calvary
Because through His shed blood you are now a winner
A saved and cherished soul, loved by God for all eternity*

The connection between this verse and what is described by Peter in Acts 2 is a perfect match. There he says –

²²"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— ²³ Him, being delivered by the determined purpose

and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; ²⁴ whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it." Acts 2:22-24

God's purpose for Israel in Joseph's ordeal was to preserve life. God's purpose for Israel in Jesus' trials was to save the lost. In both cases, man's wickedness was used by God for a good end.

II. All a Work of God (verses 6-11)

⁶ For these two years the famine *has been* in the land, and *there are* still five years in which *there will be* neither plowing nor harvesting.

The Bible says that the famine of Egypt was for seven years. It also tells us that the tribulation period will be for seven years. However, nothing is said about any specific thing that will happen at the two-year point of the tribulation. But these two years are past and so Joseph is asking them to focus on the remaining five.

Five in the Bible is the number of grace. While there is neither plowing nor harvesting, the family of Israel will be sustained by grace. And so the picture here isn't one of exact dating, but that the believing Jews who have received Jesus will be sustained, by grace, throughout the duration of the tribulation period.

And this premise is supported in both testaments of the Bible. The faithful remnant will be saved. It is hinted at in the next verse...

⁷ And God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

Joseph now repeats that it is God who sent him ahead of them to save them. In this, he uses the term *sheerit*, a remnant, which will be preserved through the trial. God has always promised to save a faithful remnant of Israel. This is not an isolated concept, but one which permeates both testaments of Scripture.

And this includes the tribulation period which is being pictured here. In Romans 9:27, quoting Isaiah 10, Paul says, "Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, The remnant will be saved."

It is this remnant of Jacob who God will save as Joseph says, "by a great deliverance." This is, again, explicitly referred to in Scripture. Daniel 12 says this -

"At that time Michael shall stand up,
The great prince who stands *watch* over the sons of your people;
And there shall be a time of trouble,
Such as never was since there was a nation,
Even to that time.
And at that time your people shall be delivered,
Every one who is found written in the book." Daniel 12:1

The entire span of the Bible is pointing to the great culmination of the ages and it is all being pictured right in this beautiful story of grace and reunion between once-estranged brothers. The magnificence of how God has woven the account of Joseph into the account of Israel's history is simply astonishing.

⁸So now *it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.*

This is the third time that Joseph has said that it was God who sent him. But, the first two times he said only "God." This time he says it was, *ha'elohim*, "**the** God" who did it. And in this verse Joseph's exaltation and his relationship to Pharaoh are openly stated.

This then, unlike before, speaks of Jesus' divinity. He is not only the crucified Man of Israel, but he is the exalted God of heaven. To be made a "father to Pharaoh" means, as the Jewish scribe Jarchi puts it, "to have a share with him in power and authority."

As we saw in Peter's quote in Acts, Jesus was delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God. But Peter didn't stop there. A few chapters later he continued the connection to Joseph in these words -

"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. ³¹ Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5:30, 31

Not a verse, nor even a word so far has failed to point to Jesus, Israel, or the end times. And the exciting thing is that these pictures very well may come to their fulfillment in our generation. That is how close I believe we are.

⁹“Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph: “God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not tarry.”

As suddenly as he revealed himself to them, he now turns his attention to his father. And so again, the characters must be identified. The brothers are the leaders representing the individual tribes in Israel. Jacob is Israel the people, and Joseph is Christ the Lord. Egypt is the land of the Gentiles.

This verse is similar to what he said earlier. He tells them to say that "God has made me lord of all Egypt." The brothers sold him off to Egypt, but he said that God did it. And it was Pharaoh who elevated Joseph to the lord of the land, but he says that God did it.

In every word, we see Joseph's understanding of the providence of God in all things. How different that is of Jacob his father who just a few short chapters ago had completely failed to understand the reason for all the trials that had befallen him over the years! In this verse Joseph also said to them, "Come down to me, do not tarry." The urgency of his words reflect what Jesus said in Matthew 24 -

¹⁵ “Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand),
¹⁶ “then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. ¹⁸ And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. ¹⁹ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰ And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.” Matthew 24:15-22

This time that Jesus speaks of is future and it is just at the midpoint of the tribulation, or 3 1/2 years into the tribulation. This is the reason for Joseph's words, "do not tarry." There is a time which is coming which will be worse than any other in human history and Jesus will save them through this.

In His instructions, he tells them to "flee to the mountains." Nobody is sure where, but many believe that it will be to Petra in Jordan, a gentile land. If so, then the pattern perfectly fits the words of Joseph.

¹⁰ You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have.

Here, Joseph names the land where they will live, Goshen. The name Goshen means "drawing near" or "approaching." Taken in the context of the end times, and especially Jesus' words in Matthew 24, the connection seems obvious. They are to flee because the Great Tribulation is drawing near... couldn't be clearer.

¹¹ There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for *there are still five years of famine.*"

Joseph says there are five years of famine to come. These five years, representative of grace, are what will be given to Israel during the Tribulation. In Revelation it says that the Israelites who take Jesus' advice and flee will be nourished in the wilderness during final portion of the tribulation.

III. Benjamin, The Son of the Right Hand (verses 12-15)

¹² "And behold, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see that *it is* my mouth that speaks to you.

Joseph tells them to trust their eyes and their ears. Their eyes can clearly see that he, not an interpreter, is speaking to them. The Hebrew tongue is being conveyed to them by the lord of Egypt who has said he is their brother and therefore it must be him.

Benjamin is being singled out because he is the full brother of Joseph, but God included this because he pictures those Jews who have called on Jesus. This includes, implicitly, Paul who descended from Benjamin and who authored much of the New Testament which is directed to the Gentiles. In other words, *the Christ of the nations is the Messiah of the Jews.*

*How did we miss what the gentiles perceived?
How could we not see that the Messiah is our Brother?
For so long, by our own eyes we were deceived
Jesus is our Lord and Savior - He and not another!*

¹³ So you shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and you shall hurry and bring my father down here."

The glory they have seen is the glory they are to tell of to their father. And the glory of Jesus which will be revealed to the leaders of the tribes of Israel is that same glory that they are to reveal to the people of Israel. The temple will stand, the Lord will come, and there will be little time to prepare.

Even if these pictures aren't what God intended for us to see in these passages, they still reveal exactly what is coming according to the rest of the Bible. In other words, these pictures *are* exactly what God intends for us to see.

¹⁴ Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept,

The Hebrew here interestingly says, "And he fell on the *necks* of Benjamin." The word is plural. The only commentator who mentions it at all says he probably wept on the left and then he wept on the right. But that is still one neck. Why would God allow such an odd plural word in here unless He wants to show us something.

Benjamin certainly only had one neck and so this must be intended to be viewed prophetically. Those Jews who had already called on Jesus and who had remained steadfast in their faith, even before He revealed Himself to Israel, are those who will have gained His greatest favor. As they are a group, meaning plural, He will weep tears of joy over them.

¹⁴ (con't) and Benjamin wept on his neck.

And these many, when they are shown to have been vindicated in their faith, will weep tears of joy over Him. Therefore, this second time the word "neck" is used, it is in the singular. Amazing detail!

*The Lord is revealed and over His brothers He weeps
A reunion so long anticipated has finally come about
Israel now knows Jesus and the covenant He keeps
And through tears comes the joy and a praise-filled shout*

*God's love for His people is eternal and sure
He has directed the ages for the sake of Israel
So they can worship Him in a way undefiled and pure
Covered by the blood of Christ, as the Bible does tell*

***15 Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him.**

And finally in today's verses we see the tender display of love towards all of the brothers. The transgressions of the past, the many years of separation, and the trial which has just ended have all been swept under the joy of reunion and brotherly love. They once tossed Joseph into a pit and sold him as a slave to the gentiles. And Israel once sent their Lord to the tomb and then sold Him off to the gentiles as well. But the reunion has arrived and what is past is past. Joseph and his brothers; Jesus and Israel. How can we not stand amazed at what God has done and is doing for His people - all pictured in these ancient stories?

Though the details are many, and there is much to be learned from these passages, maybe too much to grasp at once, understanding these early Genesis stories gives us a sure foundation in understanding the rest of the Bible. And that message is clear...

God has a plan, God is in control, and God can be trusted. This is certain. And because God sent Jesus to save us, then we can trust that Jesus can really do just that.

Closing Verse: *Indeed the Lord has proclaimed*

To the end of the world:

"Say to the daughter of Zion,

'Surely your salvation is coming;

Behold, His reward is with Him,

And His work before Him.'"

12 And they shall call them The Holy People,

The Redeemed of the Lord;

And you shall be called Sought Out,

A City Not Forsaken. Isaiah 62:11, 12

Next Week: Genesis 45:16-28 (The Spirit of Jacob is Revived) (113th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

I Am Your Brother

Then Joseph could not restrain himself

Before all those who by him stood

And he cried out, "Make everyone go out from me!"
I say, leave us alone now if you would

So no one stood with him, not a servant or any others
At the time that Joseph made himself known to his brothers

And he wept aloud, his resounding cries did emit
And the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard it

Then Joseph said to his brothers:....

"I am Joseph; does my father still live?"
But his brothers could not answer him
For they were dismayed in his presence
And so an answer they could not give

And Joseph said to his brothers
"Please come near to me"
So they came near, according to his druthers
They came near to him obediently

Then he said: "I am Joseph your brother
Whom you sold into Egypt, it is I and not another

But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry
With yourselves because you sold me here
For God sent me before you to preserve life
So that Israel does not disappear

For these two years the famine has been in the land
And there are still five years in which there will be
Neither plowing nor harvesting for the farmer's hand

And God sent me before you not by chance
But to preserve a posterity for you in the earth
And to save your lives by a great deliverance
To save you from the terrible times of dearth

So now it was not you who sent me here, but God

And He has made me a father to Pharaoh, you understand
And lord of all his house, everywhere I trod
And a ruler throughout all of Egypt, the land

“Hurry and go up to my father
And say to him, ‘Thus says Joseph your son
“God has made me lord of all Egypt
Come down to me, do not tarry to see your beloved one

You shall dwell in the land of Goshen
And you shall to me be near
You and your children, your children’s children
Your flocks and your herds, and all that you have - do not fear

There I will provide for you to keep away the fears
Lest you and your household, and all that is yours
Come to poverty for there are still five years
Of famine from the heat and wind outdoors

And behold, your eyes tell you what is true
And the eyes of my brother Benjamin
See that it is my mouth that speaks to you

So you shall tell my father making him serene
Of all my glory in Egypt, both far and near
And of all these things that you have seen
And you shall hurry and bring my father down here

Then he fell on his brother Benjamin’s neck and wept
And Benjamin wept on his neck
Away, the missing years were swept
Moreover all his brothers he kissed
And wept over them, this he did too
And after that his brothers he had so long missed
Talked with him, many years they needed to review

This beautiful story of reconciliation and grace
Is given for us to see what yet lies ahead
Someday Israel will finally look upon Jesus' face

And know He alone is their life-giving Bread

For so long they have missed the spiritual boat
But God has been faithful to them all along
Just as He said He would be in the Book that He wrote
And someday over them He will sing a joyous song

And He sings over you and I when we to Him in faith turn
And seals us with His Spirit for that glorious redemption day
It is for this marvelous moment that our heart should burn
And of this precious Savior we should ever say...

Great, glorious, and awesome God
Help us in Thy majestic light always to trod

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 45:16-28 **(THE SPIRIT OF JACOB IS REVIVED)**

Introduction: In 1944 during WWII, Lt. Hiroo Onoda was sent by the Imperial Japanese army to the Philippine island called Lubang. There he engaged in guerrilla warfare. Though the war ended in 1945, he was never officially informed. So for 29 more years, he continued to live in the jungle, ready for when his services and information would be needed.

As he was getting ready to leave on his mission, he reported to the division commander where he was told:

"You are absolutely forbidden to die by your own hand. It may take three years, it may take five, but whatever happens, we'll come back for you. Until then, so long as you have one soldier, you are to continue to lead him. You may have to live on coconuts. If that's the case, live on coconuts! Under no circumstances are you [to] give up your life voluntarily."

In October 1972, at the age of 51 and after 27 years of hiding, the only remaining man in his unit was killed during a gunfight with a Filipino patrol. Though Onoda had been officially declared dead in December 1959, this now showed the likelihood that he was still living. Search parties were sent to find him, but none succeeded.

He was on his own, but he remembered the division commander's order that he could not kill himself and so he continued to hide. Then in 1974, a college dropout decided to travel around Asia. He told his friends that he was going to search for Lt. Onoda, a panda, and the Abominable Snowman.

Where others had failed, he succeeded, at least in finding Onoda. He found him and tried to convince him that the war was over. Onoda said that he would only surrender if his commander ordered him to. So Suzuki traveled back to Japan and found the former commander, Major Taniguchi, who had become a bookseller.

On March 9, 1974, Suzuki and Taniguchi met Onoda at a pre-appointed place and Major Taniguchi read the orders which said all combat activity was to be ceased. Onoda was shocked and, at first, disbelieving. It took some time for the news to sink in.

Imagine the thoughts of lost years, friends, and family. The word "shocked" can hardly describe what he must have felt. Thirty long years of sorrow, death, and separation. It is a story not unlike Jacob. For twenty-two years he thought Joseph was dead. But even more, for 2000 years, Israel has thought Jesus is just a dead Jew.

If he were alive, He would be Lord. He can't be alive, can He? Today we will see the amazing truth of what Genesis reveals.

Text Verse: *For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and humble spirit, To revive the spirit of the humble, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.*

-Isaiah 57:15

Onoda's heart must have skipped a beat after he realized what happened; Jacob's as well. He heard that Joseph was alive and the ruler of all of Egypt and once the truth set in, his spirit revived because the Lord had arranged it all. And the Lord is still working to arrange another great eye-opener for Israel. Jesus is alive! It is all to be found in the Bible and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Providing for Israel (verses 16-20)

¹⁶ Now the report of it was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, "Joseph's brothers have come." So it pleased Pharaoh and his servants well.

The reunion has come, the brothers are reconciled and Joseph's great weeping has gone out in large gasps of relief and love. In Hebrew, the verse begins with *v'haqol nishma* - "And the voice was heard." The message was passed to Pharaoh from those outside, probably with great joy.

And the message is, "Joseph's brothers have come." But what is the reason for them saying "Joseph?" His name had been changed by Pharaoh to Zaphnath Paaneah. Some scholars say that this was what Moses just wrote, using the familiar Hebrew name for the audience who it is directed to.

But this isn't likely. Daniel, when taken to Babylon, had his name changed to Belteshazzar. And yet, throughout the book, both names are used, sometimes in one verse. It is probable that the Egyptian name Zaphnath Paaneah - Savior of the World,

would have been used as a title, but his familiar name may have been used by friends and associates.

And the same is true with Jesus. He is, in fact, the Savior of the World, but He is also Jesus, or Yeshua in Hebrew. When He is spoken of, it is normally with His name, not His title. After this we are then told that it pleased Pharaoh and his servants well. The Hebrew says, "It was good in Pharaoh's eyes."

¹⁷ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and depart; go to the land of Canaan.

This command may have come about after any amount of time. Joseph could have talked to Pharaoh and asked this, or it could be that Pharaoh made the choice on his own. We are given the details we need, but not always all the details. What is curious though is that they are told to "load" their animals and depart.

We'll see in six more verses that they will take all kinds of things to Canaan along with the animals loaded with grain. Why would they do this if they were expected to head right back to Egypt? It seems like a lot of useless effort unless there is a prophetic picture that we're being shown.

Load your animals and then depart

Go off to Canaan the land

Soon in Egypt you will make a fresh start

And you will be provided for from Pharaoh's right hand

¹⁸ Bring your father and your households and come to me; I will give you the best of the land of Egypt, and you will eat the fat of the land.

The invitation is all-encompassing. It includes Jacob and all their families. This then would include all their servants as well. Though not recorded in the Bible, there were certainly many of them in the camp. And the promise for their return is that they are to be given the best of the land of Egypt.

This is the part of the kingdom that is the most productive of all and it was to be where they would live. And to reflect the superabundance it would provide, he adds that they would "eat the fat of the land." Where they were moving is to the place that would provide the most bountiful of all crops and fruits.

¹⁹ Now you are commanded—do this: Take carts out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and your wives; bring your father and come.

This now seems almost unfriendly when it says "you are commanded." Why, one must ask, would Pharaoh give a command to Joseph like this? The Jewish scholar Joseph Kimchi writes that there was probably a command which already existed that no carts could be used for carrying grain.

People would only be allowed to buy enough to be carried by an animal. This would keep Egypt's supply from being depleted. I would agree and go further. Not only would that keep the supplies up, but it would also keep profiteers from buying grain and reselling it at higher prices.

The grain has and continues to picture the word of God and so an obvious spiritual picture comes out. Doesn't it. Who is it that profits from selling off the word of God? Paul speaks about people doing that in the New Testament and it has continued on all along.

God's word is intended to go out, but it isn't intended to be peddled for illicit gain. Many types and pictures from the Old Testament show that true time and time again. What God provides for His people isn't intended to be abused by them for unearned profit. Anyway, by giving this command to Joseph, then Joseph cannot be held guilty for breaking a previously given command. Thus Pharaoh is making a particular exception for the camp of Jacob. As Pharaoh, meaning Great House, pictures God's rule and authority, the picture is clear.

God is making an exception for the people of Israel during the tribulation. He says, "Take carts out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and your wives." He then adds, "bring your father and come." The carts are meant to carry the wives, children, and Jacob.

These would be two-wheeled carts which were drawn by oxen and would make the long, hot, and arduous trip bearable for Jacob and his family. The minute care for the details by Pharaoh is reflective of God's minute care of Israel in the coming tribulation period. Israel will survive, because God is on her side, providing for her.

²⁰ Also do not be concerned about your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.'"

Pharaoh then instructs them saying, *v'enekhem al takhos al kelekhem* - "do not let your eye pity your things." In other words, "Don't sweat what you leave behind." There was only so much space on the carts, and people can carry only so much stuff. What gets left behind is unimportant and shouldn't grieve them at all.

However, the ambiguous nature of the Hebrew has actually been translated in exactly the opposite way as well. One Catholic version reads, "And leave none of your household stuff." The reason they translate it this way is to indicate that they were making a one-way journey to permanently settle in Egypt.

This doesn't follow at all with the rest of the passage and it also doesn't follow at all with what is being pictured. As we saw last week, this is being done under urgency and it is pointing to Jesus' urgent words in Matthew 24 -

¹⁷ "Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house.
¹⁸ And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. ¹⁹ But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! ²⁰ And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be." (17-21)

The picture we are seeing is the protection of God's people. Those who are more caring about their stuff than they are about coming to Christ, will never be a part of God's kingdom. He is providing for their needs and He has made great promises to them, just as Pharaoh now is doing for Jacob and his family.

*Let him who is there, out on his housetop
Not go down to take anything out
And let him who is in the fields not delay or stop
Even to get his clothes, for the terror which is to come about*

*Woe to those pregnant or nursing during those times
Pray that your flight will not be in winter or on the Sabbath day
For the world will go through great tribulation for its crimes
Not has it even been so, nor will it ever be again, I say*

II. Something Special for Benjamin (verses 21-24)

²¹ Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them carts, according to the command of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey.

Verse 21 is tied directly back to verse 17, "Say to your brothers, 'Do this: Load your animals and depart.'" The reason why these two are tied together is because everything else in the other verses is either being worked out still or is future. And so, "then the sons of Israel did so" is speaking about loading their animals.

But Joseph is also a son of Israel and so he is included too. He "gave them carts, according to the command of Pharaoh, and he gave them provisions for the journey." This care of Pharaoh, representing God, is exactly pictured in Revelation 12 -

"Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*. ¹⁴ But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent." (13, 14)

Just as Jacob and his family are given provisions to keep them nourished and Pharaoh's carts to carry them, so will Israel be nourished and carried in the tribulation. It is exact. The symbolism of the wings of the eagle are given to signify God's divine care. Exodus 19:4 and Isaiah 40:31, among other verses, show this.

A detail in this verse which I believe is very important and which is something similar to what we saw many sermons ago when Jacob and Laban made an agreement, is that these carts actually represent something else. The word for "carts" is *agalot*, a word which means something revolving or circular.

These carts came "according to the command of Pharaoh." In Hebrew *al pi Pharaoh* - literally "by the mouth of Pharaoh." The structure of the complete Bible, which contains the New Testament, actually makes a circular pattern.

As the Bible is from the mouth of God, the picture is clear. Israel will now have and accept the entire Bible, represented by these wagons which are being sent by the mouth of Pharaoh. No I don't think this is a stretch at all either.

²² He gave to all of them, to each man, changes of garments;

Adam Clarke notes that, "It is a common custom with all the Asiatic sovereigns to give both garments and money to ambassadors and persons of distinction, whom they particularly wish to honor. Hence they keep in their wardrobes several hundred changes of raiment, ready made up for presents of this kind."

But there is more to this. The biblical honoring of a person with garments is seen several times in Revelation. There it says -

"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." Revelation 3:5

This granting of the garments, mentioned specifically by God in His word, is to show the change in the brothers. They are now in right standing with God because of acknowledging their brother as Lord. It is clear and explicit what we are being shown - all who call on the Lord will be saved. They have overcome and are granted His garments of righteousness.

^{22 (con't)} **but to Benjamin he gave three hundred *pieces* of silver and five changes of garments.**

As happens from time to time, something comes along in the Bible that makes one wonder. Why would Joseph give Benjamin all that silver and five changes of garments to carry to Canaan and then have to lug it all the way back as well? And even more so, the specific amount of silver is given.

The brothers have brought silver twice and had it restored twice and yet the amount was not even hinted at. Unless God is showing us something, it doesn't really make much sense. The last time a specific amount of money was given was when Joseph was sold. It was for twenty pieces of silver.

Now Benjamin is given 300. That is 15 times the amount for which Joseph was sold. And, not surprisingly, EW Bullinger, the great biblical numerologist shows that 15 represents resurrection - divine grace, issuing in glory. He gives seven specific examples of this in his book *Number in Scripture* which you can read on line.

Joseph, picturing Christ was sold off for twenty pieces of silver, Benjamin, the Son of the Right Hand, picturing Christ in glory and those who have called on Him, is given 300. The five garments given to Benjamin shows the divine grace in their redemption, having

called on Jesus in His exalted state. It is grace based on belief; it is the resurrected and exalted Christ pictured in the silver and the garments.

²³ And he sent to his father these *things*: ten donkeys loaded with the good things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain, bread, and food for his father for the journey.

The last time ten animals were noted as being loaded with goods and sent to someone was when Abraham sent his oldest servant to find a wife for his son Isaac. Like then, there is a reason why the number ten is mentioned. The number of carts isn't given, but isn't that just as important... unless we're being told something.

Ten is the number of fullness. The term "10 days" is used several times in the Bible to indicate a fullness of days, not specifically 10 days. The term "10 times" is often used the same way. These ten donkeys represent a fullness of what is being sent which includes the "good things of Egypt."

Egypt is the land of the gentiles. It is where Christ has been proclaimed since He was sold off by the Jews. The 10 donkeys sent from Pharaoh picture what we have in Christ now which will be given to the Jews of the future. Our wealth of knowledge and the good things we now have in Christ will be shared with them. The fruits of the Spirit will be granted to the sons of Israel.

The ten female donkeys are then said to be loaded with grain, bread, and food for his father for the journey. Jacob has consistently represented the corporate body of Israel during these Joseph sermons. To them they are now given grain.

But the word grain here is not the one used so many times in the past 4 chapters which was *shever*. Instead it is *bar*, purified grain. The kernel is cracked and the grain is purified. The grain has consistently pictured the word of God, but now, finally, Israel has the pure grain which includes the New Testament.

If you've wondered why I kept naming the grain, again and again in these past 10 sermons, it's because it is all pointing to Christ. The Word of God is what reveals Him to us and the use of these different words has been so targeted and specific that only through understanding the work of Christ can we understand what the reason for all the detail is.

Israel will someday not just have the grain, but it will be the full and purified grain which they now lack. Along with that, the donkeys are loaded with both bread and with food. It seems like a redundancy, but it again points to Jesus, specifically John 6.

In John 6:35, Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life" and in John 6:55, He said "My flesh is food indeed." Everything is about Christ Jesus and everything in these stories is pointing to the reconciliation of Him to Israel. The detail is exact and it is all there for a reason. Israel is going on a journey and Jesus is going along.

Interestingly, in Revelation 6:6, we read this -

"And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

A denarius comes from the term "containing 10." It is the equivalent price of ten donkeys. This verse in Genesis with two sets of 10 donkeys is being tied directly to that verse in Revelation. Though there will be lack during the famine, those under Joseph's care are well fed. And though there will be lack during the tribulation, those under Jesus' care will likewise be sustained.

²⁴ So he sent his brothers away, and they departed; and he said to them, "See that you do not become troubled along the way."

On sending them away, he gave them this bit of specific instruction. The word he uses which is translated as "troubled" is the word *tirgezu*. It indicates quarrelling or anger. Three ideas come to mind. The first is that they may argue over who takes the blame in front of Jacob when he finds out what happened to Joseph twenty-two years earlier.

The second also concerns Joseph. At some point they may be brought in to him to explain the past and they may argue over that. And finally, Benjamin has been given much more than them. They once argued over Joseph's favored status by Jacob and now they may argue over Benjamin's favor as well.

And each of these have a fulfillment in the future. Those spiritual leaders of Israel who had been wrong about Jesus will worry about how they explain 2000 years of cover-up and incompetence. They will worry as to whether Jesus will later be vindictive towards them. And finally, they may even be envious of the sealed 144,000 mentioned in Revelation, represented by Benjamin.

What has been will be again and what is pictured in the past will be revealed again in the future. Looking back to Genesis takes us forward to Revelation. And all of it is centered on Jesus Christ. Amazing.

III. Jesus is Alive (verses 25-28)

²⁵ Then they went up out of Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father.

In the Bible, when one goes to the land of Canaan, they go up. When one goes to Jerusalem, they go up. It doesn't matter from where they are coming, north, south, east, or west, nor does elevation matter, to go to Jerusalem is always going upward. This is God's land and in it is God's city.

And so the brothers go up, out of Egypt and head home to Jacob their father. Imagine the suspense in them as they anticipate every possible thing that he could say - both good and bad...

²⁶ And they told him, saying, "Joseph is still alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt."

Understanding the picture that is being made here, it is almost impossible to express it with words. Someday, the leaders of Israel will go and tell their people something extraordinary. It will be something beyond imagination to them. To me, the words of the song "O Happy Day" come to mind -

*Oh, happy day
When Jesus washed
My sins away, yeah
He taught me how to watch
How to fight and pray
And living rejoicing everyday
Oh, happy day - Edwin Hawkins*

Imagine what Jacob felt... Imagine what Israel will think? Jacob thought God had abandoned him and Israel has felt the same. Jacob thought the son was dead and Israel was sure Jesus was dead too, a mere myth. But Joseph is alive and he is governor over all of Egypt. And Jesus... Jesus is alive and Lord of heaven and earth. Imagine the emotion...

²⁶ (con't) **And Jacob's heart stood still, because he did not believe them.**

The Hebrew says, *v'yapag libbow* - and his heart grew numb. This is derived from the idea of being rigid through coldness. He simply couldn't believe what he had heard. Yes this is the normal reaction that we would expect, but it is also a concept Jesus uses about the people of Israel during the tribulation in Matthew 24 -

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. ¹⁰ And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. ¹¹ Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. ¹² And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³ But he who endures to the end shall be saved." (9-13)

Jacob grew cold temporarily, but some will stay cold. This is the warning, given in advance, to Israel. Those who are truly of Jacob will warm up once again. There will be all the evidences in the world presented to them. For those who choose to believe their eyes, they will be saved. This is seen in the next verse...

²⁷ **But when they told him all the words which Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.**

Some need only to hear the good news of Jesus Christ and they are born again. Some need more. They need to read the word, think on the concept, see the evidences in others lives, or whatever way they make the mental assent to the knowledge which then turns to faith. For Jacob, he needed to see the evidences.

He saw the carts which Joseph had sent. These would have been royal Egyptian carts. They would have been the finest of the land and ornamented in beauty. And when he saw the carts, he knew the truth. Joseph is alive. If you remember from a few verses ago, I said the Hebrew name of the carts was *agalot* and I said they pictured the Scriptures.

Jacob picturing Israel of the future, will open the *bar*, the purified and full revelation of God given in both testaments of the Bible, they will read, and they will believe. They will believe, they will be revived, and they will be saved. This picture is so astonishingly exact that it cannot be overlooked.

For all of these sermons, we've seen the *shever*, the grain in the kernel. And only today

have we seen the *bar*, the purified grain. And there it is, with the *agalot*, the carts. It is the Superior Word. It is our sure and complete testimony of Jesus Christ our Lord.

I saw the carts one day and I realized that Jesus Christ is alive and that He is Lord. Whatever evidences you think you need, they are all found in the Bible and in the testimony of His people. But the carts are there. Don't close your eyes to them, but believe.

When Jacob saw them, the Bible exclaims *v'takhi ruach yaakov* - "and lived the spirit of Jacob." He wasn't reanimated in *his body* as the Bible speaks of people elsewhere. Instead, he was *reanimated in his spirit*. This then pictures that truly culminating moment in the history of Israel.

It is prophesied in Ezekiel 37, the Valley of the Dry Bones. There it promises two separate things. The first is that the people of Israel would be returned to the land of Israel. They would re-gather and fill the land. But verse 8 says, "but there was no spirit in them." (Douay Rheims)

That has happened. They are there, but they are without the Spirit, but God will send the Spirit and they will revive. In verse 14 it goes on to say, "I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken *it* and performed *it*," says the LORD."

As I said about these things last week, "Even if these pictures aren't what God intended for us to see, they still reveal exactly what is coming according to the rest of the Bible. In other words, these pictures *are* exactly what God intends for us to see."

Jacob's revival is carefully worded because it is pointing to a spiritual truth. Man without Christ is dead. Man with Christ is made alive. Paul tells us this several times in his epistles, such as in 1 Corinthians 15:20-22 -

"But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive."

You know, the apostles - those who knew Jesus and had heard His words and seen His many miracles also doubted. We shouldn't miss the similarity between Jacob and his carts and the apostles and Jesus after the resurrection. Listen and see how they parallel-

³⁶ Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you." ³⁷ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. ³⁸ And He said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹ Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." ⁴⁰ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. ⁴¹ But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "Have you any food here?" ⁴² So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. ⁴³ And He took *it* and ate in their presence. Luke 24:36-43

What do you need to believe and not doubt any longer? Is His word good enough for you? It is the deepest treasure ever, *ever* given to man and yet we find much more pleasure in late nights, later mornings, sports, and play time - and we miss Jesus. Stop doubting and believe. The carts are right in front of you.

***28 Then Israel said, "It is enough. Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."**

He is called Israel. Three times in this chapter the man, the father, the person - he has been called Jacob. Jacob the flesh and bones. Jacob the deceiver who was still deceived. And then it all changed. He is Israel. He is alive. And Israel cries out *rav* - "Abundance!" "Much!" "It is enough and more than enough! Joseph my son is still alive!"

The Spirit will rest upon Israel and they will come to life. This is the promise of God in the pages of the Bible and it should be the hope of every Christian on earth. It is the culmination of the greatest separation and reunion ever imagined.

Those Jews who hear and believe will be revived and they will go to Him, as Jacob says, "Before I die." It is either Jesus or it is death. One either has the Spirit or there is only cold and eternal separation from God. These are the choices that each individual faces and these are the choices that Israel as a nation faces.

But God has shown us in Genesis what lies ahead of us in the future. Israel will live and they will behold their Lord. They will behold Jesus. Matthew Henry sums up this chapter with beautiful words for each of us to consider.

"Behold Jesus manifesting himself as a Brother and a Friend to those who once were his despisers, his enemies. He assures them of his love and the riches of his grace. He commands them to lay aside envy, anger, malice, and strife, and to live in peace with

each other. He teaches them to give up the world for him and his fulness. He supplies all that is needful to bring them home to himself, that where he is they may be also. And though, when he at last sends for his people, they may for a time feel some doubts and fears, yet the thought of seeing his glory and of being with him, will enable them to say, It is enough, I am willing to die; and I go to see, and to be with the Beloved of my soul."

Adam Clarke said, "A desperate disease requires a desperate remedy." Sin is, in fact, a desperate disease. We are born with it and we live in it. Only one remedy can take it away. And it comes at a very high cost. Give up on self, call on Jesus, and let the blood shed at Calvary wash the crimson stain of sin away.

This truth is needed for the people of Israel, but this truth is also needed for each of us individually. God has offered and we must receive that offer

Closing Verse: ³² "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³ So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors! ³⁴ Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. Matthew 24:32-35

Next Week: Genesis 46:1-27 (So Israel Took His Journey) (114th Genesis Sermon)

Just so you know, when Lt. Onoda reached Japan, he was hailed a hero. Life there was different than when he left 1944 so he bought a ranch and moved to Brazil, but in 1984 he and his new wife moved back to Japan and founded a nature camp for kids. On Thursday, January 16, 2014, just two months and one week ago, Hiroo Onoda died at age 91. I hope he knew Jesus.

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

He is Alive!

Now the report of it was heard
In Pharaoh's house, saying,
"Joseph's brothers have come, this is the word
Something for which Joseph must have long been praying

So it pleased Pharaoh and his servants well

As the record of the Bible does so surely tell

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, yes he did impart

“Say to your brothers, ‘Do this:

Load your animals and depart

Go to the land of Canaan, do not be remiss

Bring your father and your households

And come, return to me

I will give you the best of the land of Egypt

And you will eat the fat of the land, you see

Now you are commanded—do this:

Take carts out of Egypt the land

For your little ones and your wives, them do not dismiss

Bring your father and come as I have planned

Also do not be concerned about your stuff

For the best of all the land of Egypt is yours, and it will be enough

Then the sons of Israel did so

And Joseph gave them carts as stated

According to the command of Pharaoh

And for the journey he gave provisions to keep them sated

He gave to all of them, to each man

Changes of garments, things to wear

But he gave three hundred pieces of silver to Benjamin

And five changes of garments to carry back there

And these things he sent to his father:

Ten donkeys loaded with the best

Provisions of Egypt for this was no bother

For he wanted the family abundantly blessed

And ten female donkeys loaded heavy

With grain, bread, and food

For his father for the journey

And for his spirit to be renewed

So he sent his brothers away and they
Departed and he said to them, "See that you do not
Become troubled along the way
Don't let your emotions flair or tempers get hot

Then they went up out of Egypt and came
To the land of Canaan to Jacob their father
With great news to proclaim

And they told him, speaking this word
"Joseph is still alive, and he is governor
Over all the land of Egypt, think it not absurd

And Jacob's heart stood still because
He did not believe them, that this is how it was

But when they told him all the words
Which Joseph to them had said
And when he saw the carts
Which to carry him Joseph had sent ahead

The spirit of Jacob their father did revive
Then Israel said, "It is enough for my eye
Joseph my son is still alive!
I will go and see him before I die

Man is born alive in his soul
But his spirit has no life at all
But for this Jesus came and took control
So that on Him, we may call

And when we do He revives us, granting new life
And between God and us is ended all the strife

This is the message of hope that we find in God's word
It is a story of wonder, of glory, and of praise
We are restored to Him through the blood of Jesus our Lord
To live in His presence for eternal days

And so yes, to you O God we offer a joyful sound
May You be ever-exalted as our praises to You abound

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 46:1-27 **(SO ISRAEL TOOK HIS JOURNEY)**

Introduction: The past many stories which were focused on Joseph showed us pictures of the time from Jesus' death, all the way through the church age and to the point in history where Israel would again be revived as a people, and that God's Spirit would then be poured out on them.

They showed us a woven tapestry which spanned over 2000 years of history, clearly demonstrating that there was a plan for the world during Israel's time of exile and that there is a plan to keep Israel safe during the time of the tribulation.

Now with today's verses, we will see the beginning of how God will use this group of people to bring the message of redemption to the entire world. Jacob will move to Egypt and in this move, the list of those who accompany him will actually show us a picture of the macro plan of the treasure they have brought to the world, the oracles of God, the Bible.

A listing of seventy people will be used to show us the divine perfection of God working in the created order to bring to the world the fullness of His message. And it is through this message that the world will hear about and come to know the Messiah.

Text Verse: *But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world." Romans 10:18*

Paul, speaking about the Jewish people, asked as to whether they had not heard the message of salvation found in Christ. His answer was, "Of course they have" and he cited three sets of verses from the three portions of the Old Testament to show that they, of all people, should know.

Old Testament and New, it is all about the work of Jesus Christ. God has given us this word to show us Jesus. And the reason He did this is because Jesus reveals who God is. Without the Bible then, we cannot know Jesus and in turn we cannot know God. So let's come to know God through His Son Jesus, and through the Bible which tells us of Him. And... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Visions of the Night (verses 1, 2)

¹ So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba,

"So Israel." In this chapter, the name Israel and the name Jacob will be used back and forth numerous times, sometimes even in the same sentence. There is Israel who struggles with God and there is Jacob the man of flesh and in need of his God. It is Israel who takes his journey and heads out.

As tent dwellers, this wouldn't be the great challenge we think of in a move today. Everything could be rolled up and moved in no time. And with the carts of Egypt, the traveling would be all the easier. The first leg of the journey from Hebron where he lived to Beersheba would be 26.5 miles according to Google Maps.

Beersheba is used synonymously many times in the Bible with the extreme border of the land of Israel. In 1 Samuel 3:20, when speaking of Samuel's notoriety, it says, "And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel *had been* established as a prophet of the Lord."

Dan is the northernmost point and Beersheba is the last large town prior to heading into Egypt. It was given its name at the time of Abraham when he made a treaty with Abimelech, King of Gerar. When they made the treaty, Abraham set seven ewe lambs off to the side as a confirmation of the covenant.

Because of this, the name of the place was given. *Beer* is "well" and *sheba* means both "oath" and also "seven." And so this place is the "well of the seven," or "the well of the oath." Abraham and later Isaac both dwelt in this spot and Isaac also made an oath with Abimelech there.

^{1 (con't)} and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.

Adam Clarke says of this verse, "Prayers and provender never hinder any man's journey. He who would travel safely must take God with him." This is the case in all things, be it a new business, seeking out a job, getting married, or any other thing that we can do of major importance in our life. LIFE APP

In the case of Jacob who had travelled many long miles in his days, both within and without the borders of Canaan, he knew that his prayers and petitions would be heard and attended to by God. This is especially so because the Lord God had appeared to Abraham and spoken these words of Genesis 15 to him -

"Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror *and* great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. ¹⁵ Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. ¹⁶ But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites *is* not yet complete." Genesis 15:12 -16

God spoke of a time when Abraham's descendants would leave the land of Canaan, but that they also would eventually be brought back into it. And the reason was given, "because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

In His mercy, God allowed the inhabitants of the land to continue on despite their rejection of Him. Only when their iniquity was complete and there was no remedy left, would they then be judged.

Like the promise to Abraham concerning his descendants, God spoke to Isaac the same thing and He did so at Beersheba - the exact spot where Jacob now offered his sacrifices. In Genesis 26, we saw this account -

²³"Then he went up from there to Beersheba. ²⁴ And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I *am* the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I *am* with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham's sake." ²⁵ So he built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD, and he pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well." Genesis 26:23-25

And so here, at this same place with so much family history connected to their God, he sacrifices. And there were probably several reasons for doing so. First, he wanted to give thanks for the restoration of his beloved son Joseph and for the great, even exalted position he held.

Secondly he wanted to petition Him for his favor concerning the journey he had begun. And thirdly, it was to commit himself and his family to the covenant which had continued now for 215 years. In the same spot which held so much covenant history, and after the giving of his sacrifices as he prepares to leave his homeland, God appears to him once again...

² Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night, and said, "Jacob, Jacob!"

In one verse the man is called Israel by the Bible and Jacob by God who wrote the Bible. Though the Bible calls him Israel, God at the time He spoke calls him Jacob. Why would this be? Jacob has lived in a scared and faithless manner for many years and so God comes to Him on this level to pacify and comfort him.

And he does it in a way seen frequently in the Bible. He calls his name not once, but twice, "Jacob, Jacob." The first time God is recorded as having done this was in Genesis 22. When Abraham was just about to plunge the knife into his son Isaac, the Lord called out "Abraham, Abraham."

Now again in His reassuring way, He calls out to the chosen son to let him know that all will be ok. And He does it in a vision. The word in Hebrew is *marot*, the plural of "glass." As one looks into a piece of glass or into a shiny piece of metal to see a reflection of himself, this is how Jacob sees God, not directly, but as in a mirror.

It is reflective, pun intended, with how Paul speaks about our own understanding of spiritual matters. In 1 Corinthians 13, he says,

"When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. ¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known." 1 Corinthians 13:11, 12

This is how Jacob now perceives God, in a vision of the night.

*God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night
As through a piece of glass or in a shiny mirror
He was there to tell Jacob that all would be alright
To not fret or fear, and to not feel any terror*

² (con't) **And he said, "Here I am."**

Jacob responds with the word *hineni*, "Here I am." In an interesting set of parallels, Jacob speaks this phrase only two times. The first was in chapter 31 when God spoke to him and told him to *return* to Canaan after being away many years. And now this time when he is *leaving* Canaan for what will be many long years in Egypt.

And equally as interesting, is that his son Joseph responded with this exact same term, *hineni*, when Jacob asked him to go see how his brothers were doing in the fields with

the flocks. That was the last time he ever saw him, but it was the very thing that precipitated the move he is now making to Egypt.

And finally, the last time the word *hineni* will be used in exactly this manner, is when Moses is called to be the one to *return* Israel to Canaan in Exodus 3. It is an amazing set of parallels which show purpose and intent in the use of this word, *hineni* concerning the movement of the covenant people in and out of Canaan.

Jacob calls out in response to God, acknowledging the vision he has been given. "Here I am."

*Here I am, responding to Your word
Speak to me and Your servant will pay heed
I will hearken to You my great and awesome Lord
Here I am Lord, speak in this, my time of need*

II. All Things Have Worked Together For Good (verses 3, 4)

³So He said, "I am God, the God of your father;

In reply to Jacob's words, "Here I am," God speaks directly to him. *anokhi ha'el elohe abikha* - "I, the God, the God of your father." The reason why he speaks this way is because of what it said in verse 1. Jacob "offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac."

Why did he do this? The reason is that when Isaac was alive there was also a famine, but God forbid him to go to Egypt. Instead he was told to live in the land of the Philistines in Gerar. At that time in Genesis 26, it says that the Lord, Jehovah appeared to Isaac. And so all are being tied together.

The Lord is God. He is "the God." He is the all-sufficient protector and the one who is transcendent over time, over His creation, and it is He who monitors His covenant. All are tied into One. Jacob may have wanted to make sure that his leaving Canaan wasn't forbidden like it was for his father and so now *the God* speaks to him.

^{3(con't)} do not fear to go down to Egypt,

Because of God's command to his father Isaac to *not* go down to Egypt, he may have feared leaving the land without divine approval. But there are other reasons why he

may have been fearful. The first is the prophecy that was given to Abraham about their bondage and affliction.

He may also have feared that living out of the promised land would lead them to lose their promised inheritance or even forget that it was, in fact, their promised inheritance. He may have feared that it would lead them to idolatry which was taking over Egypt. Because of these and maybe other reasons, he would need the assurance and direction from God to make the move.

³(con't) **for I will make of you a great nation there.**

Whatever worries he had are dispelled in this verse, and even a blessing is pronounced. In Genesis 35, he was already told this -

"Also God said to him: "I *am* God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body.
¹² The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land." Genesis 35:11, 12

Now Jacob can connect the dots. He was already promised this, but now he knows that the promise will be fulfilled *in Egypt!* It must have been to him like the ending of a mystery novel. Suddenly all of the trials he had faced, all of the sadness at the loss of Joseph, all of the times of weakness and lacking faith, and even the things he feared now were wholly a part of what God was doing.

The fears, the sadness, the times of weakness - all of it was completely unfounded. God had worked it all out for the fulfillment of the promises and that time was now at hand. It must have been an amazing rush of relief and awe that filled him at this moment. It isn't that *despite going to Egypt* the promises will be fulfilled, but *because of going to Egypt* they will come about.

⁴ **I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up *again*;**

In this verse, the "I" is emphatic. God will absolutely be with him in Egypt and God will absolutely bring Israel back up again. There is no chance of him or them being left alone in a darkened valley. As a way of stressing what He will do, God says *v'anoki alalkha gam aloh* - "and I will bring you up, also, bringing you up."

God will *be with* Jacob, God will *bring up* Israel. As the Bible states, so history records. The words were fulfilled in a great and mighty way. One important thing to realize is that by having been given these promises by "the God of your father" meaning Isaac, it excludes any other claim on the Land of Canaan by anyone else, including the church.

We in the church are descendants of Abraham by faith, but the same is never said about Isaac. Because the God of Isaac has promised the land to Israel, it can only belong to Israel, not anyone else. Their unfaithfulness in later years and through two exiles does not negate God's faithfulness to His word.

⁴ (con't) **and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes."**

To put one's hands on another's eyes means to be with them at death and close the eyes of the dead person. God has promised that not only will the family be safe and reconciled to Joseph, but that Joseph himself, the leader of the greatest nation on earth and his beloved son, would personally attend to him at death.

Nowadays strangers, maybe a doctor or a nurse, does this. But then it was considered an honor bestowed upon the most beloved. It is to Joseph that this honor will fall some day in the future. In death, Jacob will be with his beloved son.

And for the Christian, no matter what our life is like, no matter where we are, or what trials we face, there is no fear in the valley of the shadow of death. We are now in, and will never be separated from, the presence of Christ. He will be there to put His hand on our eyes and to lift them again in the glory of His presence.

*To Egypt do not fear to go down
For I will make of you a great nation there
Have no fears or sadness, do not weep nor frown
I will be with you and dote upon you with tender care*

*This is how the Lord treats His child
Though we often miss the fact that He is there with us
Because of trials which may be severe or mild
But He is faithfully at our side; He is the Lord Jesus*

III. Departing Canaan (verses 5-7)

⁵ **Then Jacob arose from Beersheba;**

The night has ended, the visions are over, and Jacob the man now prepares to leave the land of promise for the last time. He has put his trust fully in the God who called him, carried him, and now has promised to be with him and his family during the times ahead.

Borders, real or imagined, cannot contain the God whose Spirit runs to and fro throughout the world. Though Canaan and his inheritance will be behind him when he leaves Beersheba, the Lord will always be at Jacob's side.

⁵ (con't) **and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob, their little ones, and their wives, in the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.**

The carts which were sent by Pharaoh are put to good use for those who needed them. Jacob once walked alone out of Canaan to Mesopotamia. About 20 years later, he walked back to Canaan with four wives, numerous children, and many flocks and slaves.

Now, at least two of his wives are dead, but he has more children and grandchildren with him, and they are conducted in royal fashion using the royal carts of Pharaoh.

⁶ **So they took their livestock and their goods, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and went to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him.**

There is nothing in this verse which is disobedient to what Pharaoh said in chapter 45. There, when speaking to Joseph concerning the move, he said this –

"Now you are commanded—do this: Take carts out of the land of Egypt for your little ones and your wives; bring your father and come. ²⁰ Also do not be concerned about your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt *is* yours."

-Genesis 45:19, 20

Now in this verse it says that they brought their goods which they had acquired in Canaan. Pharaoh didn't tell them they couldn't bring their goods; only that they shouldn't be concerned about them. Whatever they could bring would be fine, but whatever they lacked or left behind would be made up in Egypt.

With their departing, other than Abraham's short journey out of Canaan to Egypt during another famine, there has been a continuous presence of this family in the land for over 200 years. Abraham first moved into Canaan in the year 2084AM and it is now the year 2298/9AM or the 215th year since the promise was made to Abraham.

From this date, Israel will spend another 215 years in Egypt before they are brought out by Moses and led to Mt. Sinai to receive the law. Thus it is exactly 430 years from the promise to the law as Paul notes in Galatians 3:17. It will be a time of great increase in number of the people of Israel.

⁷ His sons and his sons' sons, his daughters and his sons' daughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

Starting in the next verse, the names of these sons, and daughters, and sons' daughters will be given. In all, it will only mention 1 daughter, but he certainly had more as is evidenced here and elsewhere. And in all, it will only list 70 recorded people who descended from him who went to Egypt.

However, others also went with him. The names of the wives of the sons aren't listed and there would have been many servants, possibly in the thousands. Whatever the number, it will be exceedingly small compared to the 603,550 fighting-aged men, plus women, children, and others who will leave Egypt in just 215 years. They will surely become the "great nation" God promised.

IV. The Family of Israel (verses 8-27)

⁸ Now these *were* the names of the children of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt: Reuben *was* Jacob's firstborn.

⁹ The sons of Reuben *were* Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

¹⁰ The sons of Simeon *were* Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar, and Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman.

¹¹ The sons of Levi *were* Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

¹² The sons of Judah *were* Er, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan). The sons of Perez *were* Hezron and Hamul.

¹³ The sons of Issachar *were* Tola, Puvah, Job, and Shimron.

¹⁴ The sons of Zebulun *were* Sered, Elon, and Jahleel.

¹⁵ These *were* the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Padan Aram, with his daughter Dinah. All the persons, his sons and his daughters, *were* thirty-three.

¹⁶ The sons of Gad *were* Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni, Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli. ¹⁷ The sons of Asher *were* Jimnah, Ishuah, Isui, Beriah, and Serah, their sister. And the sons of Beriah *were* Heber and Malchiel.

¹⁸ These *were* the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter; and these she bore to Jacob: sixteen persons.

¹⁹ The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife, *were* Joseph and Benjamin.

²⁰ And to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him. ²¹ The sons of Benjamin were Belah, Becher, Ashbel, Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard.

²² These were the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob: fourteen persons in all.

²³ The son of Dan was Hushim.

²⁴ The sons of Naphtali were Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem.

²⁵ These were the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter, and she bore these to Jacob: seven persons in all.

²⁶ All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt, who came from his body, besides Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty-six persons in all.

²⁷ And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt were two persons. All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy.

Imagine this... in the 215 years since Abraham came to Canaan until this point, there are only 70 names given of those in the covenant line. In the same amount of time, just 215 years from this, there will be over 600,000 fighting-aged males. These, along with all the others probably numbered between 2 and 3 million.

God has the ability to make great, and to reduce to nothing, as is evidenced here and throughout the rest of redemptive history. The church started with one Man. He added 12 disciples and called them His apostles. It grew exponentially to have become a number surely in the billions when He resurrects us to eternal life. God can, and He will, accomplish the marvelous in and through His people.

Although I'm not going to go into any great detail concerning these 20 verses, there are a few things to mention. The first is that out of all four of his wives, only Rachel is actually called his wife in this list. She was the wife of choice, the others were wives by circumstance.

Then there is a problem with the numbering which confuses almost everyone. First, verse 26 says "sixty-six persons in all." Then verse 27 says "All the persons of the house of Jacob who went to Egypt were seventy." And finally, in Acts 7, we read this -

"Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to *him*, seventy-five people. ¹⁵ So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers."

-Acts 7:14, 15

So there are three different numbers to deal with - 66, 70, and 75. For the first number, 66, we are told "all those who are 'with' Jacob." So Jacob, Joseph, and his two sons aren't counted. That almost resolves the total of 70.

But in the listing of Leah's offspring, there are only 32 names mentioned even though it says 33. The 33rd wasn't born yet. She is Jochebed, the daughter of Levi and the mother of Moses and Aaron. She is named in Numbers 26:59.

Finally, in Acts, Stephen says "Jacob and all his relatives." This then implies counting the unnamed wives of the sons, and it leaves out Joseph and his family who are already in Egypt and who, as Stephen says, "sent for them." The reason for saying all this is not to bore you with numbers, but to show that the Bible is not in error.

The importance of the number 70 in this Old Testament account is that the names given here are identified after the exodus as the chiefs of the divisions of Israel. Israel is God's instrument for His redemptive works among humanity leading up to the Messiah. And all of humanity is derived from the 70 names contained in the Table of Nations recorded in Genesis 10.

In other words, the 70 names in Genesis 10, which correspond to everyone on earth, are to be given the oracles of God through the 70 names recorded in this chapter in the covenant people of Israel. This is explained in Deuteronomy 32:8, which says -

"When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations,
When He separated the sons of Adam,
He set the boundaries of the peoples
According to the number of the children of Israel."

Seven is the number of spiritual perfection. It is the sum of 3, the divine number, and 4, the number for creation. Ten is the number for completeness. Thus, as those who are noted as Israel and who have gone to Egypt, God's divine plans (3) are being worked out in His created world (4) in their fullness (10) through these 70 people.

This isn't just an arbitrary list of names and numbers, but a prophetic plan and symbolic structure of what God is doing in the history of man's redemption. The same applies to the seven churches of revelation. During the church age, while Israel has been under God's punishment, those seven churches represent God's working in His plan of redemption.

God bestowed grace on Adam after the fall and kept a select line of people through the years until Noah, who again received grace in the eyes of the Lord. After the flood, God gave an overall structure of redemption as laid out in the Bible in the account of Noah.

After that, He called Abraham and made a covenant of grace to the world, declaring him righteous by faith. Through the chosen line of Abraham's seed, He has refined what He will do in the future, giving us pictures of everything that is coming.

These pictures are what we have seen in all of the sermons since that time. The entire scope and structure of redemption has been seen in these many stories. Now as these pictures have been realized, Jacob and Israel are going to Egypt to begin this long and meticulous plan, preparing Israel for their role.

This is the reason why the list here is divided into two sections of 66 and then 70. Those 66 names reflect the 66 books of the Bible which is the transmission of that spiritual message by the whole - reflected in the 70 people.

In verse 10 a person named Shaul is mentioned. But unlike any other person in the list, it says this about him "Shaul, the son of a Canaanite woman." Others in the list were born of Canaanite women, but it doesn't mention them that way. Why? Because it wants to highlight that he is a son of Simeon, "He who hears."

What it's telling us is that "He who hears" isn't just someone of pure Hebrew descent, but anyone who holds to the transmission of God's message, represented by these people. In other words, people like Luke, who was a Gentile and yet he authored two of the 66 books of the Bible. We are given these clues in this otherwise seemingly tedious list of names.

Speaking of the base numbers, 6 and 7, EW Bullinger shows in his book on the numbers of the Bible that they show a "combining and contrasting what is *human* and what is *spiritual*." In other words, we can see in these two lists the mystery of the compilation of the Bible. The 66 books were written by God through man.

About this book, which testifies to the grace of God, Albert Barnes says that it is "with the most perfect exactitude to the benign reign of grace already realized in the children of God, and yet to be extended to all the sons and daughters of Adam." It all testifies to the work of the Messiah; it testifies to the grace of Jesus Christ.

What seems arbitrary isn't. What seems confusing is because we are looking at individual trees and not the forest. If we can keep in mind the macro-structures of the Bible, we can more clearly see what is going on in the individual details and why things are listed.

Of all of the macro structures, there is one overall theme which is that there is a God and we were separated from Him. In order to repair that breach He has a plan to fix that, and the plan is centered on grace in the giving of His Son, Jesus Christ. If we can always keep that in mind, then every other detail becomes understandable.

Closing Verse: *Your fathers went down to Egypt with seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as the stars of heaven in multitude. Deuteronomy 10:22*

Next Week: Genesis 46:28-34 (A Glorious Reunion) (115th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Journey to Egypt

So Israel took his journey with all that he had
And came to Beersheba and sacrifices he offered
To the God of his father Isaac, the God of his dad
Is to whom his sacrifices were proffered
Then God spoke to Israel in the visions of the night
And said, "Jacob, Jacob!"
And he said, "Here I am. Now I am filled with delight
So He said, "I am God, the God of your father
Do not fear to go down to Egypt, let it be no bother
For I will make of you a great nation there
In fulfillment of the vow to Abraham I did swear
I will go down with you to Egypt, I so apprise
And I will also surely bring you up again
And Joseph will put his hand on your eyes

Then Jacob arose from Beersheba
And the sons of Israel carried
Their father Jacob, their little ones
And their wives that they had married

In the carts which Pharaoh had sent to carry him
In these is how he transported them
So they took their livestock and their things
Which they had acquired in Canaan the land
And went to Egypt, as the story rings
Jacob and all his descendants with him, just as planned

His sons and his sons' sons whom on his knees he taught
His daughters and his sons' daughters
And all his descendants with him to Egypt he brought
Now these were the names of the children of Israel
Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt: which Genesis does tell

Reuben was Jacob's **firstborn**
The sons of Reuben were Hanoah, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi
These sons his crown did **adorn**
The sons of Simeon were...
Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachin, Zohar too
And Shaul, as the Bible does refer
He, a Canaanite woman did come thru
The sons of Levi were Gershon, Kohath, and Merari
Kind of nice to have a name that rhymes with Ferrari
The sons of Judah were Er, Onan
And Shelah, Perez, and Zerah too
(But Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan)
So with three sons he had to make do
The sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul
Being named in the Bible must be kind of cool
The sons of Issachar were
Tola, Puvah, Job, and Shimron, these four
The sons of Zebulun were for sure
Sered, Elon, and Jahleel, only three and no more
These were the sons of Leah
Whom she bore to Jacob in Padan Aram, we see
With his daughter Dinah
All the persons, his sons and his daughters, were thirty-three
The sons of Gad were Ziphion, Haggi, Shuni
And Ezbon, Eri, Arodi, and Areli
The sons of Asher were Jimnah, Ishuah, Isui, Beriah

And Serah, their sister
And the sons of Beriah were Heber and Malchiel
That makes eight names to remember there, mister

These were the sons of Zilpah
Whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter
And these she bore to Jacob: sixteen persons
Quite a brood that he brought her
The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife
Were Joseph and Benjamin
Rachel was the love of Jacob's life
And to Joseph in the land of Egypt
Were born Manasseh and Ephraim
Whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On
Bore to him and which made his eyes gleam
The sons of Benjamin were Belah, Becher, Ashbel
Names that to pronounce are hard
And also Gera, Naaman, Ehi, Rosh, Muppim, Huppim, and Ard
These were the sons of Rachel, Jacob's beloved doll
Who were born to Jacob: fourteen persons in all

The son of Dan was Hushim
The sons of Naphtali were Jahzeel, Guni, Jezer, and Shillem

These were the sons of Bilhah, as we do recall
Whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter
And she bore these to Jacob: seven persons in all
All the persons who went with Jacob to Egypt
Who came from his body through his long haul
Besides Jacob's sons' wives
Were sixty-six persons in all

And the sons of Joseph who were born
To him in Egypt were persons two
All the persons of the house of Jacob
Who went to Egypt were seventy, quite a crew

Lists which seem tedious need extra attention and care
Because many important treasures are actually hidden there

To read the Bible is both an honor and a delight
An honor because it is God's word given to us
But it also reveals that all will be alright
Because of the work of our Lord Jesus

Where we are lost in sin, with no hope at all
God reaches out to us with an offer exceedingly great
If we simply trust in the work of Jesus and on Him call
He will seal us with His Spirit for a wondrous date
He will glorify us and then for all eternity
We will behold His glory there upon the glassy sea

Thank You O God for the precious gift of life
Through Jesus is ended all our enmity and strife

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 46:28-34 (A GLORIOUS REUNION)

Introduction: There is a famine in the world during Jacob's time which will continue on for about five years. In order to protect and feed Israel, Joseph called them down to Egypt. Jesus speaks of the time of Great Tribulation coming on the world as well.

He warned them that the time would come when they would have to pick up and leave on a moment's notice. But those people will be kept, nourished, and carried through that terrible time and they will come out of it in the end.

Joseph is taking steps to ensure his family will be cared for during the continued famine and he will keep them from the corruption of the Egyptians in the process by sending them to an area separate from them.

Sometimes we get our own periods of personal tribulation and we might feel like the world is falling apart around us. It may be so bad that we might wonder if there is any safety or sure foothold left at all. But there is.

As followers of Christ, we have to remind ourselves during the times of trouble that He is there and He will carry us through these things. It might not always be the way we expect, but it is always the way that is the absolute best.

That's hard to see from the low spots in life, but it is what we must trust is true. In a great song of salvation, Isaiah chapter 26 gives hope to the people. Even in death the Lord promises victory. At one point of the chapter, He gives advice to His people who are facing a world of trouble and horror.

He tells them to go into hiding while He handles what needs to be done. This is something we can do as well. When we're overwhelmed with the events of life, we can hide away and let Him handle the problems that swirl around us. There, separate from the outside world, we can commune with Him, read His word, and wait on His curing treatment for our woes.

Text Verse: *Come, my people, enter your chambers,
And shut your doors behind you;
Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment,
Until the indignation is past. Isaiah 26:20*

The famine in the world at Joseph's time was immense, but God gave him wisdom to prepare for it. And with his family now coming to Egypt, he will ensure that they are kept in an area isolated from everything else that will happen.

God gave them a savior *from within* Israel and He prepared a safe haven *for* Israel. He has done the same for us too. He has given us a Savior from *within* humanity and a safe haven *in* Christ Jesus. He can empathize with us, understand our cares and troubles, and he has given us a place of refuge during our times of trial.

And above all, He has given us food enough to make it through any famine. That food is found in His word. It is what instructs us, comforts us, and nourishes us. Of all the things we could read to have better life and a fuller relationship with Him, His superior word is the very best.

Too often we read book after book about the Bible and we fail to devote that same amount of time to actually reading the Bible. Let's not make that error, but let's get into His word every day of our life. And let's get into His word now too, and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Son Appears to Jacob (verses 28, 29)

²⁸ Then he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out before him *the way* to Goshen.

The family has departed Canaan, having left Beersheba after Jacob made sacrifices to the Lord. On the journey, Judah is selected to point out the way before him to Goshen. There are probably a few reasons why Jacob would have done this.

The first is that they have a very large company coming into the land. There were the 70 mentioned in this chapter, but there were other family members and certainly a huge number of servants as well. Even though they had royal carts, soldiers of Egypt at the border may think they were an attacking force.

Secondly, if Judah arrived to tell Joseph they were coming, he could send someone to pinpoint exactly where in Goshen they were to settle. Judah was selected because his three older brothers fell from favor over things they had done in the past. He was, for all intents and purposes, the trusted leader of the brothers.

Also, he is the one who spoke for the whole when appealing to Joseph before they knew

who he was. It was his speech which finally convinced Joseph to reveal himself. Because of this, he would be the most obvious choice to meet with him again.

What is a bit more than ironic is that it was Judah who had suggested selling Joseph off as a slave many years earlier. Now Joseph is the one who is dealing with him to find them a home to settle in. Matthew Henry says, "This is rendering good for evil."

Two interesting pictures then come out of this. The first is that Judah represents all of the Jews. The term "Jew" comes directly from the name Judah. Secondly, as happens several times in the Bible, Judah is sent forth first.

As Judah means "praise," it is giving us a picture of our responsibilities before the Lord - "Let praise go first before the Lord." Judah will be the first to march before the tabernacle each time it is moved in the wilderness. Also, Judah will be selected several times to march first into battle.

In all things, let the praise of the Lord go first. It is an eternal picture for us to see and to act upon - in our prayers, in our lives, and in our hopes. Let praise go first.

The name Goshen means "drawing near" or "approaching."

As I said in a previous sermon, I'm certain that this is asking us to consider the name. Two things which are drawing near of the future are being pictured here.

The first is that the Jews are to flee from the land of Israel because of the Great Tribulation. The second half of the seven years of tribulation is drawing near. The second is the literal return of Christ to earth to rule for 1000 years.

The name Goshen is being used to show that the end times are truly drawing near. Goshen is also called the land of Rameses in Chapter 47 and the name Goshen is never mentioned in any documents outside the Bible. And so this name is certainly given specifically for us to see the approach of the Great Tribulation.

^{28 (con't)} **And they came to the land of Goshen.**

This is where Israel will be kept safe during the time of famine and separation from their home land. They will remain here for the next 215 years, but the story will skip over almost all of that time. It will go from this early period of their time in Goshen at the end of Genesis right into the time of their departure there in Exodus.

The time frames are different, but the pictures are the same. Israel is kept safe until they are brought back to their homeland. The Bible tells us specifically and also demonstrates time and time again, "that which is will be again and that which has been done will be done again, and there is nothing new under the sun."

We're given these patterns so we can accurately perceive the world around us and to have faith that God is in control of what is happening.

*They came to Goshen where they would be safely kept
During the famine and the time of tribulation
And for more than 200 years, there they slept
Until the Lord led them out of Egypt by a great salvation*

²⁹ So Joseph made ready his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel;

In the first 27 verses of this chapter, the name Jacob was used 15 times and the name Israel was used 4, but only two of those were applied to him as his name. Suddenly, in the last 7 verses, the name Jacob isn't used at all and the name Israel is used twice.

It is *the man* in the story, but *the collective group* of people in the picture. It is to his father Israel that Joseph makes his chariot ready as he goes up to Goshen. It is to His redeemed people, Israel, who Jesus will protect and defend during the tribulation.

In another ironic occurrence, it is Israel who was invited to come to Egypt by Pharaoh and who is being met and lovingly greeted by the chariot of the governor of the land under his authority. But yet, when Israel departs Egypt it will be as they are first expelled and then chased by Pharaoh and his chariots during the Exodus.

There is a famine in the land which made Pharaoh bring them here, and there will be destruction in the land which will cause Pharaoh to drive them out. There is Goshen which means "drawing near" and there will be Moses which means "drawing out."

And it is Joseph who is coming to greet them as they arrive and it is Joseph whom they will carry out when they depart. This is shown to us in Exodus 13:19 -

"And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, 'God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you.'"

The continued parallels between the two events are certainly noteworthy and it shows immense care in the details.

²⁹ (con't) **and he presented himself to him, and fell on his neck and wept on his neck a good while.**

Joseph came to his father and in the most tender moment of either of their lives, they are reunited face to face and in tears of joy. In fact, it says that he fell on his neck and wept a good long while. Interestingly enough though, the Hebrew isn't specific enough to let us know who did the weeping on which neck.

The Greek Old Testament, the Latin Vulgate, John Calvin, and others think it was Joseph. But the Jewish scholar Maimonides says the verb refers to Jacob. I'd have to agree with him. Jacob has for many years been the grieving father.

This is the greatest moment of his life and one he never thought would come about. And it is reflective of the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15. In that famous story we read -

"And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.
²¹ And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'" (20, 21)

However, having said this, I think the reason the Hebrew is left uncertain is because it shows us exactly the opposite in what is being pictured. Jacob is picturing wayward Israel. Joseph is picturing Jesus. What is pictured is the mourning of the people at the knowledge of who Jesus is. This is seen in Zechariah 12:10 -

"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."

And as an internal clue to this very thing, we see something unusual in this verse. The words "and he presented himself" is the Hebrew phrase *v'yira*. It is used 20 times in the Bible in this exact construct which is known as the *niphal* form of the verb.

Every instance except one in Ezekiel is referring to the appearance of God to someone. The one in Ezekiel is speaking of Jerusalem in a metaphorical way. Because of the unusual term *v'yira*, it is certainly asking us to look at this in the context of the greater picture which is being presented.

Joseph is said to have "appeared" to Jacob using this special form of the verb because it is picturing the appearing of the Lord to Israel during the tribulation period. The picture is exact. When He does, they will mourn for Him exactly as Zechariah says.

*I will pour on the house of David
And on the inhabitants of Jerusalem too
The Spirit of grace and supplication
In the future, this I shall do*

*Then they will look on Me
Yes on Me whom they have pierced and they will mourn
For Him as one mourns for his son - his only
And grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn*

II. Now I Have Seen (verse 30)

³⁰ And Israel said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen your face, because you are still alive."

Another reason is here for me to think that Maimonides is correct about Jacob being the one to fall on Joseph's neck. He is the first to speak. In other words, when he had finishing balling his heart and tears out, he finally gathered himself enough to speak.

And his words echo throughout history. In fact, what he says here is almost parallel to what Simeon said when he beheld the baby Jesus in Luke 15. Let's read that passage -

"And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name *was* Simeon, and this man *was* just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, ²⁸ he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said:

²⁹ Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace,
According to Your word;
³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation
³¹ Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples,
³² A light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles,
And the glory of Your people Israel." Luke 15:25-32

It is a beautiful comparison between the two, but there is more than just two old men saying they can now die. One amazing parallel is that Jacob is looking at Joseph who is known to Egypt as *Zaphnath Paaneah* - the Savior of the World. He is saying to him that he is now ready to die.

And this is literally what happened to Simeon when he said, "For my eyes have seen Your salvation." Both Joseph and Jesus are the light to the Gentiles around them and both Joseph and Jesus are the glory of their people Israel. And both are God's mode of salvation for His people.

It is certain that Simeon, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, spoke his words to reflect this ancient passage from Genesis as a remarkable parallel to the picture. But in addition to the parallel is the picture itself. The NIV translates this verse as "now I am ready to die" rather than "now let me die."

This is certainly the intent of the words. Israel isn't *asking* to die, nor is he saying that he would *wish* to die. Rather he is saying that *he is now ready* to die. And it is the words on the lips of every true believer in Jesus Christ since He came. Without Christ, nobody is truly ready to die. In Christ, we are set and ready - our bags are packed for the great journey when the heavenly train arrives.

Jacob will in fact live 17 more years, but because of what has happened, anytime - whether a day, a week, a month, or many years... it no longer matters. And how blessed we are in Christ that the same is true for us. We have beheld the face of the Lord and this isn't really our home.

*Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace
According to Your word, I am ready to go
For my eyes have seen your salvation, in wonderful release
I have now a heavenly hope, this I know*

Jesus is our salvation, prepared before the face of all peoples

*A Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles as well
They will hail him under all church steeples
And He is the glory of Your people Israel*

III. You May Dwell in the Land of Goshen (verses 31-34)

³¹ Then Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, "I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and say to him, 'My brothers and those of my father's house, who *were* in the land of Canaan, have come to me.

After his intimate reunion with his father, he directs his words to his brothers and all the others. "I will go up and tell Pharaoh." In verse 29, it said that Joseph "went up" to Goshen. Now he says that he will "go up" and tell Pharaoh.

This has caused confusion for some. How can he "go up" in both directions. But this really isn't a problem. Goshen is on the way to Canaan from where Joseph is. When one goes towards Israel or towards Jerusalem, they are always said to "go up."

It is God's land and His city. One always ascends toward them regardless of elevation. In the case of Joseph going up to Pharaoh, he is going up in legal elevation, toward the royal throne. And so it is "going up" in a courtly sense.

It's good to remember that the brothers picture the individual leaders and the tribes of Israel. Joseph pictures the Lord, Pharaoh is "the Great House" picturing heaven. Israel will be brought into the wilderness during the tribulation where they will be cared for and nourished according to Revelation.

Joseph is going to Pharaoh to tell them his family has arrived. It is picturing those Jews who have recognized Christ and are reunited with Him. He will ensure that heaven itself tends to their needs.

³² And the men *are* shepherds, for their occupation has been to feed livestock; and they have brought their flocks, their herds, and all that they have.'

Here it literally says, they are "keepers of the flock." As shepherds, they are responsible for the flocks under them. The picture is consistent that the brothers picture the leaders of the tribes of Israel in the future.

The feeding of flocks is symbolically used throughout Scripture as tending to, and caring for, those under a spiritual head. One of many such verses is found in Isaiah 40 when speaking of the Lord caring for His people. Here are those beautiful words -

Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong *hand*,
And His arm shall rule for Him;
Behold, His reward *is* with Him,
And His work before Him.

¹¹ He will feed His flock like a shepherd;
He will gather the lambs with His arm,
And carry *them* in His bosom,
And gently lead those who are with young. Isaiah 40:11, 10

These shepherd brothers of Joseph and their flocks then would be the people of Israel under their leaders noted in Revelation. During the tribulation they will be tended to and cared for with Christ as their Chief Shepherd. And this is exactly what Peter speaks about in his first letter, addressed to the Jewish believers –

"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." 1 Peter 5:2-4

³³ So it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, ‘What is your occupation?’

There was already at this time in Egyptian history a strict caste system in place. People were categorized and given their status based on their lineage and their work. Joseph is preparing them for their meeting with Pharaoh, knowing that he will ask them their occupation.

The cast system will only get worse in Egypt as the years go by and so this was a serious business. Joseph wanted them to be prepared in advance for the important meeting.

³⁴ that you shall say, ‘Your servants’ occupation has been with livestock from our youth even till now, both we *and* also our fathers,’

The instructions include the words "Your servants." They are subjecting themselves to the rule and authority of Pharaoh. The connection to the New Testament is clear. They

have claimed Jesus as their brother and they have claimed devotion to God because of Him.

It is in this relationship that they are told to state that they are shepherds and this is what they have been all their lives. The reason for it is coming and it is what will keep them alive and yet separate from the rest of the Egyptians during the famine.

And even this picture is accurate of the leaders of Israel. They are, by default, shepherds of the people. They may not have been very good ones in the past, but they have been shepherds. The Bible is filled with such references like this one in Jeremiah 23, speaking of the shepherds of Israel -

“Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!” says the LORD. ²Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: “You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,” says the LORD. Jeremiah 23:1, 2

A shepherd can only be an effective one if he proclaims Christ, but a shepherd is a shepherd regardless of whether he does it well or not. This is why it's so important to have a proper shepherd or to be a proper shepherd. Souls really are at stake.

³⁴ (con't) **that you may dwell in the land of Goshen;**

There are several reasons for selecting Goshen. The first is that shepherds were a lower class than others. They weren't shaven, they did what might be considered menial work, and they were probably less educated. This is the perception that many people even today have of farmers and country folk.

The thought of being lower class also lends to the idea of people who are thieves and trouble-makers, whether that is true or not. Another thing that would bother the Egyptians is that they sacrificed and ate their animals, many of which were considered sacred by the Egyptians.

Because of these biases against them, Joseph was hoping to keep them separated and isolated so that the Egyptian people wouldn't come after them in the years ahead as they prospered. And being the covenant people, this is something they would surely do.

Another reason is that Goshen was on the way to Canaan and if they needed to leave, the flight and travel would be quicker and easier. Also, Goshen is called the "best of the land of Egypt" implying that it was an excellent area for pasturing flocks.

And finally, the isolation from the Egyptians would be a two-way street. Not only would they be kept *from the biases of the Egyptians*, but they would also be kept *from corruption by the Egyptian's beliefs and practices*.

All in all Goshen is the perfect spot for them to dwell. God surely had it ready in advance for their arrival.

*** 34 (fin) for every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians."**

Some scholars believe that these last words weren't actually spoken by Joseph, but were instead given by Moses as an explanation of the state of Egypt at the time of Joseph. Whichever is true, the words are corroborated by the famed historian Herodotus.

He said that shepherds were a part of the caste known as the swine-herds, one of the seven castes which the Egyptians were divided into. They were held in such low esteem that they weren't allowed to enter a temple. They also couldn't contract marriage with any others of their countrymen.

They were so disliked that existing monuments from the times of the Pharaohs frequently represent them as lame, deformed, dirty, and unshaven, and sometimes even having a stupidly ludicrous appearance.

It's funny how being a shepherd is considered so lowly and abominable to the people of the Bible, be it the Egyptians here, or even the Jews at Jesus' time, and yet it is considered the most noble of jobs in the Bible at the same time.

Both testaments use shepherds as the epitome of character and both testaments ascribe the job spiritually to the Lord. The sons of Israel, Moses, and David were all shepherds. And the Lord is called the Shepherd in both the Old and New Testaments.

Regardless of what the rest of the world thinks, whatever your job, whether it is good paying or not, whether it seems important to others or just menial and degrading, it is our obligation to do it to the best of our ability and so honor the Lord. Paul explains that to us in Colossians 3 -

"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." Colossians 3:23, 24

As far as what this verse is picturing though, if the shepherds are an abomination to the Egyptians and they along with their flocks are picturing Israel during the tribulation, then the picture is clear. Those faithful Jews of the tribulation period will be considered an abomination to the people of the world. And this is exactly what is expected in the future.

It shouldn't be missed that Herodotus says the Egyptians called shepherds "the swine-class" of people and this is what Muslims and others today call the Jews. The Koran actually makes references to this. It is common terminology which will only become more prevalent in the future.

The whole world will come against Israel and they will almost be annihilated before Christ returns to defend them, but He will come to defend them. This is the great thing about redemptive history. God makes promises and God keeps those promises. And He does it in a way that the underdog is cared for and protected.

On a more personal level though, this is how God regularly works with man. Paul, writing to the believers in Corinth told them about how God favors the underdog. There in his first letter, he writes these words to you and me -

"For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. ²⁷ But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸ and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹ that no flesh should glory in His presence. ³⁰ But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— ³¹ that, as it is written, 'He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.'" 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Whether it is ancient Israel being brought into a foreign land to be safely kept and carried along, or them some years later being brought out and defended at the Exodus, God is there to protect the little guy. In fact, He told them that explicitly in Deuteronomy -

"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; ⁸ but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

-Deuteronomy 7:7

Again, many years later, Israel was consigned to be destroyed by the wicked Haman during the time of the Persian Empire. But God turned his curse into a blessing upon the people. He has done it again for them in modern times by putting them back in their land, just as the Bible said would happen.

He is the Defender of the widow and the God who cares for orphans. He hears the cries of the oppressed and upholds the weak and broken. So, when you see disaster all around the world, when it seems like things are out of control and falling apart, don't let these things worry you.

Because of Jesus, we are included in the New Covenant, a covenant He sealed with His own blood. It is a promise and a guarantee from the Everlasting God that we belong to Him and that nothing can ever separate us from Him.

Israel is headed into the future in a foreign land, and we are heading into the future in a land which isn't our home. But God brought Israel out and planted them again in their own land and God has guaranteed that because of Jesus we will be planted for all eternity in the new heavens and the new earth.

This is our great hope and so let's hold onto that assurance as our lives go by. He is a great God and our magnificent Redeemer. He is Jesus.

Closing Verse: *Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Peter 2:11, 12*

Next Week: Genesis 47:1-6 (Grace in the Land of Goshen) (116th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

He Appears to Israel

Then he sent Judah before him to Joseph at his command
To point out before him the way to Goshen
And they eventually came to Goshen the land

So Joseph made ready his chariot as the Bible does tell
And went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel

And he presented himself to him with a smile
And he fell on his neck and wept
On his neck there for a good while
Surely also his beating heart leapt

And Israel said to Joseph at that place
“Now let me die if it is God's will
Since I have now seen your face
Yes, because you are alive still

Then Joseph said to his brothers
And to his father's household too
“I will go up and tell Pharaoh my druthers
This is thing that I will now do

And say to him, ‘My brothers and also
Those of my father's house as well
Who were in the land of Canaan
Have come to me in Egypt to dwell
And the men are shepherds as they were taught
For feeding livestock has been their occupation
And their flocks they have also brought
Their herds, and all that they have for the famine's duration
So it shall be when Pharaoh calls you and says
What is your occupation?’
That you shall say the following
This shall be your affirmation...

"Livestock has been your servants' occupation
From our youth even till now we say

Both we and also our fathers, this our vocation
We continue at it to this very day

That you may dwell in the land of Goshen
For every shepherd to the Egyptians is an abomination
All of the pains of Jacob's broken heart
Those many sad and anguished tears
They were really only a temporary part
Of God's plans which unveiled through the years

In the end there was a joyous reunion
As Joseph appeared to Jacob in flesh and blood
The beauty of the moment, the intimate communion
Was more beautiful than any blossoming bud

We in our hearts await a reunion as well
With loved ones in Christ since departed from us
But we shall see them again as the Bible does tell
This hope is sure because of the victory of Jesus

And with them together we shall see His face
And sing the song of His marvelous redemption and grace

All hail our king, yes our glorious Lord Jesus
Who has done such wondrous things for us

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 47:1-6 **(GRACE IN THE LAND OF GOSHEN)**

Introduction: Some time ago while talking with my brother, he said something I hadn't really thought of from our perspective. We who are a bit younger tend to take Israel for granted. They were there when we were born and like so many other countries, they pop in and out of the news from time to time, but there doesn't really seem anything special about them.

And so without the Bible, it's hard to see the miracle of Israel for what it really is. And the more years that pass, the less miraculous they must seem to people because the world ignores the Bible. Only when looking at history and comparing it with the Bible, does Israel of today really shine so brightly.

A very small piece of land and a minute number of people were all but forgotten for 2000 years. The land lay in ruins, the people were scattered around in pockets that kept getting shoved from place to place, and the ancient tongue was all-but gone.

And yet, suddenly things started to change. The word that established them also pointed to their return, and to their blossoming and fruitfulness. And it told us that the dead language would resurrect. Hebrew would again be on the lips of the people.

And as chance... no, as divine favor would have it, proof of their ancient oracles, the writings we would call the Old Testament, suddenly showed up in a dry, barren place called the Dead Sea one year before they were reestablished.

The ancient words of the past were waiting there for them as they arrived off of ships. God was calling them and they weren't listening. They still, for the most part, aren't listening. And so, like Israel in Joseph's time, God will send a famine.

It will be a tough time on earth, but a portion of them will be saved through it by grace. The mystery of redemption is still alive and well in the world. To those of us who read, study, and believe our Bibles, it's not a mystery at all. God speaks and we accept. But like creation itself, most of the world, including much of Israel, tries to take God out of the picture.

They ignore the signs, they ignore the wonders, and they ignore the miracle. They take no notice of what was written so long ago to show them what would happen in the future... probably a not-too-distant future from right now.

And they fail to open their blind eyes and lift them to the God who established them and has so faithfully carried them. It is a problem with both Jew and Gentile and it will lead down a destructive path. But even there God's grace will shine forth, especially for this cherished group of people, Israel.

Text Verse: *Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
Will bring her into the wilderness,
And speak comfort to her.*

*¹⁵ I will give her her vineyards from there,
And the Valley of Achor as a door of hope;
She shall sing there,
As in the days of her youth,
As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt. Hosea 2:14, 15*

In order to be brought into the wilderness and up from the land of Egypt, Israel must first go into the land of Egypt. This is where the story is today. Israel has arrived and they will be planted in the land of Goshen; the land of "drawing near."

There, for the next 215 years, they will draw ever-nearer to the day when they will be called out of that land. Considering that our nation is only 238 years old, to us 215 years sounds like a long time. But each year of Egypt was a year where they could grow and flourish.

Eventually, like today, they would have a sufficient number to dwell in and assume control of the promised land. Nothing is arbitrary with God and all things, even seemingly long delays in His plans, fit perfectly. As we read the Bible, we can learn that the long delays in our own life actually serve a great purpose.

When we get to the end of them, we can clearly see in hindsight that the delay was exactly what was needed for the circumstances. So don't fret over them, revel in them. In the process, He is taking care of you and providing for you.

We see this in today's story about Israel's arrival in Egypt. It is a story of God's gracious care for His chosen people and so let's turn to this superior word again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Five Brothers Before Pharaoh (Verses 1-3)

¹ Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, and said, “My father and my brothers, their flocks and their herds and all that they possess, have come from the land of Canaan; and indeed they *are* in the land of Goshen.”

Joseph was finally reunited with his father and his brothers when he went down to meet them in Goshen. They stayed behind and Joseph then went back to Pharaoh with his happy report. They had completely removed themselves from Canaan as is seen in the words, "their flocks and their herds and all that they possess, have come."

The move isn't a temporary one, but rather one that is expected to continue on for at least the duration of the famine, but which will actually last for 215 years. It is now the year 2299AM and they won't actually depart until the Exodus in the year 2514/5AM.

Interestingly, it is now also 215 years since Abraham was given his original covenant promises from God in Genesis 12. At that time, there was also a famine so he left Canaan and entered Egypt. And this was exactly 430 years after the Flood. That visit to Egypt resulted in plagues on Pharaoh's house.

Exactly 430 years after that, the chosen line of Israel, who are now again in Egypt, will be enslaved by the Egyptians under Pharaoh's rule and it will again result in plagues and their being forced out of the land. In both instances, their departure from Egypt results in carrying out the great wealth of Egypt along with them.

As it says in Ecclesiastes and as we will learn is O so true, both in the Bible and in history—

"That which has been is what will be,
That which is done is what will be done,
And there is nothing new under the sun." Ecclesiastes 3:15

The account now with Israel arriving in Egypt is at exactly the halfway point between these two things. The patterns of the Bible are rich, complex, and astonishing. How wonderful it is when we think about how God has woven everything together in this great drama we're participating in.

During both times in Egypt - that of Abraham and that of Israel, it seemed that things had turned out for the worse for them, but the Lord had a handle on all of it each step of the way. So there they are in Goshen.

This name means "drawing near" or "approaching." Two things which are drawing near in the future are being pictured. The first is the second half of the seven years of tribulation seen in the book of Revelation. The second is the literal return of Christ.

The name Goshen is being used to show that the end times are truly drawing near. Israel is back in the land and they are being readied for their meeting with the Lord, just as Joseph and his family have now been reconciled here in Genesis.

After these Genesis stories, this place Goshen in Egypt will only be mentioned one more time. That is at the time of the Exodus when the plagues come upon Pharaoh, plagues which are actually parallel to and prefigure the great plagues of destruction in the tribulation period recorded in Revelation.

*Details in the Bible repeat time and again we know
And in the stories there is magnificent harmony
This gives us comfort that everything will happen as God says so
And that we can trust every single word of Bible prophecy*

² And he took five men from among his brothers and presented them to Pharaoh.

This verse, right here, was used by one very well known pastor to say that only some Christians will be raptured. The pastor who said this is one of the best speakers and yet he ranks among the very worst theologians.

The notion of a saved believer not being taken out at the rapture violates the premise that we are saved by faith and then given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our promised redemption. Don't buy into such nonsense. It is bondage designed to scare believers into a state of submission to whatever the pastor dictates.

His analyses are often wrong and they are filled with bad doctrine, misleading statements, and incorrect assumptions. He is one of the great figures in Christian TV today who I wholly recommend people to NOT listen to, though I will leave his name unsaid here.

He is also one of Israel's worst enemies, not because he doesn't support them; he does. But he supports them to the point that they believe they are saved as Jews because they are Jews regardless of whether they make a personal commitment to Christ or not.

No wonder he completely botched his analysis of this passage. He came at it under the supposition that it is picturing those in the church, not Israel. But the entire panorama of these stories of Joseph's life picture Israel's coming reconciliation with Jesus.

In this verse, there is a most unusual phrasing of the Hebrew. It says *umiqseh ekhav laqah khamishah anashim* - "from the 'end' or 'extremity' of his brothers he took five men."

There is a lot of debate about what this means and six prevalent possibilities have been given over the past two thousand years -

- 1) He randomly took five of his brothers.
- 2) He took five of the meanest-looking, because if he took the best looking, Pharaoh would keep them for his own service, thus separating the family.
- 3) He took five of the healthiest and best-looking in hopes of impressing Pharaoh and thus making him look good in Pharaoh's eyes
- 4) He took five of the youngest of them.
- 5) He took five of the oldest.
- 6) He took five from both extremes, some of the oldest and some of the youngest.

Using the same word and the same number of men later in Judges 18:2, it says this -

"So the children of Dan sent five men of their family from their territory, men of valor from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and search it. Judges 18:2

In Judges, it calls them "men of valor" and so it was the best of group who were selected. But whichever five of Joseph's brothers it is, they aren't identified for a reason. This is because *who* they are isn't important. All of this speculation is irrelevant. It is the number five that is being focused on, not who the five are.

In the Bible the numbers one through three speak of the first three mysteries, that of the Godhead - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Four speaks of the mystery of God's manifestation through creation. And then five speaks the next revealed mystery, redemption.

It is the people called out from mankind, redeemed and saved. And therefore *five* is therefore the number of grace. In picture then, these five are those spoken of in Zechariah 13. During the tribulation period, most of Israel will die, but a remnant will be saved by grace. Here is what it says -

And it shall come to pass in all the land,"
Says the LORD,
"That two-thirds in it shall be cut off *and* die,
But *one*-third shall be left in it:
I will bring the *one*-third through the fire,
Will refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them.
I will say, 'This *is* My people';
And each one will say, 'The LORD *is* my God.'" Zechariah 13:8, 9

The reason for the unusual wording of the verse where it says "from the 'end' or 'extremity' of his brothers he took five men" is because it is from the end, or extremity of those left at the end of the tribulation who are being pictured.

They are those who are left alive by grace and who will be brought into the presence of the Lord, represented by Pharaoh. The unusual Hebrew of the verse was used to show us a prophetic picture of the future.

³Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, "What *is* your occupation?"

This is exactly what Joseph said they would be asked before he took them to Pharaoh. As they are Joseph's brothers, he would want to know what their trade was so that he might find a position for them in Egypt as an honor to Joseph.

Joseph knew Pharaoh well enough to know that this was coming. And he also knew that it would be important to keep the family together. In order to do that, he gave them advanced instructions on what to say...

³(con't) And they said to Pharaoh, "Your servants *are* shepherds, both we *and* also our fathers."

And exactly what Joseph instructed them to say, they said in reply to Pharaoh. They are keepers of the flocks and it has been that way throughout their generations. They said this because shepherds are considered an abomination to the Egyptians and so he would keep them all isolated from the people and together as a clan.

God ensured these things would come about in order to keep the people as a collective unit until it was time to bring them out of Egypt. Although the time is 215 years, it is no different than what God will do during the tribulation period.

He will keep the people safe and redeem them by great judgments on the world, just as He will bring great judgments on Egypt at the Exodus. All these patterns keep repeating themselves to show us that God is in control of the entire span of history.

*That which has been is what will be
That which is done is what will be done
God repeats the many details of history
And there is nothing new under the sun*

*He does this for our benefit, that we can trust He is in control
In the repetitions there is a chance for us to believe
That if He can do this in the world then He can do it for our soul
In Him there is no worry and our every burden He does relieve*

II. We Have Come to Dwell (Verse 4)

⁴ And they said to Pharaoh, “We have come to dwell in the land, because your servants have no pasture for their flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan.

There is the hand of God all over this verse. It is amazing how much is connected elsewhere to what the brothers now tell Pharaoh. First they tell him that they "have come to dwell in the land." This was prophesied by the Lord to Abraham about 200 years earlier. In Genesis 15, it says this -

¹² Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, horror *and* great darkness fell upon him. ¹³ Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. ¹⁴ And also the

nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Genesis 15:12-14

Whether they realized it or not, their lives were being directed by a higher Force which had brought them down to Egypt by a series of events which had been ongoing since the world was created. And along the way, God had provided hints as to the plan.

The reason why they came to Egypt is explained next. It was because, as they said, "your servants have no pasture for their flocks." Despite being the chosen people, they have subordinated themselves to Pharaoh by using the term, "your servants."

And this goes directly back to the dreams of Joseph from 22 years earlier. His dreams, which he relayed to them, showed that they would bow to him, implying that they would be subordinated to him. Because he is the second to Pharaoh, they have again subordinated themselves to Joseph in their words to Pharaoh.

Every detail, once again, has worked toward the next step of God's plan. Not a gust of wind nor a drop of rain has failed to be used to bring about His intentions.

And finally in their words, they explain why there are no pastures for their flocks. They say to Pharaoh, "for the famine *is* severe in the land of Canaan." In saying this, they confirm to Pharaoh exactly what Joseph prophesied concerning Pharaoh's dreams about nine years earlier. There in Genesis 41 it said -

"Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; ³⁰ but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. ³¹ So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it *will be* very severe. ³² And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing *is* established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass." Genesis 41:29-32

They have used the exact same term for the harshness of the famine that Joseph used then. It is the word *kaved*, "heavy." Even the words within the text show us the overarching hand of God on every detail of the story.

And thus, if we apply these things to our own walk with God, we can see that every detail of what happens around us is used by Him to meet His intended end. As a great example of this, I'll tell you about a portion of today's sermon and how it came about.

I had a friend staying with me for a couple weeks. He came in to have some coffee in the morning which kept me from my usual routine. I wasn't miffed, but I knew I couldn't practice my sermon as I do each day and so I started typing this one. Because he was there, I got diverted a couple times and couldn't focus properly.

But because of that, I ended up looking for something in the wrong place and it took me to exactly what I needed concerning Abraham from 86 sermons ago. It was something I'd completely forgotten and yet it was exactly what I needed for understanding today's passage and fitting it into a correct perspective.

There is nothing that He is unaware of and if He can do this for a sermon heard by a handful of folks in Sarasota and some out on You Tube, then how much more attentive do you think He is concerning the really important issues in your own life.

This is a great God who has every detail in perfect control. Just look at the hundreds of years of planning to bring these sons of Israel into Pharaoh's presence to say in one sentence exactly what the Bible has already hinted at again and again.

And as an exceedingly great parallel, it was exactly the same word used to bring about the move by Abraham to Egypt 215 years earlier. The brothers said, "for the famine is severe in the land." In Genesis 12:10, this is what it said about the time of Abraham -

Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to dwell there, for the famine *was* severe in the land. Genesis 12:10

Both times, the same phrase is used, *ki kaved ha'raav b'erets* - "for the famine was severe in the land."

^{4 (con't)} **Now therefore, please let your servants dwell in the land of Goshen."**

Because of the great and heavy famine which has taken away pasture for flocks in the higher lands of Canaan, they have come to Egypt where their lands still have some pastures left. And so, with this as their only option and their only way to continue as shepherds, they now ask for the right to dwell in Goshen.

Surely the name, Goshen, or "drawing near" would be from this day on a continual reminder that God's day of returning them to their own land was drawing near. The promise had been made and it would be fulfilled in due time.

*Time and again we see God's divine hand
Upon our lives and everything that happens around us
Even the rain or the lack of it upon the land
Is used to bring us to calling out for Jesus*

*Nothing is really out of control in our lives
Everything is directed by our Lord, the great God
Let us not be troubled as against us the world strives
He is surely in complete control of the path that we trod*

III. Dwell in the Best of the Land; Dwell in Goshen (Verses 5 & 6)

⁵Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, "Your father and your brothers have come to you.

This seems like an unnecessary verse because of its obvious nature. But it isn't superfluous. Instead, it isn't repeating the obvious, such as "Your father and brothers have arrived." Rather it is an acknowledgement of Joseph's position and authority.

"It is to you they have come, how could I turn you down concerning their request." The picture is obvious. When Israel is reconciled to Jesus, God will not withhold any good thing from them. The 84th Psalm perfectly reflects the sentiment here -

"For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield;
The LORD will give grace and glory;
No good *thing* will He withhold
From those who walk uprightly." Psalm 84:11

⁶The land of Egypt *is* before you.

Egypt in Hebrew is *mitsraim* which means "double distress." In this place of double distress, Pharaoh offers to Joseph anything suitable to the task of caring for his family and his people. Someday, the world will truly be in double distress, without God and at war with each other.

But there will be a group of God's people who have come to Jesus, just as they have come to Joseph. And God will grant them a place where they can be protected, nourished, and continued through the time of distress. When God sees that they have come to Jesus, they will again be His people and He will so tend for them.

6(con't) Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land;

While the world suffers through the famine, completely dependent on the grain of Pharaoh for survival, the Israelites will be in the best of the land. It will be close enough to the Nile to allow water to filter into the land and provide grass.

While the Egyptians will stagnate, lose their property and their possessions, the Bible tells us that the Israelites will not only keep their possessions, but they will grow and multiply exceedingly. Every detail is preplanned by God from the beginning to the end.

And again, in future because of their location, they will be close enough to the Nile so that a baby will be placed into a basket and floated down the river to the area near the house of another Pharaoh. There he will be drawn out and he will become Israel's human redeemer and lawgiver, Moses.

Nothing is left to chance, everything is preplanned, and your own destiny is as set in God's mind as was that of Joseph, Moses, and all of Israel. It is more than amazing to contemplate.

6(con't) let them dwell in the land of Goshen.

The royal decree is given. It is as much an exemption from taxes as one could get. And it is divinely directed welfare for the people of Israel. Soon, the continuing of the famine will leave the Egyptians with nothing left, but in Goshen there will be food and prosperity.

Let them dwell in the land of Goshen, the land of drawing near. Every day that passes will draw Israel that much nearer to their deliverance and a return to the promised land. And for those who are in Christ, each day also draws us one day closer to our own deliverance. As pilgrims, we are living in the land of Goshen.

And so we should live our lives in that manner. As the book of Hebrews says in an amazing parallel to what Goshen pictures -

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

-Hebrews 10:23-25

***6(fin) And if you know *any* competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock."**

These final words for the day show that despite their isolated location, Pharaoh would still like to honor Joseph by offering any of his brothers work based on their ability. The NKJV translates them as "competent men," but it's a word *khayil*, which is widely translated.

For fun, I checked several other versions and here are their translations: special ability, special skills, able men, capable men, men of activity, especially skilled, qualified, men of valor, men of ability, industrious men.

The word *khayil* indicates strength and comes from the word *khul*, "to twist." The idea is that of added strength in a twisted rope. It is to such notable and resilient people as this that he offers care of his own personal flocks. And these certainly would also be in the land of Goshen where the pastures were the best.

The picture here should be obvious. Though the Gentile church has already been raptured, there is what the book of Revelation calls "the great white multitude." They are Gentiles who have come to Christ since the start of the tribulation. It is these people whom the sealed 144000 of Israel will evangelize.

In fact, in Exodus 12:38, we read these words, "A mixed multitude went up with them also, and flocks and herds—a great deal of livestock." It won't be only Jews, but Gentiles as well who will be carried through the tribulation and into the millennial kingdom.

And it is to these shepherds, authorized by God, that Peter writes these words -

"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³ nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴ and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." 1 Peter 5:2-4

These competent herdsmen certainly did their job well in the past. When Israel entered Egypt, there were 70 recorded names. When they leave, they will be numbered at 603,550 fighting aged men, along with women, children, and so on. The flocks will flourish, the people will multiply and God will be set for a great deliverance of His chosen people.

And the chosen shepherds of the tribulation period will do an equally noteworthy job. Revelation 7:9 says, that those saved during the tribulation will be "a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands."

Yes, God is in the business of doing things on a grand scale. He can start with one and end with more than the sand on the seashore. Never underestimate the glorious work of God!

*Shepherd the flock of God which is among you
Serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly
And God will amaze with the results that ensue
So shepherd not for dishonest gain, but eagerly*

*Nor act as lords over those entrusted to you
But being examples to the flock each and every day
And when the Chief Shepherd appears, this thing He will do
He will grant you the crown of glory that does not fade away*

We here today serve an awesome God; *the* awesome God. He has entrusted us with life, time, and place. Your life isn't your own, but it was given to you to glorify Him. The time you were born was selected as the most advantageous for the person you are. No other time in history would have worked out as well for you.

And the place you are is the place you belong. From your birth to your parents, in the place you came to be - all the way until your dying day, God selected the place where your feet would step in anticipation of you using that placement to bring honor and glory to Him.

Take every advantage of every moment. Time slips by so fast that it will be gone before you know it. And remember this as you go. The cross of Jesus Christ handled our sin problem; the resurrection of Jesus Christ proved that our sin problem was handled.

Closing Verse: *For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.*

²⁸ *Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:27, 28*

Next Week: Philippians 3:4-11 (To Know Jesus Christ and the Power of His Resurrection)
(Resurrection Day Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Grace in the Land of Goshen

Then Joseph went and told Pharaoh, and said
“My father and my brothers, as well
Their flocks and their herds and all that they possess
And maybe even a stray gazelle

Have come from the land of Canaan
And indeed they are in the land of Goshen

And he took five men from among his brothers
And presented them to Pharaoh
Just these five without the others

Then Pharaoh said to his brothers
“What is your occupation?”
And they said to Pharaoh, “Your servants are shepherds
Both we and also our fathers, it is our vocation
And they said to Pharaoh during the talks
“We have come to dwell in the land
Because your servants have no pasture for their flocks
For the severe famine in Canaan is also at hand
Now therefore, please let your servants dwell
In the land of Goshen
To us that would be so swell

Then Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, saying, what he already knew
“Your father and your brothers have come to you

The land of Egypt is before you
Have your father and brothers dwell
In the best of the land they have come to
Let them in the land of Goshen excel

And if you know any competent men among them
Then over my livestock make them chief herdsmen

Joseph ensured that Israel would survive
During the years of famine that still lay head
In those years they would be kept alive
And to live without fear or dread

God also has ensured that in the future Israel
Will be kept safe through the Great Tribulation
This is the wondrous grace of which the Bible does tell
Abundantly poured out on the undeserving nation

In the same way, God gave to us such abundant grace
When He sent to Calvary's cross His beloved Son Jesus
In this act we are restored to His favorable face
And in it eternal life has been granted to us

Thank You, O God, for Your marvelous love
Thank You for the gift of Your own precious Son
Because of Him someday we'll be in the heaven's above
When this earthly life is finally done

Hallelujah and Amen...

Flood of Noah ----->	Abraham in Egypt	= 430 years
	Due to Famine	
	Visit resulted in plagues on Pharaoh	
	Carried out great wealth	
Abraham Covenant ---->	Departure to Egypt	= 215 years
	Due to Famine	+
Arrival in Egypt ----->	Departure from Egypt	= 215 years
Abraham Covenant ----->	Departure from Egypt	= 430 years
	Visit resulted in plagues on Pharaoh	
	Carried out great wealth	

GENESIS 47:7-12 (AND JACOB BLESSED PHARAOH)

Introduction: Jacob will come before Pharaoh in today's verses and there will be a tender exchange between the two. After that, we'll see Joseph's planned care for Israel during their time in Egypt. These things, though brought about by Joseph, were actually planned by God.

Every detail that has happened in the lives of these people has been orchestrated to demonstrate His providential hand over the ages, over the elements, even over the choices that the people have made. As RC Sproul says, "There are no maverick molecules in the universe."

Every atom that flies about is known to God, every drop of water serves His purposes, and the vast distances between the extremities of the universe are traversed by Him at all times and eternally. Let's keep this in mind as we look at what otherwise seems the futility of life to those around us.

The lies of evolution and global warming show the world a God who is lacking control, ineffective in His capabilities, and unable to keep His promises. This isn't the God of the Bible. Our God is great in all ways, perfect in His very being, and holds absolute sway over the minutest details of our lives. We are in good hands.

Text Verse: *"Man who is born of woman
Is of few days and full of trouble.
² He comes forth like a flower and fades away;
He flees like a shadow and does not continue. Job 14:1, 2*

It's true, our days are few and they are filled with trouble, but there is purpose and there is reason for it all. Though we are like the flower that is beautiful one day and gone the next, because of Jesus Christ, we have a hope which springs eternal. The radiance of what we will be is worth the wait, worth the grief, and worth the anguish we often suffer.

Hold fast to this truth. It is the constant theme of God's superior word and so let's turn to that wonderful book again and ... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Days of the Years of My Pilgrimage (verses 7-10)

⁷ Then Joseph brought in his father Jacob and set him before Pharaoh;

In our last sermon, we saw the cares taken for Jacob and the family of Israel as they settled in Egypt. We also were shown that only five of the brothers had been brought before Pharaoh. The Hebrew used to describe them was unusual.

This unusual wording was used because it was speaking of those who would survive at the time of the tribulation. It would be those who are left alive by grace and who will be brought into the presence of God's Great House, represented by Pharaoh.

This verse about Jacob seems to confirm that. Jacob, during these Joseph sermons has pictured the collective body of Israel from all the ages. He represents not a tribe, but all the tribes, or the people collectively from those tribes. After the five brothers are brought before Pharaoh, Jacob is brought in. It pictures Israel in the presence of their God.

^{7 (con't)} and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.

To bless another carries different connotations in the Bible. We can bless someone by giving a simple greeting - "The Lord bless you." That's a nice way of hailing one another, which we more and more fail to do in our society.

It goes all the way back to the high priestly blessing in Numbers 6:24 and is first used between people in the Bible in the book of Ruth (2:4). I try to say this to anyone I greet - a cashier at the store or someone at the mall as I take out the garbage. I wish everyone would still use this type of speech, but it's fading quickly.

Another way one can bless another is from a position of superiority to one of a lesser position. In Genesis 14, Melchizedek pronounced a blessing upon Abraham. When he did, he said -

“Blessed be Abram of God Most High,
Possessor of heaven and earth;

²⁰ And blessed be God Most High,

Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.” Genesis 14:19, 20

In an analysis of that blessing, the author of Hebrews says, "Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better." (7:7) In this, we found that Melchizedek is actually deemed to be greater than Abraham, even though Abraham is considered the father of the faithful.

We can also bless the Lord, such as happens many times in the Bible where someone says, "Bless the Lord, O my soul" or something like that. This isn't somehow saying we are greater than God. Rather it is using the term "to bless" in a different way; it is a term of honor and praise.

And so we are left with a question as to what this verse means when it says *v'barekh Ya'acov eth Pharaoh* - "and Jacob blessed Pharaoh." It doesn't give the blessing he pronounced and yet it makes the point that he, in fact, blessed him. So what is this telling us? Who is the greater?

The answer is that one is greater than the other in reality, and the same is lesser than the other in picture. Jacob is the living covenant patriarch. He *is* the greatest person on earth at this time in history. He is a prophet of the Lord and the one to monitor faithfulness to the family's responsibility to God, such as circumcision on the eighth day.

He is also the one who is obeyed and respected by those in the covenant line - as we have seen time and again. Joseph may be the second ruler of Egypt, but he is subordinate to his greater father, Jacob, in person. Pharaoh is no different. Therefore, Jacob's blessing is from the greater to the lesser. It is a blessing upon Pharaoh, not a hailing of Pharaoh.

However, in picture, the exact opposite is true. *V'barekh Ya'acov eth Pharaoh* - "And Jacob blessed Pharaoh." In picture, Jacob is corporate Israel, brought into the presence of God. And they shall bless God as we see in the Psalms. From a portion of the 68th Psalm, we read these words -

"They have seen Your procession, O God,
The procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.

²⁵ The singers went before, the players on instruments *followed* after;
Among *them were* the maidens playing timbrels.

²⁶ Bless God in the congregations,
The Lord, from the fountain of Israel.

²⁷ There *is* little Benjamin, their leader,

The princes of Judah *and* their company,
The princes of Zebulun *and* the princes of Naphtali." Psalm 68:24-27

This complex concept of blessing shows us why Jacob's blessing of Pharaoh isn't actually recorded here in the Bible. It's because in reality it was one type of blessing, but in picture it is another. This is certain because if it was one type of blessing or another, such as Melchizedek's blessing on Abraham, it would have been recorded.

*Bless God in the congregations
The Lord, from the fountain of Israel
Bless Him all you Christian denominations
And of His mighty works to all the world, do tell*

*Bless the Lord with a great resounding voice
Bless the Lord, Yes! O my soul
Bless the Lord you peoples, and rejoice
And all His mighty works shall we extol*

⁸ Pharaoh said to Jacob, "How old are you?"

This probably sounds like a bizarre question to put forth as the very first question that you would ever ask of a person. Especially coming from the ruler of all of Egypt, Pharaoh himself. You might expect something like, "So how was your trip down here" or "I hope the royal carts weren't too bumpy on the highway, were they?"

Or maybe you might think he'd ask, "What about that Joseph, eh? The ruler of the whole world, pretty nifty!" Right? I mean anything but "How old are you?" But considering the circumstances, it was probably the first thing that jumped into his mind.

Joseph, his right hand man, is only 39 years old. He would have been shaven as an Egyptian, youthful, and close to the prime of his life. The obvious difference in appearance between the two, especially because of the huge age difference, must have been shocking.

Jacob would have a gray head and a long gray beard, both of which wouldn't have been seen in the normal circles of Egypt. He would have been calloused in hand and foot, wrinkled in the face, bent over at the back, and for all we know he could have been wearing a favorite garment made by his beloved Rachel who had died some 30 years earlier.

The question wasn't "How old are you?" in a flat tone. It was probably, "*How old* are you?" Each word was uttered in an astonished awe. And to show that this is certainly how Pharaoh said it, we can look at Jacob's response...

⁹ And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage *are* one hundred and thirty years;

In his response to Pharaoh, he begins with words of faith, "the days of the years of *my pilgrimage*." The word we use for "pilgrim" came from a French word *pelegrin*. This was a corruption of an earlier Latin word *peregrinus*.

This implies a stranger or a foreigner and is based on the adverb *peregre* which means "not at home." A pilgrim, throughout the ages, is a person that goes on a journey of some sort, even quite often for a religious reason.

As they aren't home, they can expect hardship and privation. And this pretty much sums up the life of Jacob in both his worldly walk and in his spiritual walk. And this is one attribute which the people of God are especially noted for. In the 11th chapter of Hebrews, speaking of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah, it says this -

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Hebrews 11:13

Like those who went before him in faith, Jacob also confesses that he is only on a pilgrimage. This life isn't his ultimate destination, but a walk towards something greater. Saying this to Pharaoh would be more relevant because this is what the pharaoh's believed of themselves.

They thought that they were set for an eternal life with all the trimming of bliss, wealth, prosperity, and contentment. For a commoner from another country to claim that they had another, greater inheritance, would probably have been received with unusual surprise.

In our world today, it is no different when we say, "This world isn't our home." If you ask most people if they believe in heaven, they will say "Yes", but they normally don't live in that way. Instead, life is filled with self-gratification and a hunger to complete bucket-lists, and to make as much as possible before their demise.

Unfortunately, too many Christians act in the same way. Instead of the faithful response of Jacob, we see the lustful actions of David and Bathsheba or the greedy actions of those who sold in the temple at Jesus' time. In Acts, Ananias and Sapphira are a perfect example of faithless Christians who put notoriety and profit above devotion to God.

But, if we can really hold fast to the promise of eternal life because of Jesus, the material things will find their proper perspective in this life. All we have is a blessing and it has been given by our gracious God, but it shouldn't be the consuming drive of our lives.

Finally, in finishing this thought to Pharaoh, Jacob's words to him say that "*the days of the years* of my pilgrimage *are* one hundred and thirty years." Jacob was born in the year 2169AM. He now stands before Pharaoh at the age of 130, and so it is the year 2299AM. From this statement, many important connections can be made to dating elsewhere in the Bible.

God records these things so that we will take the time to navigate through the dating of the Bible and determine where we are in human history. Joseph is now 39 and so he was born when Jacob was 91. No wonder Pharaoh was astonished. Joseph is fully grown with his own family and yet Jacob is 91 years older than him!

And one more point about what is said here is that in both the question by Pharaoh, and in the answer by Jacob, the term *yeme sheme* "the days of the years" is used.

It is the Bible's way of reminding us that we don't live by years until the years are complete. We live by days and moments. There is no control over time and circumstance by us, no matter what we may think. In the end, every day is a gift and each moment is all we have. The Bible asks us to consider this and take it to heart.

This is the reason why the Bible tells us to pay attention to the days. In the 90th Psalm, Moses said -

"So teach *us* to number our days,
That we may gain a heart of wisdom." Psalm 90:12

When we look to the years we have lived or that we anticipate we will live, we get our vision out of focus and our thoughts out of perspective. When we count our days instead of years, we see that they are actually few, though greater in number.

James, like Moses, asks us to take to heart the fragility of life. In His little book, the 59th in the Bible, tucked right towards the end, he says this in the 4th chapter

"Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit'; ¹⁴ whereas you do not know what *will happen* tomorrow. For what *is* your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵ Instead you *ought* to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.'" (13-15)

^{9 (con't)} **few and evil have been the days of the years of my life,**

Few were his days in relation to two things. The first is in how long his forefathers lived. But more so in relation to how long he *expected to live* because of the promise to him and to his people. In them was the hope of the Redeemer who would transform them from death to life, eternal life.

In comparison to this, his days were truly few. And evil... He says the days of the years of his life have been evil. Many of his troubles were self-inflicted, but the troubles really existed none-the-less. In his 130 years he had fled from his brother Esau who had threatened to kill him.

He served seven years for a wife he didn't want and then had to serve seven more for the one he did want. He suffered through many hardships as he served, and afterwards as well when he went to raise his own family and flocks - he had many trials and pains.

He feared for his life again as he fled from his father-in-law back to Canaan. And he feared for it when he returned to face his older brother once again. Later in Canaan, his daughter was violated by the son of a king and two of his sons killed the whole town in response. Something that made him only more fearful.

As he traveled south, his beloved wife Rachel died in giving birth and then just after that his oldest son Reuben slept with another one of his wives. But, of all of the difficulties and trials, probably the worst followed a while later when he was told his favorite son Joseph was surely dead.

The days of Jacob's life were evil, at least to him. But not everything that is evil from one perspective is evil from another. All of these events which tired him out, wore him down, and gave him grief were used by God in several ways.

In one way, they have all been used to picture both the coming Messiah, in Person and work, and also the corporate body of Israel in the future. And in another, they were all used by God to bring him and the covenant line to the place where he now stood, in front of Pharaoh, safe, secure, and well taken care of.

Every single evil event was used as a stepping stone toward a greater good. Looking at the pilgrimage of Jacob and how God used it for this greater good - of him and others, we can put our own lives into proper perspective. The 119th psalm says this -

"Your statutes have been my songs
In the house of my pilgrimage.
⁵⁵ I remember Your name in the night, O LORD,
And I keep Your law.
⁵⁶ This has become mine,
Because I kept Your precepts." Psalm 119:54-56

This is what Jacob often failed to do. Instead of remembering the Lord in his pilgrimage, he wallowed in his own woe and misery. This man, Jacob, had personal visits from the Lord along with other dreams and visions from Him as well.

And yet, it took most of his life to come to the point where he was able to look past himself and to the greater good that God was using him and his trials for. Now, like the promise of eternal days instead of the few he had thus far lived, he finally had a grasp of the goodness of the days ahead in comparison to the evil ones he had experienced.

He now realized that every aspect of life, good and bad, was intended to work *for* good, and that this good is in connection with the eternal days promised through the hope of the Messiah. Not only could he look forward to *eternal* days, but He could look forward to *perfectly good* eternal days. This is the hope that the coming Promise would bring.

^{9(con't)} **and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage."**

Jacob is now 130 years old. He will live to 147 years, but the lives of his fathers were more. Isaac lived to 180 years; Abraham to 175. And before them the lives of the fathers were counted in the hundreds, even to Methuselah who lived to 969 years of age.

But much of this was probably known to Pharaoh at this time in history. Jacob and Pharaoh both reached back together to their ancestor Noah who lived until the year

2006AM which was only 293 years earlier. Despite being from different sons of Noah, they ultimately shared a common humanity in their father Noah.

¹⁰ So Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh

The NKJV says "So Jacob blessed Pharaoh." This implies something like "thus." The blessing came during the conversation and the Bible is acknowledging a blessing was made. Some other versions say "Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh."

This implies that the blessing referred to at the beginning actually was given *after* the conversation. One uses the word "then" and then adds in the word "again" to indicate two blessings. And still some other versions say, "And Jacob blessed Pharaoh." This then implies two blessings, one at the beginning and one at the end.

It's probable that Jacob blessed Pharaoh twice, once as he came in and once as he departed. There is a double blessing bestowed upon the Great House by the man of God.

*Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life
I've walked many miles and was often drowned in my tears
I've been through trials, hardships, toil and strife
And was at times consumed in overwhelming fears*

*But now I perceive that it all was intended for good
What seemed evil, it really wasn't, I now see
It took so much of my life, but I've finally understood
That God has always been there, faithfully directing me*

II. A Possession in the Land of Egypt (verse 11)

¹¹ And Joseph situated his father and his brothers,

If the time in Egypt is a picture of the people of Israel during the tribulation period, then what we see here is perfectly expected. Jesus will provide for Israel during the tribulation. It will be a time of grace during a time of hardship. And this is exactly how it is described for them in Revelation.

In this, Joseph situates his father and his brothers. What is done is for their benefit at his direction. It is no different in type than what Jesus is going to do for Israel.

11 (con't) **and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt,**

There is a place specifically selected for Israel during their time in Egypt. Egypt means "double distress." This looks forward to the time of the Great Tribulation in the book of Revelation. Though the time is 215 years for Israel in Egypt and only 3 1/2 years for them in the future, the concept rings true for both.

In Daniel 7, Daniel 12, and Revelation 12 the term "time, times, and half a time" is used, indicating 3 1/2 years. In Revelation 12:14, it says -

"But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent."

This will be the 1/2-way point of the seven years of tribulation and Israel has been brought to Egypt at the 1/2-way point between the covenant with Abraham and the Exodus from Egypt, both periods of 215 years. This pattern isn't to be missed because it points directly to the future events at the end of the age.

11 (con't) **in the best of the land,**

Not only is Israel given land in Egypt, it is given in the best of the land. This picture certainly isn't intended to say that Israel during the tribulation will be given the best of the land for farming, or for mining, or for water skiing.

Instead, it is saying that where they flee to will be the best possible land for their security and their safety. They will have what is needed in order to be sustained until the Lord finally delivers them.

11 (con't) **in the land of Rameses,**

This is the first of only five times that the Bible mentions Rameses. The debate about where this is or what is intended by this term is immense. One scholar devoted pages of possibilities as to these things. But the "where" and the "what" are less relevant than the "why." The name Rameses means "son of the sun" or "child of the sun." In Psalm 84, God is represented by the sun –

"For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield;
The LORD will give grace and glory;

No good *thing* will He withhold
From those who walk uprightly." Psalm 84:11

In Malachi 4, Jesus is called the Sun of Righteousness and that passage is one which appears to telescope between His first and second advent. Listen to how these verses seem to mirror Joseph's care for his family and the Lord's future care for Israel -

"For behold, the day is coming,
Burning like an oven,
And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble.
And the day which is coming shall burn them up,"
Says the LORD of hosts,
"That will leave them neither root nor branch.
² But to you who fear My name
The Sun of Righteousness shall arise
With healing in His wings;
And you shall go out
And grow fat like stall-fed calves.
³ You shall trample the wicked,
For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet
On the day that I do *this*,"
Says the LORD of hosts. Malachi 4:1-3

Rameses, rather than the name Goshen, is used here because it is speaking not so much of the tribulation period, but the actual state of those God will care for during it. Israel is the son of the Sun, Jesus. As evidence of this, Israel is elsewhere called the Lord's "firstborn son."

And they are called this when Moses, picturing Christ the Redeemer, is told to speak to Pharaoh, the afflicter of Israel. What is being seen here is perfectly detailed, not just of actual events of the past, but of actual events in Israel's future. This is what it says in Exodus 4 -

"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: "Israel *is* My son, My firstborn." Exodus 4:22

The name Rameses is used here to show us that Israel is the son of the Sun, exactly as the Bible has described them both. Israel the s-o-n of Jesus the S-u-n. These things that

seem unusual are always given to help us weave together the patterns of redemptive history.

11 (con't) as Pharaoh had commanded.

We have logically divided this verse into five individual thoughts. It is as if we are asked to stop and evaluate each individually. And so this is what we've done. Each has shown us of wonderful things which God has done; which God will do.

This final portion of verse 11 shows us that what was done by Joseph is at the direction of Pharaoh, the Great House. And it shows us that the actions of Jesus are all done at the direction of God in heaven. The two are working harmoniously in redemptive history for the sake of fulfilling the ancient covenant of God.

In the time ahead, Pharaoh will take on different symbolism as the once great protector of Israel works against them. We'll have to take care to not miss the transition as that occurs.

*A possession in the land while the famine rages
Care for the people of God at the hand of Jesus
These beautiful things are seen so clearly in the Bible's pages
The marvelous things God has done for all of us*

*He gives us the best of all things as He watches over us
His attention never slacks as He keeps us safe from harm
And He does these things through His Son, our Lord Jesus
He is fully capable to keep us, by the power of His mighty arm*

III. Bread to Sustain (verse 12)

***12 Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all his father's household with bread, according to the number in *their* families.**

Without being Jacob's favorite son, the brothers would never have been jealous of him. Without their jealousy, his dreams wouldn't have enraged them. Without their hatred they would never have thrown him into a pit nor sold him off to the gentiles.

Without being sold off to the gentiles, he never would have ended in Potiphar's house. If he weren't there, he never would have been in the royal prison. If never in the royal

prison, he never would have heard the dreams of Pharaoh's officials. If he never heard those dreams, he couldn't have given their interpretation.

Without their interpretation, he never would have been brought before Pharaoh to interpret his dreams. And God gave Pharaoh those dreams which were otherwise not able to be interpreted. Without his interpretations, he never would have been exalted to ruler of Egypt. And if this were the case, then Egypt would have suffered and perished in the famine.

Without the famine, there would have been no need for Israel to get grain from Egypt, or if there was a famine and Egypt had no grain, Israel would have perished. Without coming to Egypt, Israel would never have been reconciled to Joseph and without that, they would never have been brought to this place of safety.

If you were to substitute "Joseph" for "Jesus" and say the same thing I just said again, you'd see that all of history has had an exacting purpose and it is all leading to the end times and it is all about Jesus and Israel. The church is an insert. And thank God we got that chance. Had the Jews not crucified Christ and sent him to the tomb, we wouldn't have had this chance.

But if they had accepted His resurrection, we still wouldn't have had that chance. The kingdom age would have come without there having been a church age. But they didn't accept Him and we were given God's grace during this time.

Joseph married a gentile bride, and we are Christ's gentile bride. But despite this, there is still a future for Israel. God is good and He is good all the time. Israel will be brought out of Egypt by God's mighty power during the exodus, and Israel will be sustained through the tribulation by a great and mighty work of God as well.

Nothing is left to chance, nothing is haphazard, there is no error or confusion in God's superior word. There is only harmony, wisdom, love, and a marvelous display of God's glory. If we just look close enough, it is right there for us to see.

So, let's keep our eyes open as we go through life. Let's look at the difficulties, the trials, and the many terrible things that arise as a part of God's greater plan for us. Yes, Jacob had personally talked to the Lord and yet his faith floundered often. But we have something more than he did.

We have Jesus, we have the Bible, and we have the past 6000 years chock-full of fulfilled

prophecy to validate both. Let's not let our faith flounder, but let's be continually built up in our walk with the Lord.

Closing Verse: A man's heart plans his way,
But the LORD directs his steps. Proverbs 16:9

Next Week: Genesis 47:13-26 (What Will a Man Give in Exchange for His Soul?) (118th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

And Jacob Blessed Pharaoh

Then Joseph brought in Jacob his father
And before Pharaoh him he set
And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, not another
But Pharaoh was not done yet

Pharaoh said to Jacob,
"How old are you?"
And Jacob said to Pharaoh
My years have been evil and few

The days of the years of my pilgrimage, full of strife
Are one hundred and thirty years
Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life
I've lived through many trials and tears

And they have not attained to the days
Of the years of the lives of my fathers' span
In the days of their pilgrimage
Since the Lord created man

So Jacob Pharaoh he blessed
And went out from before Pharaoh
After Pharaoh had been addressed

And Joseph situated his father and his brothers

And gave them a possession in Egypt the land
In the best of the land, suitable to their druthers
In the land of Rameses, just as God had planned

It is as Pharaoh had commanded
And truly God never left Israel stranded

Then Joseph provided his father, his brothers, and all to be fed
All his father's household, he provided them with bread

According to their families' number
Nothing for them did he encumber

This is how God cares for His children
For those who live by faith and not by sight
God looks down upon the sons of men
And those who live this way are His delight

God chose Israel for His own people
And He chose us in the church as well
So let us proclaim His glory from every steeple
Let us this wondrous saving message tell

Jesus, beautiful Jesus, our Lord and our King
To Him all honor and all our praise belong
Let us forever to Him our voices sing
At all times let us glorify Him in song

Hail the Lord who does marvelous things for us
Hail the splendid and glorious name of our Lord Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 47:13-26

(WHAT WILL A MAN GIVE IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS SOUL?)

Introduction: I'd originally planned to do these 14 verses in two separate sermons. The first was to be verses 13-19 and then 20-26. But as I was typing, studying, and thinking, I had an idea about what these verses were showing us, but it somehow didn't seem right. And it still wasn't resolved at verse 19.

So, I continued on through verse 26. And it wasn't until that last verse that I realized that I'd fundamentally misunderstood what God is telling us about the future in these verses. One word, translated in the NKJV as "favor" is what made me stop and reevaluate the entire passage. The word in Hebrew is *khen*, grace.

Until that word, I had been misevaluating the entire passage. And so, for only the third time that I can think of, I went back and reconsidered every verse under the proper context. Nothing changes with God. We are always and only saved by grace. Without God's grace, we cannot merit eternal life.

This is the message of the Bible and it is the truth of God in Christ.

Text Verse: *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8, 9*

Our sermon today will once again be a little bit longer than usual. It has to be that way because I had to fit two sermons into one. But the picture is sure, it is reliable, and it is coming upon an unrepentant world. We can either receive Christ now and be ready for Him at the rapture, or we will face the most difficult choices imaginable - life or death choices.

Let us not be found in such a crummy position, but let's trust Christ now, placing our souls in His capable hands. The way we know how to do this is through His word and so let's go to that word now and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. No Bread in the Land (Verses 13-17)

As we've seen, the time of Israel in Egypt and then their subsequent exodus is picturing the time of the Tribulation period in the future. The reason for this is that they went to

Egypt in the 215th year after the promise made to Abraham and they will come out of Egypt 215 years later - a period of 430 years.

The tribulation is also divided into two halves of 3 1/2 years each. During the tribulation there will be great plagues upon the earth which so closely mirror the plagues during the Exodus that it is not coincidence.

Both of these are times of covenant fulfillment - 430 years from the Promise to Abraham until the law is given at Sinai, and the seven years promised to Israel for completion of their covenant responsibilities as relayed in Daniel 9:24-27. These patterns are more easily understood when we look at the words of Solomon in Ecclesiastes, a verse which I cite often -

"What is happening now has happened before, and what will happen in the future has happened before, because God makes the same things happen over and over again." Ecclesiastes 3:15 (New Living Translation)

Regardless of the actual time lengths, the patterns repeat. It is sufficient that the famine which necessitated Israel's move was for seven years and the tribulation is for seven years. After that, both times Israel is delivered by God's might and power.

These are the important aspects of what is being shown. And I say this because today's verses will show a dramatic change in the presentation of the events. During the famine in Egypt, it is Joseph who controls and tends to all of the needs of his family.

But Joseph is also taking care of the people of Egypt who are under his authority. The picture we will see in today's verses is describing a specific group of people mentioned in Revelation. While Israel is being cared for in one way, there is still another group who is being tended to during that period. They are known as the Great White Multitude.

¹³ **Now *there was no bread in all the land;***

It's important to look back to our previous sermons to determine what is being relayed here. There are two things tied up into one. The first is that there was expected to be seven years of abundance followed by seven years of famine. This is based on Pharaoh's dreams which Joseph interpreted.

This is literally fulfilled in these Genesis stories. And it also pictures the time of famine which will come upon the world in the future during the tribulation. But during that

time, there are also two things which are tied up in the picture. The first is that there will literally be famine on the earth.

This is seen in the opening of the third seal in Revelation 6 where the rider on the black horse appears as a sign of famine. But in addition to a literal famine, it is also looking forward to a famine of the word of God. As we've seen in these Joseph sermons, the grain has consistently pictured the word.

There is a time coming when obtaining it will come at a high cost. This is certain and it probably isn't far off in our future. Jesus is the Bread of Life, and the Bread of Life is found in the word, the grain, the Bible. Here then is the dual significance of this verse.

¹³ (con't) **for the famine *was* very severe,**

This is given to show the literal and complete fulfillment of what was prophesied concerning Pharaoh's dreams in Genesis 41 -

"Indeed seven years of great plenty will come throughout all the land of Egypt; ³⁰ but after them seven years of famine will arise, and all the plenty will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will deplete the land. ³¹ So the plenty will not be known in the land because of the famine following, for it *will be* very severe." Genesis 41:29-31

In that verse, the term, *ki kaved hu meod* - "and heavy it, very" was spoken about the famine. The word "heavy" is what we would think of as a crushing burden, something extremely severe. In this verse it says, *ki kaved ha'raav meod*, "and heavy the famine, very."

The reason for explaining this isn't to be bogged down *with* details, but to see the *fulfillment of* the details and how they affect the events which occur in the Bible. When God says something in prophecy, we can and should always expect it to be fulfilled literally and completely.

And so, because we have these details proving the Bible is trustworthy, then we can also be assured of the things that it has promised for us. What good is the promise of the return of Jesus to us if other parts of the Bible have been wrong?

What good is believing in eternal life through faith in Jesus if the Bible is untrustworthy. I mean, think that through for a second. How sure are we of anything in life unless we

have something which backs up what we believe? But the Bible continually backs up what it says both internally and in real history as well.

¹³ (con't) **so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine.**

Finally in this verse, we see a necessary component of what God wants us to see. It mentions both the land of Egypt *and* the land of Canaan. Both languish because of the famine. In the picture for the future, it means that this will be a worldwide famine, both Israel and the rest of the world will suffer.

Only those who are cared for supernaturally by God will prosper. This is seen in the prospering of Israel in the land of Goshen. But there is a word in this verse translated as "languished" which is important to see. It is the word *vatalah* - and fainted. It is from a primitive root meaning "to burn."

By implication it means to be rabid or figuratively, to be insane. In such a state one would become exhausted to the point of fainting. It's used one other time in the Bible, in Proverbs. There it says -

Like a **madman** who throws firebrands, arrows, and death,
¹⁹ *Is* the man *who* deceives his neighbor,
And says, "I was only joking!" Proverbs 26:18, 19

For this reason, some Hebrew scholars apply this to the people. In other words, when it says the "land" fainted, it is speaking of the people of the land. They have come to their wits end and are willing to give anything for their food. This perfectly resembles what we think of as the tribulation years of the future.

*When there is no bread how can we sustain our lives
Should there be a famine, would the land yield grain?
How could we feed ourselves, our children, our wives?
Could we survive in a time which is lacking in rain?*

*And how much more important to us is the true Bread of Life?
Without Jesus, there is no purpose, no reason to it all
Without Him there is only conflict, war, and strife
So now is the time to reach out to Him; on His name to call*

¹⁴ And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought;

This verse here is the last time that grain is mentioned in the Joseph cycle of stories. It reverts now back to the word *shever*, grain in the kernel which needs to be threshed, instead of *bar*, purified grain, which was last seen mentioned after Joseph's reunion with Israel.

After the rapture of the church, there will be no pure knowledge of the word among the gentiles as there was before the rapture. And so people will spend their last dollar to obtain the word of God and to understand it. This isn't a crazy analysis. It will be confirmed as we go on.

But it is also really pointing to the famine for real food too. There is bread to sustain the body and there is Bread to sustain the soul. All of the silver will be spent to obtain these. What was once of value to the people no longer has any meaning.

Man will sell his own children and even himself to eat. But before that point, he will look at the silver in his hands and realize it meant nothing. A life of wasted effort was put into storing up treasures for himself. Jesus speaks of exactly that in Matthew –

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

-Matthew 6:19-21

In Luke, he expands on this and He speaks of the consequences of a life of pursuing wealth at the expense of what are true riches -

"The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. ¹⁷ And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' ¹⁸ So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, *and* be merry.'" ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' ²¹ "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Luke 12:16-20

So what is it that would cause us to make this connection based on the verse we were reading right now? We'll read it again, "And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, for the grain which they bought."

The reason for the comparison is because of the verb which is used for "gathered up all the money." It is the word *v'laqet*. This is the only time that this verb is used in the Bible for collecting money. At other times when the Bible mentions gathering money, a different verb is used.

This verb, *v'laqet*, is usually used concerning gathering things on the ground, such as picking up stones, manna, flowers, or the gleanings of wheat. The symbolism we see here then is money that is tossed away in the purchasing of grain.

The imagery is like someone carrying a bag of silver up to the store house and simply tossing it down and then walking away with a bag of grain. It is a time of absolute desperation and the money no longer has any value to them.

All they can think of is the food. And after the rapture, during the tribulation, those who realized their need will do anything to be given God's grace. This symbolism is exactly referred to in the book of Ezekiel. There, we get a picture of what is happening at the time of the Lord's judgment on the land. Listen to how perfectly this mirrors the idea which this verb, *v'laqet*, implies -

"They will throw their silver into the streets,
And their gold will be like refuse;
Their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them
In the day of the wrath of the LORD;
They will not satisfy their souls,
Nor fill their stomachs,
Because it became their stumbling block of iniquity." Ezekiel 7:19

And so the money is "gathered up." It is picked up from the ground as if it were a pile of stones...

14 (con't) **and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.**

What silver there was is now in the possession of Pharaoh. One Pharaoh, Remphis, heaped up silver in this way to the point where he accumulated four million talents of it. If a talent is about 75 pounds, that's 300,000,000 pounds of silver.

Whether this is the Pharaoh at the time of Joseph or not isn't certain, but that's a whole heap of silver. One way or another, it is certainly comparable to what Joseph would have collected.

¹⁵ So when the money failed in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, “Give us bread, for why should we die in your presence? For the money has failed.”

The famine continued on longer than the silver held out and so the people have returned once again to Joseph, this time looking for a hand-out. And once again, it notes not just Egypt, but Canaan as well. The land of Canaan wouldn't be worth returning to because it was caught in the midst of the famine.

Only in Goshen, where Israel was relocated to, was there security for the people and bread for their sustenance. It really is amazing to see how God once cared so carefully for Israel and it is a sure promise to them that they will again be cared for during the tribulation by His amazing grace.

It is those who take Jesus' advice in Matthew 24 and flee to the wilderness that will be safe. The rest, along with those Gentiles who are willing to seek Jesus, must endure the hardships.

¹⁶ Then Joseph said, “Give your livestock, and I will give you *bread* for your livestock, if the money is gone.”

This would be the sixth year of the famine as we'll be able to see later. In what is a wise decision for both Pharaoh and for the animals, Joseph proposes an exchange for their livestock. This includes any type of animal of the herd, such as horses, cows, goats, camels, donkeys, sheep, or whatever else.

The wisdom here is that if the people were short on food, they would feed themselves before their animals and the animals would die. But like the Flood of Noah, the animals are cared for in a unique way. There would be enough food in the royal storehouses to care for them while also increasing Pharaoh's wealth.

And the picture of the future tribulation period comes into focus here. In Revelation, it says that no one will be able to buy or sell anything unless they have the mark of the beast. But anyone who takes the mark of the beast can never be saved.

Therefore, in order to live, people will have to trade. Without money, it will be the only way to survive. What is being pictured is amazingly exact in concept.

¹⁷ So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them bread *in exchange* for the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herds, and for the donkeys. Thus he fed them with bread *in exchange* for all their livestock that year.

The exchange is made and the few possessions of value left to the people have become property of Pharaoh. We have to keep remembering that at this same time, Israel is in Goshen and they have maintained their flocks and are prospering.

The Egyptians are living on a subsistence diet and are doing so merely from day to day. At the same time, it is as if manna from heaven was falling on Israel as Joseph cared for his family.

The connection to Revelation needs to be stressed again. In Revelation 12 it says this,

"Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male *Child*. ¹⁴ But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵ So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. " Revelation 12:13-15

The connection to the dragon, also called the serpent, then needs to be made. Here are a group of believers, God's covenant people of Israel, being divinely protected by God just as Joseph cared for his family in Egypt. Isaiah ties the two together.

First at the end of Isaiah 26, we read this concerning the protection of the Israel during a time of the Lord's judgment on the earth -

"Come, my people, enter your chambers,
And shut your doors behind you;
Hide yourself, as it were, for a little moment,
Until the indignation is past.

²¹ For behold, the LORD comes out of His place
To punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity;
The earth will also disclose her blood,
And will no more cover her slain." Isaiah 26:20, 21

Then in the opening verse of Isaiah 27, it says this -

In that day the LORD with His severe sword, great and strong,
Will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent,
Leviathan that twisted serpent;
And He will slay the reptile that *is* in the sea. Isaiah 27:1

Leviathan is the serpent which represents the world's system of false religion which corresponds in the Old Testament to Egypt and Babylon. It is the power of the devil to bring that false religion into the world.

And this is certain because the term for serpent is *nakhash*, the same word used to describe the serpent in the Garden of Eden and thus the serpent found also in Revelation. What seems like a story about a famine in Egypt and the care of Israel during that famine is actually so much more.

It is the on-going biblical theme of good verses evil and how God works to protect His people while overcoming the evil that surrounds them. As we saw before from Ecclesiastes 3, God repeats history to show us that He is in complete control over it.

*Come and be safe in your chambers
Shut your doors behind you, keep them fast
Hide yourself from the outside dangers
Do this my children, until the indignation is past*

*For behold, the Lord comes out of His place
To punish those in the earth for their iniquity
The earth will disclose her blood, the murderous disgrace
And no more will she cover the slain of man's killing spree*

*In that day the LORD with His severe sword, great and strong
Will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent
Leviathan that twisted serpent who has deceived for so long
And He will slay the reptile in the sea; He shall not relent*

II. What are You Willing to Give to be Saved? (Verses 18-22)

¹⁸ When that year had ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, “We will not hide from my lord that our money is gone; my lord also has our herds of livestock. There is nothing left in the sight of my lord but our bodies and our lands.

This is now the ending of the sixth year and the beginning of the seventh year of the famine. Everything in Egypt has been reduced to poverty level, subsistence living. The money is gone, the animals have been traded away, and so there is nothing but their bodies and their lands to trade.

It's not at all unlikely and even probable that they actually owned their own lands. This is still only about 500 years after the flood. Shepherds would have roamed with their flocks living in tents and not making any claim to the land, and no claim would have been assumed under those conditions.

But the people who ventured into new lands and started breaking up the soil for harvesting crops would settle down and claim the land as their own. As no one owned it before they did, it would be considered open to the first who make a living off of it. The land would be assumed to be owned by them.

So this verse is perfectly likely at this time in Egypt's history. But now, the Nile had failed them, the earth was dry, and there was no relief from the famine except to give up their last remaining possessions - their lands, and even themselves. And so the difficult offer that must be made is now presented...

¹⁹ Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh; give us seed, that we may live and not die, that the land may not be desolate.”

The only option for them besides death is to give up everything they have and become servants of Pharaoh. And in exchange for this servitude, they ask for *seed*. If nothing else confirms the interesting analysis of the previous sermons concerning the words "grain" and "food" this verse does it.

As I said earlier, certain special words were used during the time leading up to the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers to describe the grain. Then once again in verse 14 one of the words was used one more time. But now, a completely different word is used, *zerah*, meaning seed, not grain.

It is speaking of the same thing in the same storehouses, but now it is no longer picturing what it did before. This is the amazing treasure of searching out individual words as nuggets of God's wisdom; they are sown everywhere throughout this beautiful book.

Zerah means seed; it is how life is transferred. It is the word, for example, which is used of the promised coming Messiah in Genesis 3:15 when speaking of the Seed of the woman. It is obvious what is being pictured here, these people must be willing to give their land, and even their very lives in order to live.

Jesus' words in Mark 8 exactly picture what is being relayed here. Remember, the church age is over and this is the final seven years promised to Israel and which comprise the tribulation period. People must endure to the end to be saved. Here are Jesus' words -

"When He had called the people to *Himself*, with His disciples also, He said to them, 'Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ³⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷ Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ³⁸ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.'"

-Mark 8:34-38

As the book of Revelation notes, many, many will be martyred for their faith in Christ, but for those who are, the second death, meaning the Lake of Fire, will have no power over them.

²⁰ Then Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh; for every man of the Egyptians sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. So the land became Pharaoh's.

This shows us with certainty that until this point, Pharaoh had no claim on the lands of the individuals. Only now has he consolidated his power and ownership entirely over the people and the lands. And all of this has been at the hand of Joseph.

Interestingly, this is also almost a mirror picture of what his name means. His name, Joseph, came from two words - *asaph*, to take away, and *yoseph*, to add. In one period of

seven years, he has taken away all of that which belonged to the Egyptians and has added it to Pharaoh's wealth.

But notice here, even though Canaan has been mentioned three times since verse 13, it is excluded from this verse. Canaan was never assimilated by the Pharaoh, thus allowing for the continuing plan of God to unfold exactly as it should in the future. And what this pictures is even more revealing.

The land of Canaan is God's land; He already owns it. The picture of Egypt being completely bought up by Pharaoh, shows the final and ultimate rule of God over the whole earth. This is seen throughout the Bible, such as this verse from Revelation 11:15-

"Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" Revelation 11:15

²¹ And as for the people, he moved them into the cities, from *one* end of the borders of Egypt to the *other* end.

Some versions read differently in this verse because they are based on a different set of source texts. Instead of "he moved them into the cities" they translate it as he made servants (or slaves) of them. This is certainly correct.

Why would this be important? Well, the reason is that for the Jews, saying that Joseph enslaved the people would make Joseph look bad and imply they are the descendents of someone who did this bad thing, but it is much more plausible that of the two, the wrong one is the one that says he moved them into the cities.

Instead, he brought them into servitude. Which, by the way, is exactly what they had agreed to in the first place. And as a confirmation of this we'll see in just a couple verses that they will pay rent for the land they live on.

²² Only the land of the priests he did not buy; for the priests had rations *allotted to them* by Pharaoh, and they ate their rations which Pharaoh gave them; therefore they did not sell their lands.

I can't help but see the verses from Revelation 5 reflected in this verse here in Genesis. While the world is being subjected to servitude, there is a group of people who are

exempt from that servitude. It includes the royalty and the priestly classes. Here is what it says in revelation 5 -

“You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,
¹⁰ And have made us kings and priests to our God;
And we shall reign on the earth.” Revelation 5:9, 10

As Joseph is in charge of both Pharaoh's house and the priests, having been married into the priestly class, this then shows us the authority of Christ as both our King and our High Priest.

III. Saved By Grace (Verses 23-26)

²³ Then Joseph said to the people, “Indeed I have bought you and your land this day for Pharaoh. Look, *here is* seed for you, and you shall sow the land.

We see now that it is the seventh year of the famine. Joseph was aware of the duration of the famine, the people weren't. But for him to tell them that they have seed to sow indicates that he knows the time for sowing has come.

Because Pharaoh now owns the land, Joseph would never tell them to sow into land that wouldn't produce a harvest and thus waste what Pharaoh owns. So it is certain that the famine is now ending just as Pharaoh has consolidated all of the resources and power of the land of Egypt.

This power will continue on for the next 200 years until Israel is freed from the land during the reign of a different Pharaoh who is destroyed by plagues of God at the Exodus. But this verse is also picturing the salvation of the people during the tribulation. Those who have given up everything have been given the seed. Their lives will continue. Again, the word *zerah*, seed, not grain, is used.

²⁴ And it shall come to pass in the harvest that you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh. Four-fifths shall be your own, as seed for the field and for your food, for those of your households and as food for your little ones.”

This is the same percentage that was bought up by Pharaoh during the seven abundant years before the famine. It was enough to save all the people, including Israel, and to make Pharaoh the absolute ruler of Egypt, the land of "double distress."

Now, using this one-fifth as their payment for renting the land owned by Pharaoh, he would continue to grow in wealth and power while the people would remain his indebted servants.

²⁵ So they said, "You have saved our lives; let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants."

Here is a perfect picture of Jesus. First they say "You have saved our lives." Thus Joseph was the savior of the people, both as his Egyptian name implied, and as the picture of Christ details. Next they say, "let us find favor in the sight of my lord."

The word for "favor" is the Hebrew word *khen*, grace. In essence, they are saying "by this grace we are saved." It is an affirmative statement that they were saved by him and that the salvation was by grace; it was completely unmerited.

And thirdly, they say that they will be Pharaoh's servants. This is how we become servants of God, through the saving grace of Jesus, pictured by Joseph. This picture is so exact of what is being anticipated, that it is amazing.

And finally, as a sort of confirmation of this, the law of the land is then enacted by Joseph as we see in our last verse of the day...

***²⁶ And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt to this day, *that* Pharaoh should have one-fifth, except for the land of the priests only, *which* did not become Pharaoh's.**

The number five, as we have seen many times so far in Genesis, is the number of grace. The entire account today has shown us grace. Pharaoh's house, as ruled by Joseph, hasn't done something overbearing or reprehensible towards the people of Egypt. Instead, he has saved many people alive through a great salvation.

And during the tribulation period, God's house, as ruled by Jesus, will make strict demands on the people, but these demands will be neither overbearing nor reprehensible. They will be the needed proofs that they would rather forsake all for Christ than die apart from Him.

This is the penalty on the world for not accepting Him before the rapture, but there will be grace for many, many who choose Christ. So that you can see the marvelous work of Christ for these people, we'll take a moment before we close to read a portion of Revelation 7 -

⁹ After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation *belongs* to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying:
"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom,
Thanksgiving and honor and power and might,
Be to our God forever and ever.
Amen."

¹³ Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"

¹⁴ And I said to him, "Sir, you know."

So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ¹⁵ Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. ¹⁶ They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; ¹⁷ for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Revelation 7:9-16

I know we've been a little long today, but what the Bible pictures about the future and what it tells us is coming will really happen. The saving message of the Bible is that Jesus loves us enough to keep us from eternal separation from the Father; from hell. And the Bible shows us that there is only one way this is possible. That is through Jesus Christ.

Closing Verse: *The people will curse him who withholds grain,
But blessing will be on the head of him who sells it. Proverbs 11:26*

Next Week: Genesis 47:27-31 (If I Have Found Grace in Your Eyes) (119th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Salvation Belongs to Our God

Now there was in all the land no bread
For the famine was most severe
So that the famine was very widespread
From Egypt to Canaan they languished, life were austere

And Joseph gathered up all the money
That was found in Egypt the land
And in the land of Canaan
For the grain which they bought from his hand

And Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house
So much there wasn't room even for a mouse

So when the money failed
In the land of Egypt and in Canaan the land
All the Egyptians came to Joseph and said
"Give us bread, or we are dead, please fill our hand

For why should we in your presence die?
For the money has failed, things have gone awry

Then Joseph said, "Give your livestock
And I will give you for your livestock bread
If the money is gone, we will use this instead

So they brought their livestock to Joseph
And Joseph gave them bread in exchange
For the horses, the flocks, the cattle of the herds
And for the donkeys who brayed on the range

Thus he fed them with bread in this time austere
In exchange for all their livestock that year

When that year had ended, again they cried

They came to him the next year and to him said
“We will not from my lord this thing hide
That our money is gone and we are almost dead

My lord also has our herds of livestock
There is nothing left in the sight of my lord
But our bodies and our lands
Now please hear our word

Why should we before your eyes be dead
Both we and our land, our options are so narrow
Buy us and our land for bread
And we and our land will be servants of Pharaoh

Give us seed, that we may live and not die
That the land may not be desolate
Because things have gone awry

Then Joseph bought all the land
Of Egypt for Pharaoh far and near
For every man of the Egyptians sold his field from his hand
Because the famine upon them was so severe

So the land became Pharaoh’s
And as for the people, to them he did attend
He moved them into the cities
From one side of the borders of Egypt to the other end

Only the land of the priests he did not buy
For the priests had rations to them by Pharaoh allotted
And they ate their rations which Pharaoh gave them
So they did not sell their lands where their homes were dotted

Then Joseph said to the people
“Indeed I have bought you and your land this day
For Pharaoh. Look, here is seed for you
And you shall sow the land in the following way

And it shall come to pass in the harvest

That you shall give one-fifth to Pharaoh
Four-fifths shall be your own to invest
As seed for the field, and for your food, and your pet sparrow

And for those of your households too
And as food for your little ones, this you shall do

So they said, "You have saved our lives
Let us find favor in the sight of my lord
And we will be Pharaoh's servants, we and our wives
To you we speak this committed word

And Joseph made it a law over the land
Of Egypt to this day
That Pharaoh should have one-fifth from every hand
Except for the land of the priests only, he did say

This did not become Pharaoh's land
It was given only into the priest's hand

As the leader of the land
Joseph tended to all the people well
They were cared for with food from his hand
While he also tended to the needs of Israel

In the same way, the Lord cares for each of us
Though at times we may face difficulty and trial
There is comfort always to be found in Jesus
And the tough times give way to a happy smile

Tender care for His sheep, this is the way of our Lord
He watches over us on our path as we walk along
And so much comfort is found in His word
To give our hearts a joyful song

Thank You Lord for the care you give to us
Thank You Lord, our precious Savior Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 47:27-31

(IF I HAVE FOUND GRACE IN YOUR EYES)

Introduction: In 1941, General Douglas MacArthur was the commander of the US Army Forces of the Far East. After the attack at Pearl Harbor, the United States entered the war. Following soon after that, the Japanese invaded the Philippines.

By February of 1942 just a short time after the US entered the war, the Japanese had such a hold on the Philippines, that President Roosevelt ordered MacArthur to relocate to Australia. Upon his arrival there, he made a promise to the people of the Philippines, "I came through and I shall return."

This wasn't taken too well by Washington and they asked him to amend his words to "we" instead of "I" but he refused. For almost four years, he led the army forces under him. Eventually, the overwhelming might of the United States military beat back the Japanese to the point where his promise could be fulfilled.

On 20 October 1944, he kept his promise to the people of the Philippines, arriving on the island of Leyte. While snipers were still active around the area, and with the sound of sporadic mortar fire ringing out, he asked for a landing craft. When one couldn't be secured, he waded off the boat, through the waters of Leyte and onto the beach.

In his prepared speech, he said "People of the Philippines: I have returned. By the grace of Almighty God our forces stand again on Philippine soil—soil consecrated in the blood of our two peoples. We have come dedicated and committed to the task of destroying every vestige of enemy control over your daily lives, and of restoring upon a foundation of indestructible strength, the liberties of your people."

For almost four full years, and through much death and destruction, the people of the Philippines awaited their deliverer. Even to this day, Douglas MacArthur is a hero to the people of the Philippines. He is held in extremely high honor for having kept his word to them.

In the first year of creation, man was attacked by a much harsher foe than the Japanese. The devil himself came against us and deceived us. Humanity was imprisoned and the devil became the ruler of this world. But the Lord God promised that He would return; a Deliverer would come and cast out the aggressor.

Text Verse: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 1 Peter 1:3-5*

Those in the Philippines were confident in MacArthur and his promises, and their confidence was rewarded. Those in this world who trusted the Lord God and had been confident in His word were also rewarded. The Messiah came and defeated the devil for any and all who call on Him.

The Messiah will come again and will rule some wondrous day. This is our hope and our expectation. It is a hope which is anticipated in today's five verses and one which will surely come about. God's wonderful plan of redemption is carefully recorded for us in His superior word. So let's turn to that word again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The days of Jacob, the Years of His Life (verses 27-28)

²⁷ So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen;

Exactly as was promised by Pharaoh to Joseph, the people of Israel were planted in Goshen. The name Goshen means "drawing near." Egypt in Hebrew is *mitzraim*, or "double distress." It is a picture of the gentile world, without God and without the covenant blessings.

At the same time, Israel is drawing near to its deliverance from the famine and from the exile from Canaan even though it will be a 215-year wait for it to be come about. There in this land of double distress, they will live and await their return to the land promised to them by God.

In a dramatic parallel to their situation, living in the land of distress, and yet secure in an open place, we read these words from the 118th Psalm which uses the word *metsar*, a shortened form of *mitzraim*, or Egypt -

"I called on the LORD in **distress**;

The LORD answered me *and set me* in a broad place." Psalm 118:5

The parallel is perfect to the picture in Genesis. This 118th Psalm is a song of deliverance centering on the work of the Messiah in bringing salvation to His people. It is an ideal reflection of the years ahead for Israel as they are delivered from the bonds of Egypt, which in itself is a picture of the greater deliverance of God's people from the bonds of the devil because of sin.

Everything about this time in Egypt and then the coming exodus is used to picture the incredible work of God for all people in His overall plan of redemption. One of the immediate advantages of God's plan in the journey to Egypt is that it kept the covenant people together.

If you go back through the previous 46 chapters of Genesis, there is a continual pattern of families separating. Cain was separated from his family after committing his wicked deed against Abel.

Noah and only seven family members were separated from the world they knew and their millions of extended family members as they ushered in a new life in a new age. Abraham was called out to a land he didn't know, from his family and his land.

Abraham and Lot separated because the land couldn't support them both. The same is true with Jacob and Esau. Others were separated for various reasons as well.

Isaac and Ishmael were separated by Abraham at God's direction to ensure Isaac remained the sole recipient of the covenant. Even for a time, Judah departed from his brothers and family and took up residence in Adullam and elsewhere. Had this continued, there would have been a breach in the cohesion of the family.

However, God intended for the sons of Israel to remain united as a clan in order to establish His purposes in leading to the Messiah. If Judah had remained apart from them, or if they later separated in any other way, they wouldn't have been able to assume control of the land of Canaan.

If they did separate, they would have divided into their own warring factions, something that will actually happen later in their history. What God did in bringing Israel to Egypt is ingenious. By directing the famine as He did, they had to remain together to keep the family alive.

Eventually, they were brought down as a group and placed in one location where they wouldn't be able to divide. As shepherds, they wouldn't be welcome anywhere else. And

in the location they were given, they could prosper and so have no need to move elsewhere.

Their growth then would necessitate not division, but rather even greater cohesion. The plan was ingenious. Eventually, this single and cohesive group would be brought out, as a unit, to receive the law and then be prepared to enter their promised possession.

Everything that seems random and arbitrary is exact, precise, and filled with more than just planning, but detailed pre-planning that could only have come from the divine Creator who is working out His plans within the framework of His creation. It is, to say the least, astonishing to see.

²⁷ (con't) and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly.

The multiplication of Israel seems baffling to many scholars. The Bible records a total of 75 people within the covenant community who came to Egypt and only one named daughter. And yet, within 215 years, this small group of people will total 603,550 fighting-aged men, along with women, children, and old folks.

The number will be actually then be between 2 and 3 million people. For this reason, many disbelieve the biblical account. However, this doesn't take into consideration many things. First, Jacob had lots of daughters, not one. Only one is recorded and the reason was given many long sermons ago.

In addition to this, there would have been multitudes of unnamed servants, along with their families, who came to Egypt with them. They could have numbered in the thousands at this time. And finally, there will be, according to Exodus 12:38, a mixed multitude who will depart with them.

These would have been assimilated into the records of individual tribes of the sons of Israel. This isn't without biblical support. In Ezekiel 47, for the people who join to Israel who dwell in the land, the Lord gives them this direction -

It shall be that you will divide it by lot as an inheritance for yourselves, and for the strangers who dwell among you and who bear children among you. They shall be to you as native-born among the children of Israel; they shall have an inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. Ezekiel 47:22

Regardless of the mixed multitude of the future though, in the immediate time while in Egypt, we are told that Israel multiplied exceedingly. It is a testament to God's hand upon them. They have been kept together, they have been given good land that produces much, and above all, they have His divine blessing upon them.

²⁸ And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years.

Jacob entered the land of Egypt in the year 2299AM at the age of 130. However, he continued on in Egypt for a total of 17 years. Interestingly, this is the same amount of time that he had with his son Joseph before he was sold off to the Egyptians by his brothers.

Like bookends on the span of Joseph's life until the death of Jacob, these two 17-year periods mean that in all, Jacob had 34 years with his beloved son. That is actually close to, maybe a bit more than, Mary had with her own beloved Son who, like Joseph, was given the title "The Savior of the World."

^{28 (con't)} So the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years.

vayhi yeme yaakov shene ha'yav (6:10) - "and the days of Jacob, the years of his life." Again the Bible records, as it will, *the days of the life* of the man. In other words, our lives are reckoned, not so much by decades or years, but by days which accumulate into years and decades.

It is our constant reminder that each day is our only day. The ones which are past cannot be re-collected and used again. And the ones which are future cannot be counted on to come. We are to live out our one day in the presence of God, hoping for another, but understanding that He has already numbered each and He may even today require our soul of us.

Jacob was born in the year 2169AM and his death at 147 years of age occurs in the year 2316AM. Jacob, who is Israel, lived seventy-seven years in the land of Canaan before moving to Padanaram where he stayed 20 years.

After that, he moved again to Canaan and lived there for thirty-three more. And finally, as directed by God, he moved once again from the Promised land to live his 17 final years in Egypt.

The events of the life of Jacob were used in a most astonishing way to reveal future events in the history of redemption. Only God who knows all things, including the future, could have so carefully woven the stories and their intended fulfillment together.

*I called on the LORD in my time of distress
The LORD answered me and set me in a broad place
He took from me the feelings of overwhelming duress
With comfort and hope, my fears he did erase*

*The Lord is on my side and so I will not fear
He has brought me safely through the days of my life
He has been with me year after year
Through times of trouble, hardship, and strife*

*And so the Lord I will glorify, and Him I will praise
With all of my heart and throughout eternal days*

II. If I Have Found Grace in Your Eyes (verses 29-30)

²⁹ When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him,

The Bible speaks particularly of two different types of death for the individual human. There is the death of the spirit which is separation from God, and there is the death of the physical body which is the end of this earthly life.

The first death, the spiritual death, is inherited but can be reversed. In an act of faith in God's provision through the work of Jesus Christ, man is regenerated in his spirit and this is eternal; it is being "born again." For those who are never "born again" the death of the physical body means that the spirit will never be received by God.

For those, the Bible gives a term - the Lake of Fire. This is the rewards for a self-inflicted wound which has never healed. And so a wise man made it very easy for us to remember the thought by giving us these words - "Born once, die twice; born twice die once." Jacob was born twice and he had no fear of passing over that great abyss of physical death.

And in an act of grace, God bestowed upon him the knowledge that his time on earth was coming to a close. The many stings of life would be behind him and only a blissful anticipation of eternal glory would remain.

His death then can't be seen as a type of punishment, but rather as a reward. The punishment would be continuing on in a life of ever getting older and more tired of useless days under the sun. Instead, Jacob's reward would be eternal life under the heavens.

Knowing that this time of passing was closing quickly upon him, we are told that he summoned his beloved son Joseph. This meeting, which is recorded in the Bible for us to participate in, is given for us to learn from. We are to hopefully gain both insight and wisdom as we read.

The ancient ritual has been passed on to us, the blessed recipients of witnessing a drama, not recorded with a video camera, but by the mind of God as a gift for us to share in.

²⁹ (con't) **“Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me.**

"Now if I have found 'favor' in your sight" is literally translated, "If now I have found 'grace' in your sight." This type of language is normally spoken of one who is in a subordinate position to one in a higher position, or one in need to one who possesses the ability to meet the need. The latter is the case here. Jacob has a need and he will make his request to one who can meet that same need.

In this request is seen a rite which is only the second, and the last time, such a rite is recorded in the Bible. When things are recorded only twice, we must ask, "Why?" And then we should determine what the significance of the occurrence is.

Both times they are noted, it is with the assumption that the one being charged understands already the significance of the rite. And so it is correct for us to infer that this was an ordinary custom of the times. And yet, it is a custom mentioned but two times. Why?

Anytime the number two is mentioned, or anytime something is recorded only twice, it is given to show us a contrast and yet, at the same time, a confirmation of something. Only twice in the Bible is someone asked to take off their shoes because the ground

where they are standing is holy.

Why only two times? Why the shoes? What is the contrast between the two events and what do they confirm. These are the questions we should continue to ask as we find these hidden treasures which are found in God's superior word.

And so, in order for us to the immediate significance of Jacob's request to Joseph, as well as the contrast and the confirmation of what it is picturing, we need to go back to the life of Abraham and read the only other time that this ritual is conducted. In Genesis 24, this is recorded -

"Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. ² So Abraham said to the oldest servant of his house, who ruled over all that he had, 'Please, put your hand under my thigh, ³ and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; ⁴ but you shall go to my country and to my family, and take a wife for my son Isaac.'"

-Genesis 24:1-4

Under the thigh is the source of man's posterity. It is where the life, or seed, continues on as a starting point to bring in the next generation of humanity. In Abraham and Jacob, it is the where the seed from which the Messiah would eventually come is derived, just as promised even to the first man and his wife; Adam and Eve.

Under the thigh is also where the covenant sign was given to Abraham; a sign which continued through to Jacob. It is the sign of circumcision. It is a picture of the cutting away of sin from man. It is a picture of Christ who was born of a woman, but not a man, thus cutting away the inherited sin-nature of man.

And under the thigh is the symbol of the man himself as the head and authority over his household and from whom his household is derived. Placing one's hand there in an oath is thus tantamount to professing surety of accomplishing the oath in reverence and allegiance to the superior who has requested it.

It is a picture then, ultimately, of the One from whom all life came. As Christ formed man and breathed into him the breath of life, to swear upon the man under the thigh is to invoke allegiance to the One from whom man originally came.

It is to this sacred spot that Jacob now asks for an oath from the ruler of the greatest country on earth. And yet, despite his exalted position, Joseph is subordinating himself in this act. First, having come from Jacob, and secondly having been asked to swear to him.

²⁹ (con't) **Please do not bury me in Egypt,**

The request is about his internment... It's not about something he hopes for in another, nor is it about something that will continue on the line of the people of Israel, or to usher in the Messiah. It is simply to not be buried in Egypt, the land of double-distress. It is not his home, nor is it where he wishes to be interred.

But dead is dead, is it not? So what difference does it make if he is interred in Egypt, in Canaan, or in Thailand. What possible difference could it make to Jacob after he is dead? In other words, this request must be a hope which somehow transcends this life.

³⁰ **but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place."**

Jacob is asking to be taken out of the land of double-distress, the land of Egypt, and to be buried with His fathers. He desires to be placed along with them in *their* burial place. In two more chapters, we will read the same charge being given to all the sons of Israel. There it will say -

"Then he charged them and said to them: 'I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite, ³⁰ in the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place. ³¹ There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah. ³² The field and the cave that *is* there *were* purchased from the sons of Heth.'"

-Genesis 49:29-32

The purchase of this cave is recorded in Genesis 23, and to understand fully the importance of it, one should go back and watch that sermon. It is where Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah were all buried.

Instead of being buried with his beloved Rachel, he asks to be buried there instead. It is a significant spot which looks forward to the resurrection of the righteous. It is to this location that he asks for his remains to be interred.

So what is the contrast between the two accounts - that of Abraham and this of Jacob? The contrast is that Abraham was pursuing an earthly bride for his son in order to continue on the *earthly* line which would lead *to the Messiah*. Jacob, on the other hand, was looking forward to a *heavenly* reward *from the Messiah* which would be realized in eternal life.

The first was in anticipation of the fulfillment of the *earthly* promises to the covenant people; the second is in anticipation of the fulfillment of the *eternal* promises to them. The first is earthly, the hope *of* the coming Messiah; the second is heavenly, hope *in* the coming Messiah. Further, Abraham's request was in Canaan, Jacob's was outside of Canaan. The God who monitors the oaths is not limited to a territorial border.

And thus, the contrast of the two accounts gives us the confirmation of God, in this beautiful treasure we call the Holy Bible, of His Son's authority over both the earthly and the spiritual realms; He is Lord of heaven and earth. He is the Creator, and He is the Redeemer.

He is the giver of life, and He is the One who decides its termination. And yet, He is in authority even over the man in death. In all things, He is supreme over the physical and the spiritual. The confirmation of the two accounts is Jesus, the Son of God and yet the Seed of the woman.

³⁰ (con't) **And he said, "I will do as you have said."**

anokhi e'e'seh khidbarekha (6:49) - "I will, according to your word." Without even a hint of questioning why, Joseph simply agrees to the request. The promise is made, and the commitment rests now upon his shoulders.

"What I have spoken, will come to pass." The guarantee is from the son. The guarantee is from Zaphnath Paaneah, the Savior of the World, and the guarantee is from the lord over Pharaoh's house.

And the picture is exact. The earthly promises to Abraham and his seed were confirmed in Jesus; the heavenly promises will be confirmed in Him as well. The guarantee is from

the Son; the guarantee is from the Savior of the World; and the guarantee is from the Lord over heaven's realm. The guarantee is . from . Jesus.

If you wondered why Jacob, who is actually the father of Joseph, would ask for grace in a matter, it is explained completely in the picture it reveals. We have a need, Jesus has the ability to meet that need. We don't come to Jesus and claim eternal life, we come to Him asking for His grace, and He is pleased to grant it - He can, and He will.

*Bury me with my fathers there in the cave
In the field of Ephron the Hittite which Abraham bought
And it is now the place of Abraham's grave
And Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah, and so too my burial plot*

*It is in the land promised to us by God
And this land of Egypt is not our home
Let it be temporary that here you do trod
But only to the Promised Land let your heart roam*

*Here we have no true rest, but pilgrims are we
And someday God will return us home to Canaan safely*

III. The Word of the Lord (verse 31)

***31 Then he said, "Swear to me."**

Jacob has had the assurance from Joseph that he will comply with his requests, but he goes further so that the matter cannot be revoked under any circumstances, by asking him to pronounce an oath about it. The word is binding when the word is spoken.

The word of the Lord which is recorded in the Bible is an oath. When God speaks, it is a vow in and of itself. Therefore, when we hear of a promise made by God, all we have to do is go to the word to find it confirmed.

We don't need to ask God to swear to His promise to grant us eternal life. His word confirms what He determines.

31 (con't) And he swore to him.

The one who vows is expected to perform. Jacob has not only asked the ruler of Egypt, but his own son to accomplish his vow. It is under the authority of Pharaoh and it is with the assurance of the son. In this sense, we find ourselves like Jacob.

We have been given a promise and it is under the authority of God Himself. The Son has spoken, He has given His assurances, and all we need to do is rest in them. Nothing else is needed because nothing greater can be obtained. The highest of all authorities will keep His word. We can rest in this.

^{31 (fin)} **So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed.**

To end the chapter, we read from the Hebrew text that Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed. In these five verses, he has been called Jacob twice and Israel twice. The two times he is called Jacob, it was speaking of his life - his number of years alive and his number of years in Egypt.

The two times he is called Israel, it was speaking of his approaching death and of his worship of God. There is Jacob the man of flesh and bones who walks the earth, and there is Israel who is dependent on, and in anticipation of, his God in heaven. The two contrast and yet they confirm the physical and spiritual man who fellowshiped with God.

According to the Hebrew text, this man of God bowed himself on the head of his bed. The implication is that he worshipped God as he bowed, acknowledging Him and giving Him thanks for the surety of the promise which was just made.

However, as happens from time to time, something comes up which throws a monkey wrench into our Bible knowledge. In the book of Hebrews, this event is recorded differently. There it says,

"By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff." Hebrews 11:21

Referring to two different incidents in one verse, it says that he "worshipped, leaning on top of his staff" rather than "bowed himself on the head of the bed." And this is how the original Greek translation of the Old Testament records it - staff rather than bed.

The difference between the Hebrew word for "bed," which is *mittah* and "staff," which is *matteh*, is only a few vowel points which didn't exist when the Bible was written. They were added later to help in pronunciation, word clarity, and comprehension.

The New Testament is what is correct here and when the scribes who inserted the vowel points did so, they did it probably to keep Jacob from looking as if he were using the staff as an idol. But if he were an old and feeble man, he would worship leaning on his staff simply to stay up. So, whichever is correct, what is implied is that Jacob was thanking and praising God for what has occurred.

This is where this account ends today. It is a story of anticipation concerning the promises of God. Jacob was looking forward to the Messiah and he was looking forward to the resurrection of the righteous to eternal life. Both have been anticipated since the fall of man, and both were still anticipated at his time.

But we... we are blessed in a way that he lacked. We have the knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have the surety that Messiah has come and that His work was sufficient to restore us to God and to make the hope of eternal life possible once again.

Like Jacob, whether on our bed, leaning on a staff, or jumping for joy at the wonderful work of Christ, we too can praise Him for His promises - because many promises are still to come. Our Lord has promised to return again and bring us unto Himself.

He has paved the way in His first coming and we will be carried along that avenue at the rapture when the reality of eternal life will be realized. But this reality, although offered to all, must be accepted in order to become reality.

Christ died for all - His atonement is unlimited in scope. However, it is limited in reality because we may choose to accept it or reject it.

Closing Verse: *For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Romans 14:7-9*

Next Week: Genesis 48:1-7 (Adoption as Sons) (120th Genesis Sermon)

On 2 September 1945, General Douglas MacArthur accepted the formal Japanese surrender aboard the battleship USS *Missouri*, thus ending World War II. After this, he

was named Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers and, for all intents and purposes, was the ruler of Japan during their transition to a democratic society.

Eventually during his command of the United Nations troops in Korea, and through a disrespect of the lines of authority established by the US Constitution, General MacArthur was relieved of his command and ordered home to the United States.

Unlike the sad end to an American hero, the rule and authority of Christ will never end. His throne is an eternal one and His promises to those who call on Him are sure and reliable. Christ has come, Christ will come again, Christ is Lord of heaven and earth!

And this Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Hope of Israel

So Israel dwelt in Egypt the land
In the country of Goshen willingly
And they had possessions there, they did expand
And grew and multiplied exceedingly
And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years
Behind him were the days of trials and tears
So the length of Jacob's life, a life of joy and cheers
Was one hundred and forty-seven years

When the time drew near that Israel must die
He called his son Joseph and to him said
"Now if I have found favor in your eye
Please put your hand under my thigh
Do this my son he pled, as I will soon be dead
And deal with me kindly and truly
Please do not in Egypt bury me

But let me with my fathers lie;
You shall carry me out of Egypt
And bury me in their interment place, after I die
And he said, "I will do as you have said."
I shall do for you this thing after you are dead

Then he said, "Swear to me." Yes he pled
And so to him he swore
So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed
In thanks to God whom he did adore
Jacob walked the earth as a man
Israel hoped in God in whom he did trust
And from the moment his life began
He was destined for more than just returning to dust

His hope like ours is in eternal days
A promise spoken by God in His word
Like Jacob then, let us fix our gaze
Upon Jesus, our life-giving Lord
In Him is found the source of life everlasting
The promise is more sure than anything at all
To Him let us all of our crowns be casting
And upon His glorious name let us call

Hosanna in the highest to Jesus our Lord
Praises, glory, and honor to the incarnate Word

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 48:1-7 (ADOPTION AS SONS)

Introduction: In the Bible, we see God's hand of providence over time and situation. As we live our lives, one of the common themes that we come to experience is the sudden death of those around us. The plans that were made, the decisions that are put off for later, and the hopes of the great vacation, wedding, or retirement all come to naught.

I type my sermons about seven weeks in advance and I do it for several reasons which I will not bore you with. The day that I began typing this one I learned that a friend had died. He was shot in the head... sudden and terminal. Two years earlier, he was shot in a gang-style raid. The girl he was standing next to was killed; he was shot twice but survived.

We met up with him at mission work that Saturday morning, still bloody and reeling from what happened. We talked with him about Jesus and he'd often come pray with us, but we could never pin down whether he accepted Him as Savior or not. If not, he probably thought he had all the time in the world. Javare was 26.

Unlike him, we see how God graciously granted others the ability to set their house and their affairs in order. These things met God's purposes for all of redemptive history that followed. King David, for example, though old and with a disease that never allowed him to get warm, was blessed to appoint God's choice of his sons, Solomon, to sit on the throne after him before he died.

Had this not occurred, a different, violent son, would have assumed the throne and Solomon would surely have been executed. But God's plans always prevail. After Solomon's ascension, we read this -

"Then the king bowed himself on the bed. ⁴⁸ Also the king said thus, 'Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, who has given *one* to sit on my throne this day, while my eyes see *it!*'" 1 Kings 1:47, 48

Today, we'll see a similar occurrence that happened many centuries earlier and which has shaped the history of the world in ways we cannot truly fathom. Today we will see Jacob's decision to adopt the sons of Joseph.

Text Verse: *“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me,
Because the Lord has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn,
3 To console those who mourn in Zion,
To give them beauty for ashes,
The oil of joy for mourning,
The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;
That they may be called trees of righteousness,
The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.” Isaiah 61:1-3*

The glory of God is the chief end of man and to give God glory is the reason for our redemption. The Bible shows us the plan to bring this about and it does so in order for us to give Him the glory He is due. Let's go to this precious and superior word now as we should all the days of our lives and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Your Son Joseph is Coming to You (verses 1, 2)

¹ Now it came to pass after these things

Context is king when reading the Bible. Many things are stated in an order which doesn't follow a chronological path and it is done for a reason. When passages are chronological, they will often be noted explicitly to highlight that fact. It is done here and it asks us to look back at what "after these things" means. Here is the last section we looked at -

So Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions there and grew and multiplied exceedingly. ²⁸ And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years. So the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years. ²⁹ When the time drew near that Israel must die, he called his son Joseph and said to him, "Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, ³⁰ but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and

bury me in their burial place.” And he said, “I will do as you have said.”³¹ Then he said, “Swear to me.” And he swore to him. So Israel bowed himself on the head of the bed. Genesis 46:27-31

The Bible then is highlighting the fact that after the arrangements for Jacob's burial were settled and a vow was made concerning them, the things we now read have come to pass. And the news is as one would expect from such a thought...

1 (con't) that Joseph was told, “Indeed your father *is* sick”;

In the previous passage, it was quite apparent that Jacob was on his way out. His strength would never return and the bed he was on would be his last, but his own father Isaac was blind and confined to his bed for more than 40 years and so, despite his old age and infirmity, he could have continued on for any amount of time.

But now, word is brought to Joseph that Jacob isn't just old and in bed, but he is sick. The word used is *kholeh*, a word which gives the sense of being worn out or quickly wearing out through sickness or aging. It is the certain sign in someone of Jacob's already advanced state that they will die soon.

1 (con't) and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

Jacob lived in Goshen and Joseph's home would have been near Pharaoh's. Because of his position and high status, the two sons would have lived there with him enjoying this high life. But like Moses later, it was understood by Joseph that nothing could substitute a walk with the Lord, not even all of the riches of Egypt.

As the Geneva Bible states it, "Joseph valued his children being received into Jacob's family, which was the Church of God, more than enjoying all the treasures of Egypt." And so again, like the many other bookends on the Egyptian years we've seen already, we have another set.

Those in the high life of Egypt - Manasseh and Ephraim at the beginning and Moses at the end. For them, there is a rejection of Egypt's high status, wealth, and honor, trading it for the sake of Christ. This is spoken of in Hebrews chapter 11 -

"By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God

than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶ esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward."

-Hebrews 11:24-26

What Moses is noted for in the Bible's hall of fame is what Manasseh and Ephraim are also faithful for. And so Joseph brings these sons probably for several reasons. First, because of the distance between their homes, this would probably be the last time they would see their grandfather.

Also, because this would be the last time they'd see him, whatever his words, if any, would be a memorial for the conduct of the rest of their lives. And finally, Joseph may have been concerned about their even being accepted into the family at all because they had been born to an Egyptian mother and raised apart from the rest.

Joseph may not have even considered the blessing that is coming and simply wanted them to be acknowledged as sons of the covenant people. They will be, but they will be given even greater honor than that. The grace of Jacob upon these two will be something that will affect humanity from this point on.

And it will be especially memorable for them because, unlike most paintings of this scene which show Jacob blessing two little boys, these sons of Joseph are already adults that are at least 19 and possibly older. We know this because it said in Genesis 41:50 these words –

"And to Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, whom Asenath, the daughter of Poti-Pherah priest of On, bore to him."

Jacob arrived in the second or third year of the famine at the age of 130 and now he is 147. Those 17 years, plus the first years of the famine before his arrival make them at least 19 years old, probably older. They are old enough to understand what will happen and the great honor which will be bestowed upon them.

² And Jacob was told, "Look, your son Joseph is coming to you";

The message from Jacob's house had been received and the messenger now passes back to Jacob the news of Joseph's coming. Joseph probably told him that he would come immediately because the response by Israel is also immediate...

^{2 (con't)} and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed.

There is the sudden change in one verse from the name "Jacob" to the name "Israel." As we have, and will continue to see in the Bible, there is Jacob, the man of flesh and bones. He is weak in his spirit, he is weak in his body, he is troubled in his mind.

And then, there is Israel. It is he who strives with God, who proclaims His name, and who relies on Him for his strength and his speech. When Jacob speaks, it is as Jacob the man. When Israel speaks, it is for his God and under His inspiration.

It is reflective of you, and it is reflective of me as we live in our body of flesh or live in the Spirit that God has granted. It is the constant struggle that we face from moment to moment, relying on ourselves or relying on God. Israel now strengthens himself and sits up on his bed.

*Jacob is a man who speaks the words of men
He lives in uncertainty and is weak in body and mind
He walks through this world fearful of the day when
His time will end and he will face death unkind
Israel is he who strengthens himself in his God
He relies not on self but in the eternal hope, ever so sure
Each step that he takes is a part of his faithful trod
He knows that living in Christ is how he will endure*

*These two facets of the same person we see
Are reflective of ourselves as on this earth we live
We can worry and fret, or we can trust Christ implicitly
And all our cares and woes to Him we can give*

*Better we live in the Spirit and in the power of God
Than to fumble and fall as on this earth we trod*

II. The Blessing of God Almighty (verses 3 & 4)

³Then Jacob said to Joseph: "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me,

Without considering what is coming, the details that Jacob now relates to Joseph seem out of place. Instead of just saying what's on his mind, he gives a history lesson from his life. But in the context of the coming blessing, this is exactly what needs to be said.

When we want to convince someone of the effect of Jesus in our lives, we often tell about the changes that have arisen. When we want to console someone who is in a pit of despair, we remind them of the promises God makes to them in His word.

And when we speak at a funeral, if there is any hope for the departed loved one in Christ, we remind those around the casket of the promises that Jesus Christ has made concerning the resurrection and the hope of eternal life.

These are the things we do in order to establish a baseline for the words which are to follow. Words of comfort which are not grounded in reality, are merely deceptive words. Words of hope which have no basis except in delusion are words which are really only hopeless. Words of promise which cannot be fulfilled are merely lies.

And so, in order to establish that what he will convey is something which is based both in reality and in the sureness of God's capable hands, he imparts his brief lesson which comes from his own past. He tells his beloved son that God Almighty appeared to him at Luz in the land of Canaan, and there he blessed him.

Actually, God appeared to Jacob twice in the same spot. The first time was in Genesis 28 as he fled to Mesopotamia from the anger and threats of his older brother Esau. The second time was after his return to Canaan after being reconciled to Esau. The time that is being referred to here is the second time.

Although the same basic promises were made to him both times, the name God Almighty, or El Shaddai, was only used by God of Himself in the second visitation, not the first. But what is curious is that Jacob calls the name of the place Luz, not Bethel.

Luz was the original name of the location, but Jacob renamed it Bethel after his blessing. Instead of the pronounced name, he reverts to the original one. This asks us to consider its meaning once again.

The word Luz comes from a verb which means "to turn aside" in a negative way - such as turning away from wisdom or being a twisted person. Therefore, Luz was named after a "crooked and perverse generation" that lived there.

Luz then is a picture of the earth which started off sweetly and became bitter. However, God has a plan to restore the world to idyllic conditions. What man corrupted, God will purify. What was made bitter will again be sweet. This is why Jacob calls the place Luz, not Bethel.

The words he will speak to his son and his grandsons are intended to be used as a part of that plan where man moves from the crooked and perverse world to the sweet and purified House of God. As always, the Bible is returning us to think on the plan of redemption and to the Person of Jesus.

It is the Lord and His promises that are being brought to memory to instill in the minds of these sons that they have more than an earthly responsibility, but they have - and they will be a part of - a heavenly hope. And this hope is seen in the words of God Almighty to his servant Jacob as we see in verse 4...

⁴ and said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.'

Jacob pulls out only a part of the blessing that was pronounced upon him by El Shaddai. Here is what was said by God to him in Genesis 35 when the pronouncement was made-

⁹ "Then God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Padan Aram, and blessed him. ¹⁰ And God said to him, "Your name *is* Jacob; your name shall not be called Jacob anymore, but Israel shall be your name." So He called his name Israel. ¹¹ Also God said to him: "I *am* God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. ¹² The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you; and to your descendants after you I give this land." (9-12)

From this blessing Jacob focuses on the fruitfulness of the spiritual heritage, the increase in descendants, and the land promise as an everlasting possession. In this then we have a foreshadowing of the blessing that will be given to his two grandsons. He is selecting his words in anticipation of that momentous event.

*Then God appeared to Jacob again
When from Padan Aram he came
And blessed him right there and then
And God said to him, "Jacob, about your name..."*

*"Your name is Jacob, as you know
Your name shall not be called Jacob anymore
But Israel shall be your name, this I bestow
So He called his name Israel, a name of good report*

*Also God said to him: "I am God Almighty, it is true
Be fruitful and multiply as I have now said
A nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you
And kings shall come from your body in the years ahead*

*The land which to Abraham and Isaac I gave
I give to you, it is your inherited right
And to your descendants after you, this road I pave
I give this land, and I do so with delight*

*Then God went up from him in the place
Where He talked with him, there to his face*

Calling the past to mind is a way of testifying to the promises of the future. If the promise is from God, then it is more sure than the ground beneath our feet. Jacob calls the promises of God to attention so that his next actions will cement the future of the two boys he will now adopt as his own.

As a side note to this verse, the Geneva Bible footnotes the word "everlasting possession" and says this - "Which is true in the carnal Israel until the coming of Christ, and in the spiritual forever."

If you wonder what that means, they are saying that the promise of an everlasting possession is only truly fulfilled in a spiritual sense. In other words, they felt that what God had promised in this land-grant applied to the church spiritually, not Israel actually.

They failed to understand at their point in history that Israel was actually only under temporary, not permanent punishment. This misunderstanding is carried on even today in a large portion of the churches and denominations of the world. What we failed to see in the past has become immovable blinders in the present.

But there have been those who wondered even as early as the 1800s if this idea was wrong. The Jamieson-Faucett-Brown commentary on this verse says these words - "Whether these words are to be viewed in a limited sense, as pointing to the many centuries during which the Jews were occupiers of the Holy Land, or whether the words bear a wider meaning and intimate that the scattered tribes of Israel are to be reinstated in the land of promise, as their 'everlasting possession,' are points that have not yet been satisfactorily determined."

Since that was written, the points *have been* satisfactorily determined. What God has shown us in the many pictures in Genesis has been proven in the reality of the present. God is God and we must trust that His words are more than spiritual in this matter.

They are based in the reality of His covenant to Israel, in the typology of the book of Genesis, and in the prophetic utterances which permeate the Old Testament. The land is given to Israel and they are back in the land for His purposes.

III. The Sons of Israel (verses 5-7)

⁵ And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine;

Anyone?... In verse 1 It said that Joseph "took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim." Now the names are reversed by Jacob. Manasseh was the oldest and so verse 1 records them in birth order, but now Jacob has given Ephraim preeminence.

What has occurred in this verse is the highest honor that could have been bestowed upon both Joseph and upon his sons. It is known that the sons of Israel are the covenant people. Unlike all of the preceding generations where one person was selected and highlighted, each of the sons of Israel are a part of the covenant line.

And so this adoption moves Ephraim and Manasseh to an equal footing and position with the others as redemptive history will continue to unfold. But, already there is an indication of supremacy within the adoption.

Ephraim being named before his older brother is a divine hint of what will become a reality before their meeting is ended. And this point of supremacy will continue throughout the many long years of Israel's history. No word is without meaning and even their placement unfolds pictures of God's workings in marvelous ways.

^{5 (con't)} as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

What the Hebrew literally says is "*Ephraim and Manasseh as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be to me.*" By elevating them to positions of his own sons, he has elevated Joseph among all of them. Joseph, in essence, receives a double inheritance and thus the birthright of land.

This should have gone to Reuben as the oldest, but he forfeited his right to it by sleeping with Jacob's wife Bilhah. This will continue to be recorded in their historical documents as late as the book of 1 Chronicles. In 1 Chronicles 5:1, 2 it says -

"Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he *was* indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright..."

Instead of him, Joseph is given the inheritance birthright which consists of a double-portion of the assets of the departed. He also again elevates Ephraim over Manasseh - *Ephraim and Manasseh as Reuben and Simeon*, he says. Despite this though, the right to rule, the obedience of the brothers, and the Savior Himself, Jesus Christ, will come through Judah, not Joseph.

What this means for the two brothers though is that they are expected to leave the high life of Egypt and be united with Israel in their inheritance. The importance of their age being 19 or older as I said earlier is that they are old enough to decide what they will do.

History bears out that they agreed with the adoption, accepted the covenant inheritance, and became united to their people Israel. They made what is the wisest choice of all. Matthew Henry eloquently states it this way -

"Those are worthy of double honour, who, through God's grace, break through the temptations of worldly wealth and preferment, to embrace religion in disgrace and poverty. Jacob will have Ephraim and Manasseh to know, that it is better to be low, and in the church, than high, and out of it."

The highest honor isn't wealth, fame, or riches. Rather the highest honor is to be united to the Lord and to the covenant people of God, be they rich or be they poor by the world's standards. This is the high honor that we today in the church possess. Because of Jesus Christ, we are adopted children of God.

In this adoption by the father of the sons of his son, we see a picture of our own adoption to God because of our position in Christ - an adoption which is explained in Hebrews chapter 2 -

"For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren,¹² saying:

'I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.'

¹³ And again:

'I will put My trust in Him.'

And again:

'Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.'" Hebrews 2:11-13

God gave children to Jesus Christ and thus we are called sons of God. This is why such detail and specificity is given in these verses. It is pointing to how God works within humanity to bring many sons to glory. Because of Christ, pictured here by Joseph, we are given an eternal inheritance among the people of God.

⁶Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance.

There is no indication in the Bible as to whether Joseph had more sons or not. If he did, they were reckoned as his and were named under their brothers for inheritance purposes. They couldn't be listed directly under Joseph, because Joseph's inheritance went to Ephraim and Manasseh.

And so, if he had any other boys, he would have had to name them under one son or another and they and their families would be assimilated into their tribes.

*** ⁷ But as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died beside me in the land of Canaan on the way, when *there was* but a little distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."**

This is one of those surprising verses that pops up in the Bible from time to time. For what seems no reason at all, and which becomes a verse almost beyond commentary within the context of the passage, Jacob recounts the death of his beloved wife and Joseph's mother, Rachel.

One has to ask, "*What* does this have to do with the adoption of the sons or anything else that has come about in the previous six verses?" The only connection that comes to mind is that Jacob is tying the death of Rachel to the adoption of Joseph's sons because her child bearing days were cut short.

Because of this, and because he is the son of his wife-by-choice, the elevation of Ephraim and Manasseh to this status is the granting and acknowledgement of his

birthright. But this still doesn't explain why he used so many words, names, and places to make the point.

Because of this selection, despite being called the 12 tribes of Israel, there are technically 14 sons, and the twelve tribes are listed with several variations of the 14 names all the way to Revelation. This then is also parallel to the 14 named apostles of the Bible.

There were the original 12 and then after the suicide of Judas, Matthias was named in Acts 1, and later Paul was chosen by the Lord. It's interesting in its pattern, but it still doesn't explain this verse and all its words. However, among other things it is the reason why he named Ephraim first before his older brother.

Ephraim and Ephrath are basically the same word. The *im* at the end of Ephraim merely makes it plural. Because of the connection between the place of death of his beloved wife, which he mentions twice, and the name of Joseph's son, he may have decided that he would elevate him above Manasseh.

But even that only makes the rest of the verse more peculiar. Why did he mention Padan, why Canaan, why the distance to Bethlehem? Unless he was prophesying by the Spirit, it doesn't really make sense. And so, we will now evaluate the entire sentence word by word to see what God is telling us.

Padan comes from a verb *pada* which means "Ransom." This word is used 11 times in the Bible. This is the last, but it is the *only time* out of all 11 where it is used alone. The other ten times it is called Padan Aram.

Rachel means "Ewe" as in a ewe lamb. It is the same word used when speaking of Jesus in Isaiah 53 which says -

"He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a **sheep** before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth." Isaiah 53:7

The next word of interest is translated "beside" here. Jacob says, "Rachel died beside me." Scholars argue over what he is saying. Some say, "at my side," others "near me," and others "to me" whereby they mean, "this happened to me" and so on.

However, a guy named Lunge says "for me." And his reason is that it is "in the sense of sharing with me my toils and perils, and so bringing on herself the deadly travail which cut her off." Sounds like Jesus, doesn't it? This is what the picture we will see shows us.

After this, Canaan is named. This comes from the verb *qana* which means "humbled," "subdued," or "lowly." The HAW Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament says, "It denoted bringing a proud and recalcitrant people or spirit into subjection." Sounds like those who call on Christ, doesn't it?

The name *Ephrath* - means both "ash heap" and "place of fruitfulness." Jacob says this name twice in the same sentence. Because he does, the name Ephraim comes to mind, being the plural of Ephrath. Both translations, ash heap and place of fruitfulness then are implied in him using it twice.

After this an unusual word is used, *kivrat*. It is translated as "a little distance." This is derived from the surrounding text, but the actual meaning is the opposite. The term *kivrat erets* in this verse means "much of land." It's used only three times in the Bible and, surprisingly, it comes from a word which means "long ago" or "a great while."

And finally, the verse mentions Bethlehem which means "House of Bread."

All of this wording in a sentence which doesn't even seem to belong in the train of thought! God must be telling us again about the work of His Son as He has so many times before. Taking everything I just explained, we come up with the following thought concerning Jacob, who is Israel -

"But as for me, when I came from the place of ransom, the Lamb died for me, in my place, in the land of the humbled on the journey when there was a long distance to the place of fruitfulness and I buried the Lamb in the place of ashes, the land of affliction when sin was judged in the Lamb. That is where the house of bread is."

If you can see it, this is Israel's future acknowledgment of Jesus and his work. In our last 60 sermons, all of the many pictures of Jacob's life, which showed the history of redemption next moved into the pictures of Joseph's life.

They focused mostly on the separation between Joseph and his brothers which pictured the separation between Jesus and Israel. A separation which has lasted now for over 2000 years. For Jacob, everything led to that wondrous moment when he cried out, "Joseph my son is still alive."

At that moment, he was revived in his spirit. It is the moment of Israel's collective return to God's covenant graces. Jacob, picturing the corporate body of Israel, has in this one verse given us a snapshot of that acknowledgement. With this in mind, we will be able to better understand the blessing we will see in the weeks ahead upon Ephraim and Manasseh.

Everything in these stories points to the work of Jesus Christ in history. Every word has developed into thousands of pictures of Him. It is Jesus Christ that God wants us to focus on, to listen to, to cherish, and to exalt. It is all about Jesus Christ our Lord.

And there is a time which is future to us now when Israel will call out to Jesus and be saved. This one verse here is a recount of that. All of redemptive history is, in our lifetime, moving toward that point. Jacob's words here, once again confirm what is happening in our world today.

Closing Verse: *Let the blessing come 'on the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.'
17 His glory is like a firstborn bull,
And his horns like the horns of the wild ox;
Together with them
He shall push the peoples
To the ends of the earth;
They are the ten thousands of Ephraim,
And they are the thousands of Manasseh."* Deuteronomy 33:16-17

Next Week: Genesis 48:8-16 (By Faith Jacob...) (121st Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Adopted as Sons

Now it came to pass after these things
That Joseph was told, "Indeed your father is sick"
And he took with him his two sons
Manasseh and Ephraim, he had to be quick

And next we learn Jacob was told
"Look, your son Joseph is coming to you"

And Israel strengthened himself, though he was old
And sat up on the bed with strength anew

Then Jacob said to Joseph
“God Almighty to me at Luz appeared
In the land of Canaan
And blessed me, as I in holy awe feared

And said to me, ‘Behold
I will make you fruitful and multiply you also
And I will make of you a multitude of people
And give this land you have come to know

To your descendants after you
As an everlasting possession
The words I speak are forever true
And now your two sons
Ephraim and Manasseh, names you did assign
Who were born to you in the land of Egypt
Before I came to you in Egypt, are mine
As Reuben and Simeon are sons to me
They shall be mine, this is my decree

Your offspring whom you beget, any others
After them shall be yours, have no fears
They will be called by the name of their brothers
In their inheritance throughout all future years
But as for me when I came from Padan
Rachel died beside me
In the land of Canaan

On the way, when there was but
A little distance to go to Ephrath, she my precious gem
And I buried her there
On the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)

The adoption of the sons of Joseph as we are shown
Gives insights into how God deals with us
God has also taken us for His own

When we call on the name of His Son, Jesus

Though undeserved we are saved by His grace
And we are brought into His family care
Forever, because of Jesus we shall see God's face
In the marvelous New Jerusalem when we arrive there
Hallelujah to the Lamb of God who prevailed o'er the grave
Through His wondrous work, Jesus is capable to save

So call on Christ as Lord and be reconciled to God
Be at peace with Him from now through all eternity
First as on this world and in this life we trod
And next in His glorious presence before the glassy sea

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 48:8-16 **(BY FAITH JACOB...)**

Introduction: Take a second and think... what is it that you believe is your greatest achievement that you will be rewarded for by Jesus. Romans 14:10 says that we're all going to stand before Him at the judgment. In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul says that our foundation is Jesus Christ. He then goes on to say this:

"Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, ¹³ each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. ¹⁴ If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire." 1 Corinthians 3:12-15

So again, the question is, what do you feel you will be most rewarded for? What is it that pleases God the most? Is it how much money you gave to the church or charities? Is it how many times you read the Bible? Is it whether you kept the speed limit all your life? What thing or things do you think God is most pleased with.

The answer is so basic, so seemingly unimportant in our world, and so simple that we tend to skip right over it. And yet, it is the thing the ancients were most noted for, and it is the thing which allows us access into heaven itself. It is simple faith. Today, we will see Jacob's greatest act of faith, which is recorded in a few short verses which seem to have nothing to do with faith.

It is a beautiful passage which is deep in its theological significance.

Text Verse: *...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1, 2*

Hebrews chapter 11 details the faithful actions of God's people and it shows us those things with which God is most pleased. Then, at the beginning of the 12th chapter we are asked to follow suit with them, laying aside everything that could weigh us down and to focus our eyes on Jesus.

If we pursue this end with all of our souls, this will be the thing we are most noted for when we stand before Him as we receive our rewards. It is all about Jesus and we are asked to place all of our faith in Him. And He is to be found in His superior word, so let's go to that word now and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Sons Whom God has Given Me (verses 8-11)

⁸Then Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said, "Who *are* these?"

In verse 10, we'll see that Jacob, who is now an old man, has eyes that are so dim that he can't tell who is near him any longer. He has been in a conversation with Joseph while the his two sons stood silently and listened. Now, after having explained to Joseph why he wanted to adopt his sons into the family, he asks about the two who came with him.

Rather than Joseph being the one to introduce them first, he waited for Jacob to ask about them. They could have been friends from the royal court, royal bodyguards, Joseph's chariot men, or anyone else. Israel didn't know, and so he now asks about them.

Not recognizing them is important, because it shows that his desire to adopt Joseph's sons wasn't simply based on sudden affections for them when they came with Joseph. Instead, it is something he had already decided on apart from any impulsive tugging of his heart strings. God has placed this in his heart for His reasons and Jacob was following through with the Spirit's prompting.

⁹And Joseph said to his father, "They *are* my sons, whom God has given me in this *place*."

His response is given as a confirmation of what Israel said earlier in verse 5 -

"And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, *are* mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine."

The sons born to him in Egypt before the arrival of the family are the sons who are now presented to him. And in credit to Joseph's character, which has been exceptional

throughout the narrative of his life, he recognizes that it was God who gave him those sons.

The obvious directed care of his life, from the beginning even to this point shows more than luck or happenstance. Everything that happened to him has been a result of God's attention to him as he has directed him.

If this is true with the many personal details of his rescue from the pit, his being sold to an Egyptian noble, the timing of his stay in prison which led to his being brought before Pharaoh, and everything else that has happened, then it must also be true with the granting of his sons.

In faithful acknowledgment of that, he credits God with their bestowal upon him. And the concept is borne out in the psalms with these words -

Behold, children *are* a heritage from the LORD,
The fruit of the womb *is* a reward.

⁴ Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So *are* the children of one's youth.

⁵ Happy *is* the man who has his quiver full of them; Psalm 127:3-5

^{9 (con't)} **And he said, "Please bring them to me, and I will bless them."**

Of all of the acts of Jacob's life that are recorded, beginning at his birth in chapter 25 and continuing until his death in chapter 49 - a life which encompasses more detail than any other person in Genesis, this act that he is about to engage in, in conjunction with something he previously requested, is what he is highlighted for in Hebrews 11.

There in the great hall of faith of the Bible, this is what is remembered of this man of God –

"By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff." Hebrews 11:21

The blessing of his sons and the worshipping on his staff are noted as his greatest moments of faith. And they are reversed in Hebrews. The worshipping was seen at the end of the previous chapter after he had been given the promise by Joseph that he would be buried with his fathers in Canaan.

Now in this chapter, the blessing of the sons is given, but it is highlighted first by the author of Hebrews. One must ask, "What is it that makes this such a momentous event that it is singled out as his greatest act of faith?" Is it that he blessed them? Is it what the blessing said? Is it the unusual manner in which he will bless them?

Why did the author of Hebrews decide on this as his greatest act of faith? To understand, we have to go back to Hebrews 11:1 and read the Bible's definition of faith-

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."
-Hebrews 11:1

The answer isn't found in the act of the blessing. That is present and tangible reality to Jacob. As he blesses, the act is performed. However, the words *of the blessing* and *the way* the blessing is conducted are in anticipation of the future. Combined, they form this great culminating moment in the life of Israel.

This man spoke with God personally several times. He wrestled with Him in the night. He held the covenant blessings and inherited all of the possessions of his fathers before him. He beheld his son Joseph whom he believed to be dead and who had become the savior of the known world.

He had even acknowledged God's blessing upon his life in all ways. But it was the *unknown future* which he spoke of and acted towards that God found pleasing in His sight. This is what we should learn, if nothing else, from what Hebrews 11 says about Jacob.

The greatness of the man wasn't credited by God because of any of the many things which occurred *during* his life, but for his faith in the things coming *after* his life. This is what God was pleased with in Jacob and it shows us what God will be pleased with in us.

The things we do may be right and noble - helping others, donating to support your church, taking care of God's world as you pass through it. These are good and right things to do, but what God is most pleased with are the not the things you *can see and act upon*, they are the things you *cannot see and yet you put your faith in*.

And those things must... must be centered on Jesus Christ for them to be reckoned as worthy of note in God's sight. All of this history of Jacob, all of his acts and blessings, all of his interactions with God, and yet his faith in the future is what he is noted for.

After Jacob's dies, it won't be until the time of Moses that another person receives such remarkable detail concerning his life and his deeds, but it is only his faith that is singled out for note. Don't forget this lesson. Your faith is of great value in the sight of God.

*Without faith it is impossible to please God
And so He seeks those who will simply believe His word
And those who cherish and love Him with each step they trod
Who accept the gift of His Son, Jesus our Lord*

*It is these with whom God is pleased
And upon them His favor will last for all eternity
Through the blood of Christ, God's wrath has been appeased
And with His Spirit we are sealed, our pledge of surety*

¹⁰ Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see.

This is reminiscent of Jacob's own father Isaac. In Genesis 27:1 we read this about him prior to the bestowal of his blessing -

"Now it came to pass, when Isaac was old and his eyes were so dim that he could not see, that he called Esau his older son and said to him, "My son." And he answered him, 'Here I am.'" Genesis 27:1

There is a difference though. In Isaac's case, the word translated as dim is *kahah*, dark. His eyes had lost their light and he was unable to see because of it. In Jacob's case, the word is *kaved*, heavy. His eyes were poor and vision was strained so that it was difficult to see.

As has been the case many such times so far, and as will continue throughout the Bible, when two things which are similar are noted, it is to show us both a contrast between the two, and a confirmation of something. In the case of Isaac's blessing upon his son, the Lord had spoken to Rebekah before their birth with these words -

"Two nations *are* in your womb,
Two peoples shall be separated from your body;
One people shall be stronger than the other,
And the older shall serve the younger." Genesis 25:23

In contrast, God's plans were accomplished *through* Isaac's blindness. It was *because* of his infirmity that the prophecy was fulfilled. In the case of Jacob however, we will see that it is *despite* his infirmity that God's will is accomplished.

In confirmation, these two accounts demonstrate God's sovereignty over time and circumstance, as well as over human choice. This doesn't mean free will is excluded, but that God uses our free-will choices to direct his ultimate purposes.

We can't say that free-will was excluded in Isaac's blessing since he couldn't see, because Jacob and Rebekah exercised free will in order to deceive him. If free-will were excluded, the fault would have to be credited to God and that is certainly not the case.

Thus as I said, God's sovereignty is the confirmation between these two accounts. One is in Canaan; one is in Egypt - He is sovereign over all the earth. One shows a voluntary blessing over the wrong son which turned out to be the correct one to bless.

One shows a voluntary blessing over the right son; who is perceived to be the wrong son. Despite the contrasts, they confirm God's sovereign hand over every aspect of every situation that arises. In other words, God is in complete control over even the things we think are out of His control.

^{10 (con't)} **Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them.**

We need to remember that these two sons are around 20 years old. They aren't little children, and yet they allow their father to direct them, and guide them. In this tender moment, Jacob kisses the two boys. In all of the accounts of his life, Jacob is only noted as bestowing kisses three times.

The first time was when he deceived Isaac and kissed his father before receiving his blessing. The second time was when he first met his beloved Rachel and kissed her. And now this time, when he kisses his two grandchildren, descendants of Rachel and those who will be included in the covenant blessing received from Isaac.

It isn't coincidence that only these three instances are recorded. Others are noted as kissing him, like his father in law Laban and his brother Esau, but out of certainly many kisses he bestowed in his long life, only these three accounts are given. They tie the life of Jacob together into a picture of God's sovereignty and His grace.

¹¹ And Israel said to Joseph, "I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!"

It was a gap of more than 20 years that Jacob thought his son was dead. Never in his wildest imagination did he expect to see him again. But God had different plans and they were reunited. And even more, he now beheld the sons of his lost son as well.

However, though being translated as "sons" or "children" by some, the word Israel uses is *zarekha*, "your seed." And there is a reason for this which goes back to the promise to Abraham. He was told he would be the father of many nations and that through his seed, the nations of the earth would be blessed.

Paul builds on this in the New Testament and says that we are sons of Abraham by faith in Jesus Christ. Joseph has pictured Christ married to a gentile bride. Those sons of his are being adopted into the commonwealth of Israel by Jacob, but they are already Abraham's descendents because of Joseph's lineage.

This then is reflected in the letter to the Hebrews. Listen to how closely the words there reflect what we see in Joseph picturing Christ and his sons picturing gentile believers who are the seed of Abraham by faith in Christ. The parallel is exact -

"Here am I and the children whom God has given Me." ⁴ Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. ¹⁶ For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham. Hebrews 2:13-14

The author of Hebrews is writing to the Hebrews, but he is including all of Abraham's descendents in his letter. This adoption by Jacob pictures our adoption into the commonwealth of Israel because we are sons of Abraham by faith in Christ.

*Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord
The fruit of the womb is truly a reward*

*Like arrows in the warrior's hand
So are the children of one's youth
Happy is the man with a quiver so grand
Children of wisdom, obedience and truth*

*Imagine the multitude of Abraham's seed!
How pleased Father Abraham must be
God has done a most glorious work indeed!
By faith in Christ we are adopted into his family tree*

II. Led By the Spirit (verses 12-14)

¹² So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth.

After Jacob bestowed his affections on his grandchildren, Joseph conducted them out of the way in order to provide a clear path between himself and his father in order to humble himself before him. This is a demonstration of the immense respect seen often in the father/son relationship found in the Bible.

Joseph surpassed his father in worldly greatness, wealth, and honor, and yet he humbles himself before Israel prior to the bestowal of the blessing. Thus he is acknowledging that inclusion of his sons into the family as equals is greater than any other honor he possessed and it is the highest he could receive.

¹³ And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought *them* near him.

This is the first time in the Bible the position of the *right hand* is noted as the preeminent position. It will be noted many times after this. Only one blessing is given, but a distinction is made between the right and the left. The one blessing actually becomes two.

If there were only one person, one or both hands would still transfer only one blessing, but when two are present, the right hand is shown to be the one of greater note. Joseph knows this and so he is purposely placing them in birth order to allow the older to receive the higher conferral.

Because of what happened between Jacob and Esau 70 years earlier when Isaac blessed the wrong son, the Bible is careful to record the measures Joseph took to make sure there would be no error in this blessing. In the case of Isaac and Jacob there was *intentional deceit* to secure the blessing

In the case of Jacob and Joseph's sons, there is *intentional care* to properly secure the blessing. In both cases, there is misunderstanding concerning God's plans. Jacob's father Isaac misunderstood and Jacob's son Joseph now misunderstands. Israel is the link between the two, and the Spirit is the guide for both.

¹⁴ Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid *it* on Ephraim's head, who *was* the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh *was* the firstborn.

Despite Joseph's care, which the Bible meticulously notes, Israel does the unexpected when he pronounces his blessing. He guides his hands knowingly to cross over to the opposite son. The word translated as "knowingly" is *sikel*. It means "to consider" or "deliberate," however, it may come from an unused root word meaning to "intertwine," hence "to cross."

This is why some translations say it one way and some another. But in the end, the result is the same, he deliberately crossed his hands to pronounce this blessing. Thus, he is placing younger Ephraim above older Manasseh. This is something that has happened repeatedly so far in the Bible and which will continue through the rest of it.

Already in Genesis we've seen Abel placed before Cain, Shem before Japheth, Abraham before Haran, Isaac before Ishmael, Jacob before Esau, Jacob's second wife Rachel before his first wife Leah, and Perez before Zerah.

Again and again, God is returning us to this theme and He is doing it for a very important reason - to show us the work of Christ, the second Man, being accepted over the failings of the first man, Adam. Paul explains this in detail in 1 Corinthians chapter 15.

How though does this specifically prefigure the work of Christ? In order to understand, we have to look again, as we did many sermons ago, at the names of the two sons. Joseph named the first Manasseh who pictures Adam. The name comes from the verb *nasha*, which means "to forget."

In Hebrew, and thus in the Bible, to forget something doesn't mean what we think in English. Something can be forgotten because the memory fades, but the Bible's idea of forgetting is active. It is taking something away.

And so Joseph, was taking away the memory of his past. Joseph named his son Manasseh because he forgot, even though he hadn't really forgotten. The word-play on his name is that he "forgot by taking away - *nasha*."

However, there is more to the name Manasseh. The name is derived from *nasha* which means to forget, but the same word also means "a debt." The Bible's concept of a debt is different than we handle a debt today. In the Bible, when something is lent, it is pushed out of mind. For example, Jesus says this in Luke 6 -

"And if you lend *to those* from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil." Luke 6:34, 35

The idea is that only a person in need would ask for a loan and so the loan should be forgotten. If the debt is repaid, then it is brought back to mind. If it isn't, it is to be water under the bridge. And so as much as the name Manasseh means "to forget" it also means "from a debt."

The second son is named Ephraim. He pictures Christ. Ephraim comes from the word *apher* which means "fruitful." The IM at the end of the name makes the word plural - double fruitful, or twice fruitful. But *apher* also means "ashes." Ashes are emblematic of grief or sorrow, especially for *judgment on sin*, such as when Abraham said, "I who am but dust and ashes..."

He meant that he is a man made from the dust and one deserving of the judgment of being reduced to ashes. And so the double play on this name wasn't just that Joseph was doubly fruitful in the land of his affliction, but that he remained filled *with grief* over being separated from his father and his home *in* the land of his affliction.

By knowing this, the naming of the sons, and the wordplay involved in those names will now make all the sense in the world. Manasseh means "to forget" but it also means "from a debt." He pictures Adam, who is the man who owes a debt but whose debt... is forgotten in Christ.

Ephraim means, "twice fruitful", but it also means "ashes." He pictures Jesus. He is twice fruitful in the land of His affliction, prevailing over the law and thus becoming the Savior

of Jew and Gentile, but his work also meant that sin was judged in Him, thus the ashes. Hence, "the land of His affliction."

This account of Jacob blessing Ephraim over Manasseh is given to us to specifically show the work of Christ replacing the fallen state of Adam. This is why such minute care was given concerning the placement of the sons by Joseph and then the knowing movement of Jacob's hands to override the decision. It is all about Jesus.

Finally, this verse begins to explain why Jacob is noted for this in Hebrews chapter 11. Despite not being able to see, he allowed the Spirit of God to guide his hands for the blessing upon the boys. In placing Ephraim above Manasseh, he firmly believed it would be fulfilled that the younger would be greater than the older. He was blessing them based on faith; faith in the work of Christ.

*You and I, we owe that which we cannot pay
But God in Christ is willing to forgive and forget
It is His shed blood that washes the debt away
And through His work, our reconciliation with God is set*

*Jesus came to undo what we had done wrong
In His work, He became doubly fruitful, blessing Jew and Gentile
Now, of His time of affliction we sing a joyous song
Because of His work, God can again upon us smile*

III. The Blessing is Pronounced (verses 15 & 16)

¹⁵ And he blessed Joseph, and said:

Anyone? He blessed Joseph... The blessing on the sons is actually a blessing on Joseph. By blessing them, he is elevating Joseph to a double-status among his brothers. Thus, in this blessing, the naming of Joseph so long ago is again fulfilled. Like his two sons, his name is based on two words, *asaph*, meaning to "take away," and *yoseph*, meaning "he shall add."

In this blessing, Jacob has taken away the reproach of his brothers who sold him off, and he has added in not one, but two sons to the covenant people. The work of Christ as pictured by the two sons Manasseh and Ephraim is seen complete in the blessing upon Joseph. A heavenly drama is being pictured in this earthly ritual.

¹⁵ (con't) **"God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,**

It is an unfortunate translation. Both times God is mentioned in verse 15, it says *ha'elohim*, "the God." It is emphatic and it is intended to show us that the God of the covenant, Jehovah, is the one true God. He is El Shaddai. He is Jesus. He is One. It is in the name of this God, before whom Abraham and Isaac walked, that the blessing is being pronounced.

He is the God of the past, belonging to his fathers. He is the God who authored the covenant and who gave the promises. He carried the recipients of the covenant throughout their lives and he continued to do so after they were gone. He.is.Jesus.

¹⁵ (con't) **The God who has fed me all my life long to this day,**

After carrying Abraham and Isaac, he also tended to Jacob. And so Jacob says, *Ha'elohim ha'roeh oti*, "The God who has fed me" is literally translated "the God shepherding me." He is the Shepherd of the 23rd Psalm; He is Jehovah.

He is the Good Shepherd of John 7. He is the One who tends to and cares for His flock, meeting their every need as they anticipate the eternal days ahead in the new heavens and the new earth where there will be One Shepherd and one flock. He.is.Christ.Jesus.

¹⁶ **The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil,**

Still speaking of the same God, he calls him *ha'malakh ha'goel* "the Angel, the Redeemer." The Angel of the Lord is the Lord. He is the visible, tangible manifestation of Jehovah already seen, and who will again be seen many times in the pages of Scripture. He.is.Jesus.

And He is the Redeemer of man. This is the first use of the word *goel* in the Bible. This word will be translated in two main ways - one is "avenger of blood" and the second is "kinsman redeemer." Both of these are ascribed to Jesus in the New Testament. He is the One who avenges the blood of His saints and the One who redeems us from our sin, being our Kinsman of the flesh. He.is.Jesus.

¹⁶ (con't) **Bless the lads;**

The word "bless" is singular, not plural. Thus the names which were invoked are all One. The God of the fathers, the God who watches over us, and the Angel who redeems us

are One. To this One - our Lord Jesus, Jacob requests a blessing be made upon the two sons of Joseph.

16 (con't) Let my name be named upon them,

Let my name be upon them. He is asking that his name, Israel, be upon them and that they will be accounted as Israel. These sons, born of a foreign woman in a foreign land are to be reckoned as those who have striven with God and prevailed.

They are you, and they are me. They are the multitudes of gentiles who have been grafted into the commonwealth blessings of Jesus Christ by faith. Paul speaks of this in Ephesians 2:11-13 -

"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

16 (con't) And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;

As Jacob is the son of the promised line and as Isaac was before him, leading back to father Abraham the man of faith, so may these two be reckoned. Isaac was the submissive son who was known above all for his obedience to his father's will. Abraham was the man of faith who received the sign of promise.

Jacob asks that the name of these two great patriarchs rest upon these two foreign-born sons. May these sons be known for their submission and for their faith. May they be reckoned among the redeemed because of this.

***16 (fin) And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."**

We finish with this final portion of verse 16 with the words *v'yidgu larov b'qerev ha'erez*. Literally translated, this says "and increase like fish into a multitude in the midst of the earth." It is not coincidence that this concept of multiplication like fish transfers into the symbol of the fish among Christians.

The fish symbol comes from an acrostic of the words Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτήρ", (Iēsous Christos, Theou Yios, Sōtēr) - Jesus Christ God Son Savior. The letters of this acrostic are ichthus, Greek for "fish;" hence, the Jesus fish - something prefigured in an ancient blessing by a dying man upon his two adopted sons, born of a gentile woman, from almost 4000 years ago.

It is vast multitudes of people like you and me in the midst of the earth, all members of the body of Jesus Christ our Lord. This verse then gives the final explanation for why Jacob was noted for this blessing in Hebrews 11.

Not only did he allow the Spirit to guide his hands as he blessed the boys, but he, by faith blessed them concerning their inheritance, firmly believing that it would be fulfilled even though they were in a foreign land. This, combined with his faith in the promise of being buried in Canaan, is what he is most noted for.

"By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff." The reversal of the order, listing his blessing first is because the blessing, like his father Isaac's blessing, speaks of their future and the covenant blessings.

The deathbed charge from the last chapter is listed second because this, like Joseph's deathbed charge which is coming in Genesis 50, both speak of the inheritance of the promised land. The first is an earthly hope for abundance in life; the second is a heavenly hope for eternity in the true Promised Land.

Both look forward in a different way and together they are what Jacob is above-all noted for. He has faith in the promises of God, something we too can be found noted for if we are simply willing to believe... to accept God at His word.

In order to be noted among heaven's roles though, you have to first be a member of God's heavenly family. And the Bible says that this can only happen by belonging to Jesus Christ. He is the only way to be reconciled to God and to have your sins forgiven.

Closing Verse: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." 1 Peter 1:3-5*

Next Week: Genesis 48:17-22 (The Fullness of the Gentiles) (122nd Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

By Faith Jacob...

Then Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said
"Who are these? Are they friends, or family instead?"

And Joseph said to his father
"They are my sons, whom God has given me in this place."
And he said, "Please bring them to me, and I will bless them."
And I will petition them for God's grace

Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, heavy and overwrought
So much so that he could not see
Then Joseph near to him them he brought
And he kissed them and embraced them tenderly

And Israel said to Joseph this thing
"I had not thought to see your face
But in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!"
The many years of sadness, in this he did erase

So Joseph brought them from beside his knees
And he bowed down with his face to the earth
In humbled submission, his father to please

And Joseph took them both in a manner forthright
Ephraim with his right hand toward the left of Israel
And Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right
And brought them near to him as well

Then Israel stretched out his right hand
And laid it on Ephraim's head
Who was the younger we understand
And his left hand on Manasseh's head instead

Guiding his hands knowingly although
Manasseh was the firstborn as he surely did know

And he blessed Joseph, and said:

“God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
The God who has fed me all my life long to this day,
The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil,
Bless the lads;
Let my name be named upon them,
And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;
And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

In his blessing upon these boys
They were brought into the covenant graces
And God has done the same for the Gentiles
From all nations, from all peoples, from all places

We share in the heavenly promise by simple faith in Jesus
We are the redeemed of the Lord and set on a heavenly course
God alone has done all of these wondrous things for us
Of our faith, of our works, of our lives - He is the Source

Thank You O God for the opportunity to be reconciled to You
Through the shed blood of Christ, who is ever-faithful and true

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 48:17-22 **(THE FULLNESS OF THE GENTILES)**

Introduction: In the late 1920s Alexander Fleming was investigating the properties of staphylococci. These are various bacterium responsible for many infections, some of which can be lethal.

He was a well-known researcher, but he wasn't noted as a particularly tidy one. On the 3rd of September in 1928 he came back to his laboratory after having spent a month with his family. Before his vacation, and in his usual untidy way, he'd left all of his cultures on a bench.

When he came back, he found one of the cultures contaminated with fungus which had surrounded the staph culture... and destroyed it. All the other cultures that weren't tainted remained unaffected. Something life-changing had occurred.

He grew the mold in a pure culture and realized that through it a substance was produced that killed a number of disease-causing bacteria. Through research, he identified the mold with the *Penicillium* genus. Because of this, he changed the name he had given it from "mold juice" to penicillin.

In what was a misunderstanding of what he originally thought, that of having ruined an experiment, he came later to realize that he had revolutionized all of medicine by producing the world's first antibiotic.

Like Andrew Fleming, Joseph misunderstood what was occurring around him as well. He watched his father place his hands on his own two sons in a seemingly untidy way. But Joseph misunderstood the details because He misunderstood that God was in the details, directing his father Jacob according to an infinitely higher wisdom.

Today we are going on a journey... It is a journey which affects all of us and it is a journey which hinges on an ancient blessing pronounced upon the two sons of Joseph. The order of the blessing upon the boys, from that time on, would affect *all* of redemptive history, for both Jew and Gentile.

It shows us the immense care God takes in every detail of His word.

Text Verse: *"I taught Ephraim to walk,
Taking them by their arms;*

*But they did not know that I healed them.
4 I drew them with gentle cords,
With bands of love,
And I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck.
I stooped and fed them." Hosea 11:3, 4*

Ephraim, a name associated with the northern ten tribes of Israel, was cared for by God, but they rejected His care. And so, God rejected them and they were exiled from their homeland. But in their exile, God never forgot them and He did something wonderful for them while the southern tribes later went into their own exile.

The rejection of the tribes, the church age, the calling back of Israel by God - all of it is hinted at in a few short verses which detail a misunderstanding by Joseph of what was occurring. It is all to be found in, and drawn out from, God's superior word. So let's turn there once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. His Younger Brother Shall be Greater Than He (verses 17-19)

In order to understand the context of what occurs in today's verses, we should go back and see what happened to bring us to the point we're at. Here are the verses from last week -

Then Israel saw Joseph's sons, and said, "Who *are* these?"

⁹ And Joseph said to his father, "They *are* my sons, whom God has given me in this *place*."

And he said, "Please bring them to me, and I will bless them." ¹⁰ Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, *so that* he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. ¹¹ And Israel said to Joseph, "I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!"

¹² So Joseph brought them from beside his knees, and he bowed down with his face to the earth. ¹³ And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought *them* near him. ¹⁴ Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid *it* on Ephraim's head, who *was* the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh *was* the firstborn. ¹⁵ And he blessed Joseph, and said:

“God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked,
The God who has fed me all my life long to this day,
¹⁶ The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil,
Bless the lads;
Let my name be named upon them,
And the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;
And let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”

Jacob guided his hands knowingly, crossing them over so that the pre-eminent blessing would fall upon Ephraim, the younger son, instead of Manasseh, the older brother. As we saw, every detail of what occurred was given to picture the work of Jesus Christ in redemptive history.

Where Adam failed and incurred a debt which could never be satisfied, Jesus Christ prevailed and His work made it possible for all of Adam's sons to share in the grace and mercy of God. It is the same story being re-explained and repeated over and over again in the book of Genesis so that we don't miss what God has done.

At the time however, Joseph didn't understand. He thought his own father Jacob was confused about the placement of the sons and so he attempted to rectify it by intervening in the ritual...

¹⁷ Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him; so he took hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head.

Joseph is one of the very few people in the Bible who has a substantial amount of detail about his life recorded and yet nothing overtly negative is said about him. Most of the time, when someone is highlighted as much as he is, there are notes of failings as well as notes of favor. In Exodus 33, it says this about Moses –

"So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend."

-Exodus 33:11

In Numbers 12:3 it says that "Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth." And yet, despite these and many other accolades, his failings are also recorded. In one instance, he openly disobeyed God's command. When he did, we read the following -

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.'" Numbers 20:12

The same is true with so many others, David, Solomon, the Apostle Peter, even Jacob, the great patriarch of the twelve tribes and the one who is now pronouncing the blessing had moments of weakness which are recorded for us. But of Joseph, this instance right now is as close to a failure as one could find.

He failed to recognize the hand of God's Spirit upon Jacob as he prophesied and blessed the boys. It further says that he was displeased. These aren't equal to the great transgressions of Moses and David, among so many others.

Instead, he merely misperceived what was occurring and he failed to understand the repetition of the same pattern which had occurred many times already within his own family in the past.

As I noted last week, already in Genesis we've seen Abel placed before Cain, Shem before Japheth, Abraham before Haran, Isaac before Ishmael, Jacob before Esau, Jacob's second wife Rachel before his first wife Leah, and Perez before Zerah.

What Joseph saw as an error, was a repetition of God's continued selection of the second over the first. In this case, it would turn out to be one of the great moments in redemptive history.

This one failure of Joseph, as recorded in God's word, is succinctly stated by the Geneva Bible, "Joseph fails by binding God's grace to the order of nature." In other words, it is the same failure that almost all of us have made, and it is the same failure that many still make in the world we live in.

We attempt to shove God into a box of our own choosing. We perceive that the world should work in a particular way and we think that God will act in that way. But this is only the beginning of error. No sooner do we put God into the box, then He surprises us with amazing wisdom - far beyond that which we could ever imagine.

Paul explains it this way in the book of 1 Corinthians -

"Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"²¹ For since, in the wisdom of

God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. ²² For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.." 1 Corinthians 1:20-23

Jacob had the hand of God upon him for what would become the reality of the supremacy of Ephraim over Manasseh, and he had the hand of God upon him for what would become a picture of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The hidden wisdom of God cannot be limited to a box of our own making.

*Where is the wise? Where is the scribe?
Where is the disputer of this age?
Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?
What says the next philosopher? Please... turn the page!*

*For since, in God's great wisdom
The world through wisdom did not know God
It pleased Him through the foolishness of the message preached
To save those who believe, while on this earth we trod*

*For Jews request a sign, and Greeks after wisdom seek
But we preach Christ crucified
To the Jews a stumbling block and foolishness to the Greek*

¹⁸ And Joseph said to his father, "Not so, my father, for this *one* is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head."

When Jacob was a young man, there was a sense of favoritism between his parents and he and his brother. The Bible told us about that in chapter 25 of Genesis -

"So the boys grew. And Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a mild man, dwelling in tents. ²⁸ And Isaac loved Esau because he ate *of his* game, but Rebekah loved Jacob." Genesis 25:27, 28

There is nothing in the Bible, however, to show us any type of favoritism between Jacob and his two grandsons. Instead, we are left with only one impression - that Jacob has been guided solely by the Spirit of prophecy upon him.

And so, even in the participants of this drama we see a picture of man as he wars within himself. In picture, Jacob is the spiritual man, guided by the Spirit and Joseph is the natural man, guided by the flesh. Jacob has leaned on Christ to conduct his affairs in this moment and Joseph has leaned on Adam.

It is the constant struggle that any believer faces, and it is a struggle Paul explains in Romans 7. There he writes -

"I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. ²² For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Romans 7:20-25

It is to the spiritual side of Joseph that Jacob will now petition. He will ask him to put aside his natural thoughts about how things should be and to rely rather on the wisdom of God and the guiding of the Spirit as he conducts his affairs concerning these two boys...

¹⁹ But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know.

In an attempt to allay his cherished son's fears that he has erred, Jacob calmly repeats himself, *yadati. beni, yadati* - "I know my son, I know." The repetition is intended to highlight to Joseph that he is fully aware of what he was doing. And so with his hands firmly in the proper place, he continues his explanation...

¹⁹ (con't) He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."

There is literal truth in this statement, and there is spiritual truth as well. For the people of Israel, the literal truth is that when they are to come out of Egypt at the Exodus, there will be 8300 more fighting aged men in Ephraim than there will be in Manasseh.

And, of the hundreds of thousands of people who beheld God's glory at Mount Sinai, only two of accountable age, Joshua and Caleb, will be allowed to enter the Promised Land. Joshua, the successor of Moses is from Ephraim and Caleb is from Judah. And

these two tribes will become the two predominate ones mentioned throughout the rest of the Old Testament.

From Ephraim will come Jeroboam who will become the first leader of the Ten Tribes of Israel as they break away from the southern kingdom of Judah. Because of this, the northern tribes are often synonymously called both Israel and Ephraim. The southern tribes will be known as Judah.

It is the ten northern tribes called both Israel and Ephraim that will be exiled by Sennacherib King of Assyria in 722BC. From this exile, they will be dispersed to the ends of the world, losing their identity and mixing in with the gentile peoples. This exile will include both tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. It doesn't sound like greatness, unless one understands what occurs in their dispersion.

In his words to Joseph, Jacobs says, *v'zarow yihyeh melo hagoyim* - "his seed shall become a multitude of nations." This phrase translated "multitude of nations" is more completely understood in a literal rendering which says, "a fullness of the gentiles." The rest of the Bible will continue to explain this phrase which is actually only used here in the Hebrew and one other time in the New Testament. Imagine the impossible nature of Jacob being able to deduce any of this in his words upon the boys. How could he know that Ephraim would excel over Manasseh?

How could he know that Ephraim would become the representative of the northern tribes of Israel, completely separate from the southern kingdom of Judah? And how could he even consider what it means when he spoke the words "the fullness of the gentiles?"

His blessing is one of faith in the hand of God upon Him. Though his natural eyes were dim from age, his vision of the future through spiritual eyes was sharper than a needle. In his weakness, God's hand of grace upon him was made perfect.

*I find then a law, that evil is present with me
The one who wills to do good, O how can this be!*

*For in the law of God I delight
According to the inward man, so kind
But I see another law in my members, one not right
Warring against the law of my mind*

*And bringing me into captivity, like fiery embers
To the law of sin which is in my members*

*O wretched man that I am!
Who will deliver me from this body of death?
I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!
I will praise Him with all my soul and all my breath*

II. Ephraim First! (verse 20)

²⁰ So he blessed them that day, saying, “By you Israel will bless, saying, ‘May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!’” And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.

The blessing was pronounced upon the two adopted sons and the explanation for it was given to the wary son. But despite the higher blessing granted to Ephraim, both sons are noted as being in Joseph. Jacob says, "By you" or "In you" Israel will bless.

In other words, though the sons are named directly, the blessing is implicitly "in" the name of Joseph. This has to be considered in what is being proclaimed by Jacob. Joseph's life has been an on-going picture of Jesus - from his birth on. So when the blessing is pronounced, it is a blessing directed to the work of Messiah.

And so, to understand this, we have to go back and revisit the term, "the fullness of the gentiles" from verse 19 and see what it is picturing. It is important to know and understand, right now, that although the ten northern tribes of Israel were exiled, **there are no "lost tribes,"** something many cults and sects claim, saying that they are the lost tribes of Israel. This is entirely incorrect.

Israelites from all those northern tribes are noted throughout the rest of the Old Testament after that exile, and they are noted throughout the New Testament as well. Jesus, Paul, and James all mention there being twelve tribes at their time. Implicit references to them are made also. Thus a remnant from each tribe was preserved as God promised - there are no "lost tribes."

However, the majority of the people in the northern tribes, known as Ephraim, went into exile and were scattered among the nations. They have genetically mixed into all nations on earth. This isn't an unreasonable stretch, but it is exactly what occurs in the course of human movement.

Today we know it as the principle of Six Degrees of Separation. There is no person on earth who isn't within the spectrum of this formula. All people on earth are connected to the Jewish blood of the dispersed tribes, collectively known as Ephraim.

In Romans 9-11, Paul writes about the state of Israel, meaning the Jewish people, during the church age. In this discourse, there in chapter 11, he says these words - a mystery revealed to him which had been unknown to the world before the ink left his pen.

"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

"The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;
²⁷ For this *is* My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins." Romans 11:25-27

Despite this being a mystery, unknown before Paul revealed it, this is what Jacob was prophesying of. His words, "a fullness of the Gentiles" is the same phrase which Paul uses in the New Testament there in Romans 11, "a fullness of the Gentiles."

Unfortunately, it is a mystery still not comprehended by the majority of Christianity. Paul is speaking of us. It is the church whom Jacob was referring to in his ancient oracle, as we saw so clearly in last week's sermon.

While the Jewish people, represented by the tribe of Judah is under punishment according to the law, God has directed his attention to the Gentiles, represented by the dispersed of Ephraim. And He is, in them, continuing on with His remarkable plan of salvation.

The Gentile people are brought into the commonwealth of Israel because of the work of Jesus Christ. We become partakers of the Holy Olive Tree, apart from the law, because He fulfilled the law in our stead. Only when the Jews of Israel receive Him in the same way, will they be returned to favorable status once again.

Paul explains this clearly and succinctly in Ephesians 2:11-13 -

"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—

¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

In confirmation of this then, we have to return to the Old Testament book of Hosea. There in Chapter 2, we read this -

"Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth,
And I will have mercy on *her who had* not obtained mercy;
Then I will say to *those who were* not My people,
'You *are* My people!'
And they shall say, '*You are my God!*'" Hosea 2:23

Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, uses this exact verse in Romans 9 to show that God had rejected His people, the Jews, and called another group His people. This is the church; this is the gentiles; this is the seed of Ephraim. Here are his words -

"As He says also in Hosea:
'I will call them My people, who were not My people,
And her beloved, who was not beloved.'
²⁶ And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them,
'You *are* not My people,'
There they shall be called sons of the living God.'" Romans 9:25, 26

In the New Testament, after Paul's letters come the letters to the restored Jews, which happens after the church age. In them, Peter, the Apostle to the Jews, again cites a portion of Hosea's words -

"But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."
-1 Peter 2:9, 10

And if these things aren't clear enough, Ezekiel chapter 37 tells us this explicitly. Using Judah as the representative of the Jewish people from southern Israel and Ephraim as the representative of northern Israel, we read this passage which perfectly confirms Jacob's words upon his grandsons -

"Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ¹⁶ "As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: 'For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.' Then take another stick and write on it, 'For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and *for* all the house of Israel, his companions.' ¹⁷ Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand. ¹⁸ "And when the children of your people speak to you, saying, 'Will you not show us what you *mean* by these?' — ¹⁹ say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which *is* in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.'" ²⁰ And the sticks on which you write will be in your hand before their eyes." Ezekiel 37:15-20

We are awaiting the day when this physical bonding will take place. Israel must first go through terrible times before it occurs. When they are brought through the fire, they will be refined and tested. Those who survive will call on Jesus and together, Jew and Gentile will be united in the commonwealth of Israel in reality. Until then we enjoy the blessings of Messiah by faith.

The reason for the placement of this blessing should be obvious. Israel has been brought to Egypt, they have entered the times which picture the tribulation and they will have to endure the time of plagues upon Egypt, picturing the Great Tribulation to come. Jacob's words now, show us the miracle of the church age, all pictured by the ancient blessing which elevates the younger over the older. All of the sons of Adam, pictured by Manasseh, will be reconciled to God through Christ, pictured by Ephraim.

To this day, Jewish people still pronounce upon their children the blessing, "May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!" They do this before the beginning of Sabbath and at other times throughout the year. How wonderful it will be when they realize its significance in its fullness. May that day be soon.

As a final note concerning what is being pictured in this beautiful blessing, we need to turn to Hosea one more time and see it actually laid out in a chiasm which shows us what God is doing in redemptive history.

Hosea 1:9-2:23 - "But Me she forgot," says the LORD. (11/23/07)

A Chiasm of Contrasts - Our Unfaithfulness and God's Unlimited Mercy

a 1:9 You are not my people, I will not be your God.
 b 1:10 Jezreel (God will sow.)
 c 2:3 Dry Land, thirst.
 d 2:5 Wife departs from her husband.
 e 2:7 Wife returns to her husband.
 f 2:9 Take away the new wine.
 g 2:10-12 God punishes Israel.
 h 2:13 God will punish her.
 x 2:13 "But Me she forgot," says the LORD
 h 2:14a God will allure her.
 g 2:14b God comforts Israel.
 f 2:15 Give vineyards.
 e 2:16 LORD says, "That you will call me 'My Husband.'"
 d 2:19 Husband betroths wife.
 c 2:21, 22 Grain, new wine, oil.
 b 2:22 Jezreel (God will sow.)
 a 2:23 You are my people; You are my God.

I found this chiasm on 23 November 2007 and it has proven a great source of comfort to me since then as I've continued to see God's word unfold before my eyes. The middle, or anchor verse, is the woeful cry, "But me she forgot, says the Lord."

All God would ask of us is to remember Him, to love Him, and to honor Him as He unfolds our lives before us. When we do, by calling on Jesus Christ, we enter into the commonwealth of Israel and are entitled to all her wonderful blessings.

*I will call them My people, who were not My people
 And her beloved, who was not beloved
 I will be praised among the Gentiles under every church steeple
 While my disobedient Israel is from place to place shoved*

*And it shall come to pass in the place
 Where it was said to them, 'You are not My people
 There they shall be called sons of the living God
 Righteous Gentiles worshipping under the church steeple*

III. A Portion Above Your Brothers (verses 21 & 22)

²¹ Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am dying,

In completion of his blessing and prophecy, Jacob now returns from what is spiritual, to what is natural for a moment. He utters the words which terrify all except those who live by faith, *hinneh anokhi met*, "Behold, I die."

But in Jacob, there is no sense of anguish or any lack of joy. Instead, it is the inevitable state of every man to which he confirms he is a part. Man lives, and man must die. But as a sign that he is a man of faith and unafraid of the future, he continues his words...

²¹ (con't) **but God will be with you and bring you back to the land of your fathers.**

From faith to faith. His blessing was one of faith and his words to Joseph now follow that path. Though he had left Canaan about 37 years earlier, having been sold by his brothers, Jacob confirms that Joseph himself will again return to the land of his fathers.

At this point, he is firmly established in the land. He is the second ruler of Egypt. His entire family has moved there and they have resided there already for many years. And yet Jacob, through his spiritual eyes knows fully that Joseph and all of Israel will return someday to Canaan. He is Jacob, the man of flesh; He is Israel who trusts His God.

***²² Moreover I have given to you one portion above your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."**

The final words of this meeting are uttered and they again are words of faith. Not only will Joseph and his seed after him return to Canaan, but they will receive an inheritance as is now granted to them. It is for one portion above his brothers, meaning that the adopted sons will in fact receive the inheritance they have been promised.

Ephraim and Manasseh, upon whom the prophecies have been pronounced, will accompany Israel's march from Egypt, they will share in the covenant blessings, and they will inherit a specific piece of land named by Jacob.

In this grant, the Hebrew words for "one portion" are *shekhem echad* - "one shoulder." It is also the same word as the name of the city of Shechem, which Jacob obtained many years earlier. There is a lot of debate about his words here because he *bought* some land from the Hivites, and then the sons killed the people of the city, but these people weren't Amorites.

There is no record outside of this verse to support the words of this verse, and so some scholars say that he is stating this prophetically, meaning the land will be taken from the

Amorites by Israel in the future. But this isn't correct either. In Joshua 24, it says exactly the opposite when the Lord speaks to Joshua -

"I sent the hornet before you which drove them out from before you, *also* the two kings of the Amorites, *but not* with your sword or with your bow."

-Joshua 24:12

Further details of how Jacob obtained the land isn't needed apparently, because the Bible doesn't record them, except in this verse. What is important is that an extra portion is granted and that grant is then recorded in the book of Joshua. And the land they received was in the general area of Shechem.

It is the same piece of land which is noted in John 4 when Jesus spoke to a woman at a well which belonged, as it notes, to Joseph -

"So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph." John 4:5

The history of the Promised Land is recorded because it is God's land and He has given it to His people Israel. But God also has called out another group of people from the world to be His own. They are the unworthy recipients of God's grace which was prophesied by an old man when he blessed his two grandsons.

Surely Jacob couldn't have known the significance of his words and so surely the words were spoken by him as the Spirit of God moved him. What an amazing thing God has shown us and continues to show us as He unfolds His word before our very eyes.

Just so you know, although it can't be identified to the exact number, it is believed that Andrew Fleming's discovery of penicillin has saved 100,000,000 or more lives. Imagine that, a mistake in a laboratory which changed the world as we know it and which saved all those people.

But that is a mere drop in the bucket compared to the billions of eternal souls that have been saved by the plan of God as revealed in the pages of the Bible.

Like Fleming, Joseph thought he was witnessing a mistake, but instead, he was beholding with his own eyes the acknowledgment of a plan which includes each person who has called on Jesus Christ as Lord.

Closing Verse: *"How can I give you up, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I set you like Zeboim?
My heart churns within Me;
My sympathy is stirred.
⁹I will not execute the fierceness of My anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim.
For I am God, and not man,
The Holy One in your midst;
And I will not come with terror." Hosea 11:8, 9*

Next Week: Genesis 49:1-7 (The Blessing Upon Reuben, Simeon, and Levi) (123rd Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

May God Make You as Ephraim and Manasseh

Now when Joseph saw that his father
Laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim
It displeased him; he found it a bother

So he took hold of his father's hand
To remove it from Ephraim's head
And thus over to Manasseh's head, instead

And Joseph to his father said
"Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn
Put your right hand on his head
Let the blessing, his soul adorn

But his father refused and said
"I know, my son, I know
He also shall become a people
And he shall be great also

But truly his younger brother shall be greater than he in acclamations

And his descendants shall become a multitude of nations

So he blessed them that day, speaking this way
"By you Israel will bless, as they declare
'May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!'"
By them may they all others so compare

And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh
This is what transpired on that day

Then Israel said to Joseph
"Behold, I am dying, without cares or bothers
But God will be with you and bring you back
There, to the land of your fathers

Moreover I have given to you, and in your sight
Above your brothers one portion
Which I took from the hand of the Amorite
With my sword and my bow, this is my proclamation

Living in the presence of the Lord
Dying as an old man, full of faith and hope
Jacob pronounced his prophetic word
Which is revealed in redemption's scope

God had a plan for his people Israel
But this plan involves all other nations too
And we see it as history does tell
In the salvation of Gentiles like me and you

God's love for His creatures is perfect and pure
And it is demonstrated in the giving of Jesus, His Son
In Him there is a wondrous hope, eternal and sure
And in Him all that was needed has been done

Now by faith we can in the presence of God be made just
And for eternal years praises to Him will flow from us
Because of the work of Another in which we trust

Because of the majestic work of our Lord Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 49:1-7 **(THE BLESSING UPON REUBEN, SIMEON, AND LEVI)**

Introduction: Is it possible that God wrote the gospel story in the heavens? In the first chapter of the Bible it says "Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years." Genesis 1:14

The heavenly bodies were first given as signs and then for seasons according to the first page of the Bible. Throughout the Old Testament, there are references to stars, planetary alignments, and other heavenly occurrences which point to prophetic signs concerning the work of God in Christ.

There are also constellations mentioned in the book of Job and elsewhere. Therefore the formation of clusters of stars into pictures is something acknowledged by God in His own word. He uses them like the seasons of the year to point to His redemptive work.

God uses agriculture, geology, and even points on the compass to show us what He is doing in history. He also uses the stars to show us what He is doing and He will do in the world. It isn't coincidence that groups of people from all over the world see the same constellations and merely use different names for them.

And with the corruption of sin, they are, like all of God's other signs, misused for idolatry rather than for what He intended. But the Bible shows us that they are there, they are there for signs, and those signs will reveal Christ.

Text Verse: *"Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades,
Or loose the belt of Orion?
32 Can you bring out Mazzaroth in its season?
Or can you guide the Great Bear with its cubs?" Job 38:31-33*

In Chapter 49 of Genesis, Jacob will bless His sons and pronounce prophetic utterances over them. Like all biblical prophecy, there are multi levels to be derived from such things. There is the immediate, present application and there are applications which expand out into the most distant future in redemptive history.

But in Jacob's words, there is also a prophetic parallel to twelve constellations which swirl about our heads in the night sky. God has written His testimony concerning Christ

there. These aren't to be viewed as astrologers do, telling us how to discern matters for *our* lives. Rather, they are to be viewed as God intends, which is how to discern matters of *redemptive history* as revealed in Christ.

There is a vast difference between the two. Astrology is forbidden in the Bible, just as is worshipping the seasons through fertility rituals. But God ordained that the work of His Son would be revealed in the skies, the changing of the seasons, and even in metaphors about rocks, water, grain, and the like.

Let us be careful never to deviate from fixing our eyes on Jesus. If we do this, we will be sound in our observance of what God has placed around us in order for us to see Him. The place where we go to find out what is right and wrong is the Bible, His superior word. So let's go there now and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Jacob's Final Blessing (Verses 1 & 2)

¹ And Jacob called his sons and said,

Jacob the man is now going to pronounce his prophetic blessing upon his 12 sons. In this chapter, the name Jacob will be used five times and the name Israel will be used five times. In this, there is the natural and the spiritual - Jacob, the man of flesh and bones, and Israel, the people who strive with their God.

Using the names in this way is known as synonymous parallelism. There is an equivalent aspect to using the names, and at the same time, there is a distinction. The man is Jacob and the man is Israel, but there is also the race of people who descend from the man. Something similar is seen throughout the Bible concerning the name of God. In the Old Testament, there is the word *Elohim*, or "God" and there is the word *Jehovah*, or "LORD." In the New Testament, there is also God and there is Jesus. In both testaments, they form a synonymous parallel.

Elohim, or God, is the eternal God who is before creation and related to the entire scope and substance of the universe that He created. And then there is Jehovah and Jesus. Jehovah is the self-existent God, "I AM." He is prior to the intelligent beings He created and has a special relationship to them.

Jesus is the Word of God who is likewise related to the sentient man He created. Both Jehovah and Jesus relate to the moral attributes and conduct of their creatures, both

are the monitors of their covenants, and both are the ones who are faithful to their word, and to the keeping of their promises,

If we can remember this about Jacob and Israel, about God and Jehovah of the Old Testament, and God and Jesus in the New, then we can understand more readily what God is showing us as the Bible unfolds before us.

¹ (con't) "Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days:

Jacob has called together his seed in order to pronounce this prophecy which is under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We know this is so, because it wasn't actually recorded until the time of Moses. The substance may have been remembered, but the words were penned at Mount Sinai along with all of the law received at that time.

In this verse, he uses the term, *b'aharit ha'yammin* - at the end of days. This is the first of 16 times that the term will be used in the Bible and there is debate over what it means exactly, but it certainly covers the total time of Israel, from the Exodus all the way through until the millennial kingdom of Christ.

All of the pictures we've seen in the lives of Jacob and Joseph include things which haven't yet happened; they are future to us now. And so it would be unreasonable for us to think it meant anything other than all the scope of the history of Israel - even to the end of human existence as we currently know it.

Despite portions of the prophecies extending beyond our time, many of them were precisely fulfilled in Israel's later history, leading up to the time of Christ. And some of the words he will speak will be of the coming Messiah Himself. They are so exact and so precise that it leaves no room for us to expect any other than the One who has come. The words lead to Jesus and to no other.

In John 6, as some of His disciples were turning away from Him, Jesus asked the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" Simon Peter's response gives exactly what can be discerned from the coming verses of Jacob's prophecy, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." John 6:68

If the words which Jacob speaks here point to the work of Jesus, then they are the eternal words of God, and in Him must then be the words of eternal life. One cannot escape the beauty of the structure of the Bible which gives us such a sure and strong foundation in our faith.

**²“Gather together and hear, you sons of Jacob,
And listen to Israel your father.**

Again the words "gather together" are used by Jacob, who is Israel. This is repeated to show the elevation of his mind from the earthly (Jacob) to the spiritual (Israel) as he prepares to give his divinely inspired oracle. It is calling to their attention the importance of what is about to be uttered to them.

In the last verse, he was Jacob, the dying man who was calling his earthly sons. Now they are the earthly sons of the father who is to prophesy by the Spirit. They are the sons of Jacob and He is Israel their father who is the father of Israel, the people. It is that type of synonymous parallelism which the pages of the Bible will continue with, even to the book of Revelation.

*Jesus said to the twelve
Do you also want to go away - let me know
But Simon Peter answered Him,
“Lord, to whom shall we go?*

*You have the words of eternal life
Also we have come to believe and know
That You are the Christ, the Son of the living God
All Scripture tells us that this is certainly so*

*You are our Lord, and we shall follow You
Wherever You go, likewise we will go as well
Those things You direct are that which we shall do
The ancient words of God, about You they do tell*

II. The Blessing Upon Reuben (Verses 3 & 4)

Without a detailed examination of each line, we will miss more than we see. Because of this, the blessings of the sons of Israel will be divided into 5 weeks of sermons. Every word that Jacob utters is a part of a heavenly drama being worked out in a group of people born to this man.

The first son to be born to Jacob, Reuben, was to his wife Leah. His birth is recorded in Genesis 29 -

"When the LORD saw that Leah *was* unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel *was* barren. ³² So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, 'The LORD has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me.'" Genesis 29:31, 32

³ "Reuben, you are my firstborn,

Because he was the firstborn, he should have been blessed with the rights of a first born. They are the three portions of honor - the birthright, the priesthood, and the kingdom. Instead of a one-twelfth portion, he should have received two-thirteenths, but that went to Joseph. Instead of receiving the priesthood, that went to Levi, and instead of receiving the kingship, that went to Judah.

This verse points to both Israel and to Jesus. Israel is called the Lord's firstborn in Exodus 4:22. Jesus is called the Firstborn over creation in Colossians 1:15. There is a difference though. Israel was the first born according to adoption and is after creation. Jesus is God's Son within the Godhead and He is prior to and above His creation.

^{3 (con't)} **My might and the beginning of my strength,**

This phrase is intended to convey the thought of procreation. A man's strength is found in his seed as much as it is in his arms or legs. As a man tires, the seed of the man continues the strength of the man and of the family. Every year, my father asks me to come to visit him for a week. I go and it is never a vacation.

Because he's older, he doesn't have the strength to drop the trees, cut the logs, and chop the wood. He doesn't have the footing to climb the ladder and clean the gutters or to fix the vents on the roof. And as I get older, my strength is also fading.

Someday it would be hoped that our own children will help with the things we can't do for ourselves any more. This was the hope and expectation of Reuben as he came from the womb of his mother. This verse again points to Jesus who is the Incarnate Word of God. Fully God and Fully Man.

^{3 (con't)} **The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power.**

The word "excellency" here is from early English and means less "that which is noble" and more "that which is first" or "preeminent." This was the state of Reuben. He was

firstborn and thus should have been in the superior position over his brothers. But as Israel continues, this right and honor will forever be removed from his line.

Again, this prophecy ultimately points to Jesus whose preeminence is described in detail in Colossians 1:15-18

⁴Unstable as water, you shall not excel,

This is an unfinished sentence which contains a metaphor. It literally reads *pakhaz khamayim* or "boiling over like water." There is a double meaning here. The first is that Reuben was unstable in how he conducted himself. It was as if he was a foaming torrent, like a pouring waterfall that couldn't be controlled.

At the same time, it is an illusion to the act he committed in the past against his father and which will be described in a moment. What he did was a form of debauchery which Israel now brings to memory in front of all the brothers. And because of what he did, he is told he will no longer excel.

In his bubbling over with pride, he will no longer have anything of note to be proud of. Because of his unstable ways, there would continue to be nothing stable within his clan. Those things that should have been his will disappear into the air.

And sure enough, nothing of superiority or excellence is noted concerning Reuben for the rest of the Bible. No judge, prophet, prince, nor any person of renown will come from him. At the same time, two of the Bible's most noted bad men, Dathan and Abiram, who come against Moses, will descend from Reuben.

During the census which will be taken when Israel leaves Egypt at the Exodus, the tribe of Reuben will be not even a third the size of the tribes of Judah, Joseph, or Dan. And when the exile of the northern kingdom comes, Reuben will be one of the first tribes carried off to the nations.

Because of one disgraceful act that occurred forty years earlier, Jacob is now in the position to remind him and punish him for what he did. It was a permanent mark upon him and his family that would never heal. Now Jacob specifically mentions it...

⁴ (con't) **Because you went up to your father's bed;**

The incident is described in Genesis 35:22. There it says, "And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard *about it*."

In 1 Corinthians 5:1, 2, there is a similar incident which occurred in Corinth and the same attitude is mentioned by Paul that Israel speaks of concerning Reuben here -

"It is actually reported *that there is* sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife! ² And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you."

For Jacob, no amount of time could ever take away the memory of such an act and now, at the end of his life, he relays to the corporate body of Israel the severity of discipline deemed necessary for such an infraction.

But more so, because the Spirit who was prophesying through Him was involved, it has been recorded in the Bible for all generations of people to read and remember.

⁴ (con't) **Then you defiled it—**

This is another unfinished sentence. The verb is used in the complete sense here. It is indicating that what Reuben did was to violate something which should have been considered sacred. There could be no excuse of any kind for what he did.

⁴ (con't) **He went up to my couch.**

Jacob's words are, *yetsui alah* - literally my couch he ascends. In the order of his words and in changing them from the second to the third person, Israel is expressing the immensity of the abomination which the act represents.

In the last words ever uttered to his oldest son, he uses the third person as if he weren't even in his presence any longer. The disgust of the action was unforgivable in his eyes.

Later, Reuben and his tribe would be separated from the land of Canaan by the Jordan River. Their inheritance would remain to the east. Other than one small successful campaign in battle, there is no other note of any achievement by them.

And in the Song of Deborah, which is a great song of achievement and praise, Reuben is noted, not for their heroics, but for their apathy. However, even in this sad prophecy, the fact is that Reuben has been blessed, even if in a shameful way.

He remained an inheritor of a portion of the promised land and a part of the covenant community. As is seen throughout the Bible, God's grace radiates even through the wickedness of man. In the witness of the stars of heaven that God set in place, Reuben is represented by Aquarius. Jacob said he was "unstable as waters." Aquarius is represented by a man pouring out waters from an urn.

This constellation points to the Messiah mentioned in Numbers -

"He shall pour water from his buckets,
And his seed *shall be* in many waters.
His king shall be higher than Agag,
And his kingdom shall be exalted." Numbers 24:7

Later in Isaiah, we see a clearer picture of the coming Messiah, represented by the blessing upon Reuben -

"Yet hear now, O Jacob My servant,
And Israel whom I have chosen.
² Thus says the LORD who made you
And formed you from the womb, *who* will help you:
'Fear not, O Jacob My servant;
And you, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.
³ For I will pour water on him who is thirsty,
And floods on the dry ground;
I will pour My Spirit on your descendants,
And My blessing on your offspring;" Isaiah 44:1-3

In Christ, we see the picture in John 7:37, 38 -

"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

This will be realized, in its fullness, in the heavenly Jerusalem as noted in Revelation -

"And He said to me, 'It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.'"

-Revelation 21:6

The prophecy ultimately points to the Man, Jesus Christ, who poured out His life that He may pour out on us every spiritual blessing. He has removed the curse, opened the gates of paradise, and will pour out an eternal, endless stream of life-giving waters for us to drink. The prophecy points to Jesus.

*If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink
He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said
Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water
This is true for the soul who has Christ as his Head*

*It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega
I am the Beginning and the End
I will give of the fountain of the water of life
Freely to him who thirsts, this grace I will send*

*If you call on me I will respond
I will lead You in the paths of righteousness
For my name's sake I will do these things
For all eternity, your soul I will bless*

III. The Blessing Upon Simeon and Levi (Verses 5 - 7)

⁵ **"Simeon and Levi are brothers;**

The next two sons of Israel are blessed together. They were also born to Leah and their births read as follows from Genesis 29 -

"Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, 'Because the LORD has heard that I *am* unloved, He has therefore given me this *son* also.' And she called his name Simeon.³⁴ She conceived again and bore a son, and said, 'Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.'
Therefore his name was called Levi."

Of all the sons to be blessed by Israel, only Simeon and Levi are united in a single blessing rather than individually. They are sons of the same mother and workers

together in the evil deed of killing an entire city of men. Because of their actions Jacob goes on...

⁵ (con't) **Instruments of cruelty *are in* their dwelling place.**

Rather than acting in the manner of shepherds, they put aside their staffs and picked up swords to commit a horrendous deed. The account is recorded in Genesis 34 -

"Now it came to pass on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of the sons of Jacob, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came boldly upon the city and killed all the males. ²⁶ And they killed Hamor and Shechem his son with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went out." Genesis 34:25, 26

In this sentence there's an unusual word translated here as "dwelling place." It's used only one time in the Bible and it is the word *mekerah*. The term "dwelling places" or as the KJV says "habitations" isn't correct. Translating it this way would require the preposition "in" before it which is not in the Hebrew.

Most translators call it a sword from the Greek word *machaera* which is a knife. Israel is on a trade route between Egypt and Greece and these would have been a common commodity sold by the Greeks. It also could be a pun on another word as well.

The word *macher* which means "counsels" or "agreements." This fits much better with what happened, because the brothers made an agreement with the people of Shechem to circumcise them so that they could marry into the family, but after circumcising they killed them. It then is a pun on the words "sword" and "agreement" in their one action.

Because of what they did by killing a whole city with the sword, Jacob removed them from the positions of honor that should have followed Reuben's rejection.

Remembering that Israel was under the influence of the Spirit, it is God who likewise looked with disfavor upon their actions. And so the prophecy continues...

⁶ **Let not my soul enter their council;**

This verse shows us that the previous verse meant "agreement." It is forming a parallel between their secret council to kill the people of Shechem and that Israel should not enter into their council. Because of one action, the second action should not take place.

The word for council is *sowd*, which is a little carpet or cushion that the people would sit on. For two people to sit on the same carpet would indicate friendship and intimacy. Israel is saying that such intimacy was not recommended with these two sons of his.

6 (con't) Let not my honor be united to their assembly;

First he said "let not my soul enter their council." The soul is the true self of a person. It is what animates us as humans. Now he repeats himself, but heightens the meaning, "Let not my honor be united to their assembly." The honor or *khavod* is what makes man glorious.

It is what gives him his dignity, self-worth, and honor before God and man. Such things could only be degraded by joining with them in the congregation. We can refer to the same man we mentioned earlier from 1 Corinthians 5 to see what Paul recommends in such an instance -

"But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person."

-1 Corinthians 5:11

It is a word for each of us, from both testaments, that we are to hold sexual immorality in contempt and we are to not associate with those who are called brothers but who are perverse in their actions, like Simeon and Levi. Paul, like Jacob, understood and spoke by the Spirit to warn us.

6 (con't) For in their anger they slew a man,

This goes back to Genesis 34 and the killing of the people of Shechem. It is speaking specifically about the killing of Shechem the son of Hamor the one who defiled their sister, but it is also referring to the whole town - the singular being used for the whole.

6 (con't) And in their self-will they hamstrung an ox.

This is the second half of the parallel thought, but the Hebrew is very difficult to understand. Three different translations prevail -

They... hamstrung oxen as they pleased. NIV
...in their selfwill they digged down a wall. KJV

(Or) they... in their self-will eradicated a prince. YLT

Because the verse is used in parallel, the last is probably right. They killed a man; they eradicated a prince. It was a willful, self-pleasing act which Jacob is condemning as unacceptable in his eyes. It caused him stress and trouble that he never forgot.

This verse perfectly points to Christ who is the prince that was eradicated by Simeon, "He who hears" and Levi - the steward of the law.

⁷ Cursed *be* their anger, for *it is* fierce;

In this, Jacob is careful to curse their emotions, but not the sons. Even in his condemnation of their actions, he is still granting them the blessing of the covenant people for their future. In this is another set of parallel verses as he cries out against their fierce anger. It is a destructor which can only cause destruction.

Paul instructs us to "be angry, and do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26). And in Ecclesiastes 7:9, Solomon says -

"Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry,
For anger rests in the bosom of fools."

^{7 (cont)} And their wrath, for it is cruel!

Throughout the Bible, there is a place for wrath. It is the obvious result of offense, but wrath is to be tempered and appropriate to the situation. In the case of these two brothers, they allowed their wrath to make a mockery of justice. Again, Solomon advises on this matter -

"*He who is* slow to wrath has great understanding,
But *he who is* impulsive exalts folly." Proverbs 14:29

Simeon and Levi allowed their anger to take hold of themselves and it cost them a prominent blessing from their father. Instead, in their blessing will come a prophetic rebuke concerning the generations which follow and which conclude the parallel verses spoken to these two sons...

***^{7 (fin)} I will divide them in Jacob
And scatter them in Israel.**

These words are literally fulfilled in the Old Testament. The two names, Jacob and Israel, are used to show the certainty of the prophecy. The descendent people would be divided and their unified tribes would be scattered among the other tribes.

And there will be a marked difference between the destinies of the two. Levi will ascend to the priesthood and be given the highest blessing by Moses before he dies. Simeon will be reduced to become the smallest of the 12 tribes. They will become so insignificant that they will be passed over for any blessing by Moses.

Levi will be divided into 48 separate priestly cities, scattered around Israel, and Simeon will be incorporated into the land of Judah. They will be sprinkled in pockets throughout the territory, taking over only 15 cities. Eventually they will be absorbed into the greater tribe of Judah.

In Numbers 25, during the time in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land, Simeon will be noted for a man named Zimri who will fall into idolatry and sexual immorality. On the other hand, Levi will be noted for a man named Phineas who will defend the honor of the Lord against that idolatry and will kill Zimri in his zeal for the Lord.

There is a contrast between the two and yet there is a confirmation of this prophecy in them as well. And in them is seen in the witness of the stars the second constellation, that of Gemini, or the Twins. It isn't coincidence that Israel blessed these two together and all the other sons separately. They are the united brethren of the stars. These picture Christ in His incarnation, the God/Man in his two-fold work; that of suffering and glory. It also shows us his two comings, first in humiliation and then in triumph. In the constellation, there are the two figures named Apollo and Hercules.

In the head of one is the star Apollo, which means "Judge" or "Ruler" and within the head of the other is the star called Hercules, which means "Who comes to labor, or suffer." In his left foot is another star called *Al Henah* which means "hurt or wounded." They form a beautiful picture of Christ's work.

As EW Bullinger says, "Here the two great primeval truths are presented in two persons; for the two natures were one Person. God and man in one Christ. As man, suffering for our redemption; as God, glorified for our complete salvation and final triumph."

In the hand of one is a palm branch, or as some depictions show, a club but in either it is hanging down in repose. It is a state of rest and peace after a victory. This branch is referred to in Isaiah 11 -

"There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a **Branch** shall grow out of his roots.

²The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

³His delight *is* in the fear of the LORD,
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;

⁴But with righteousness He shall judge the poor,
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,
And faithfulness the belt of His waist." Isaiah 11:1-5

The word Isaiah uses for branch is the word *netser*. It is believed to be where the term Nazarene comes from. Thus, again, we see in the stars the second of 12 constellations a testimony to the work of God in Christ Jesus.

This constellation is mentioned by Luke in the book of Acts. There in Acts 28:11 it says - "After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island." The word is Dioskourois - the two brothers, also called in the NIV Castor and Pollux."

These are the first three of the blessings upon the sons of Israel. They point to the future history of the people and they also point to the work of God in Christ, both in the Bible and in the stars themselves. Time and time again, God reveals His Son to us in an attempt to wake us up out of our sleep and to call on Him.

Without Christ, there is no purpose to life and no ultimate point in our existence. But in Him there is the eternal hope of glory in the presence of God. The stars themselves testify to the great work of God in Jesus Christ.

Closing Verse: *"The Lord builds up Jerusalem;
He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.
3 He heals the brokenhearted
And binds up their wounds.
4 He counts the number of the stars;
He calls them all by name."* Psalm 147:2-4

Next Week: Genesis 49:8-12 (The Blessing Upon Judah) (124th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Blessing Upon Reuben, Simeon, and Levi

And Jacob called his sons and said
"Gather together, that I may tell you
What shall befall you in the last days, the days ahead
I will now utter my prophetic view

Gather together and hear
You sons of Jacob
And listen to Israel your father, please draw near
"Reuben, you are my firstborn,
My might and the beginning of my strength,
The excellency of dignity and the excellency of power.
Unstable as water, you shall not excel,
Because you went up to your father's bed;
Then you defiled it—

He went up to my couch.
"Simeon and Levi are brothers;
Instruments of cruelty are in their dwelling place.
Let not my soul enter their council;
Let not my honor be united to their assembly;
For in their anger they slew a man,
And in their self-will they hamstringed an ox.
Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce;
And their wrath, for it is cruel!

I will divide them in Jacob
And scatter them in Israel.

Jacob blessed his sons as the Spirit upon him rested
His words a prophecy of things ahead
And the words have proven true, tho tested
And they confirm the message which in the skies is spread

There is a message of hope for fallen man
And it is found in the giving of God's Son to us
All of creation as well as the Bible in your hand
Tells of the glorious work of Jesus

Open your heart and receive the gift so blessed
Call on the Lord Jesus and be saved from sin
And in the purest garments you will be dressed
Found free from guilt and covered by Him

Thank You, O God, for this blessed hope given to us
Thank You, O God, for our glorious Lord Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 49:8-12 **(THE BLESSING UPON JUDAH)**

Introduction: As Jacob blesses his sons, a celestial drama is revealed, one which was placed in the heavens by God to show us the work He would accomplish through His Son Jesus. Astrology is forbidden in the Bible because it attempts to reveal our future and the choices we should make from the creation rather than the Creator.

But what God has revealed in the constellations was intended to reveal Jesus and how God would conduct His affairs. There is a world of difference between the two. For example, if we use the Bible for divination, then we are misusing what God has given us. But if we use the Bible to see Jesus and His plan for the ages, then we are following what God intended for us to see.

Text Verse: *In Judah God is known;
His name is great in Israel.
2 In Salem also is His tabernacle,
And His dwelling place in Zion.
3 There He broke the arrows of the bow,
The shield and sword of battle. Selah Psalm 76:1-3*

Today, we will see Jacob's blessing upon Judah, his fourth son. Through Judah, will come Christ the Lord. Not only is this revealed in the Bible, but it is also revealed in the very sky above us. And the Bible shows us how. So let's turn to that precious word again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Praise of His Brothers (verses 8, 9)

⁸ **“Judah, you *are* he whom your brothers shall praise;**

Judah was the fourth son born to Jacob and the fourth son born to Leah. His birth is recorded in Genesis 29:35, which reads -

"And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, 'Now I will praise the LORD.' Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she stopped bearing." Genesis 29:35

This first part of verse 8 is intended as a play on words, just as it was at his birth. The name Judah means "praise" and Jacob acknowledges that it is his brothers who will praise him. In other words, as his name is, so is he. The word translated as "praise" is an elegant variation of the name Judah.

It is a delightfully palpable sentence which is lost in translation, but in Hebrew it reads, *Yehuda, attah yodukha akhekha* (1:12). The same word for "praise" here is used numerous times elsewhere in the Bible, such as this verse from Psalm 111:1 -

"Praise the LORD!
I will **praise** the LORD with *my* whole heart,
In the assembly of the upright and *in* the congregation." Psalm 111:1

The term "Jew" that we know today comes directly from the name Judah and like Jacob's words now, Paul uses the term in a pun. There in Romans 2:28, 29 we read this -

"For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God." Romans 2:28, 29

Jacob's note in this prophecy is that God was praised *for* him at his birth, God was praised *by* him, such as in the psalm I cited, and God is praised *in* him because Jesus descends from the tribe of Judah. Because of this, his brothers shall, and indeed do, praise him - *Yehuda, attah yodukha akhekha*.

Already, at the very beginning of his oracle, Jacob has placed Judah above his brothers. In this now, and for the rest of the prophecy, we can be certain that the words are not pronounced based on Jacob's exceptional love for him.

That already belongs to Joseph. His advancement of Judah above his brothers is a direct result of the Spirit of God and prophecy which now rests on him. Being the first of the brothers means that he will be first of the tribes. And this is seen with all surety throughout the rest of Scripture.

Judah first began to attain ascendancy when he spoke on behalf of all the brothers before Joseph revealed himself to them. After that, he was sent by Jacob ahead of the others as they traveled to Egypt to point the way to Goshen.

In the future, Judah will be the first tribe to break down and march ahead of the other tribes as they carry the Ark of the Covenant in the wilderness on the way to Canaan. Once in Canaan, Judah will repeatedly be selected as the first of the tribes to go into battle.

After Joshua's death, Judah will have the first lot of land assigned to them as it is divided among the tribes. It is a land which is very large and very fertile. The first judge of Israel will be Othniel, of the tribe of Judah. From Judah will come the great king, David.

All of this is intended to teach us a lesson. Judah, meaning "praise," sets the example for each of us. In all things, let praise go first. If we can remember this simple lesson which has been revealed to us in these many patterns concerning Judah, we will always succeed in our endeavors. Praise the Lord first and praise the Lord always. Let the praise of the Lord never depart from you.

In these first words of Jacob to Judah, there is an ultimate fulfillment found in Jesus. It is through Him that we offer our own sacrifice of praise to God. In Hebrews 13, we read this -

"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name." Hebrews 13:15

In the end, it is all about Jesus. Every word testifies to this.

⁸ (con't) **Your hand *shall be* on the neck of your enemies;**

To have one's hand on the neck of their enemies is an expression indicating the conquest of, and victory over, them. In the book of Job, we read his feelings of defeat before God who afflicted him. In his discourse, he uses this same terminology -

¹¹ "God has delivered me to the ungodly,
And turned me over to the hands of the wicked.

¹² I was at ease, but He has shattered me;
He also has taken *me* by my neck, and shaken me to pieces;
He has set me up for His target..." Job 16:11, 12

This prophecy by Jacob is exactly fulfilled in the Psalms. In Psalm 18:39, 40, we read this from the hand of David -

"For You have armed me with strength for the battle;
You have subdued under me those who rose up against me.
⁴⁰ You have also given me the necks of my enemies,
So that I destroyed those who hated me." Psalm 18:39, 40

In this is more than just a literal fulfillment by David, but it is found in Christ, the ultimate King of the Jews. He has conquered not only the physical enemies of God's people, but all the spiritual ones as well. In Him sin is defeated, Satan is destroyed, and death is conquered. This then is what is intended in these words.

⁸ (con't) **Your father's children shall bow down before you.**

Once again, Jacob makes a prophecy that one would think he would have bestowed upon Joseph. In Genesis 37, we read this -

"Now Joseph had a dream, and he told *it* to his brothers; and they hated him even more. ⁶ So he said to them, 'Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷ There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.'" Genesis 37:5-7

Jacob's words though are directed by the Spirit of God and not the knowledge he already possessed and leaned upon. Reuben in his blessing was called the "excellency of dignity and the excellency of power." But he was told he would not excel. Now that honor is transferred to Judah. Jacob's sons would bow down before him.

After God selected David, who was from Judah, to replace Saul as the king of Israel, the kingly line continued on through him all the way to Jesus. And it is to Jesus, as Paul records in Philippians 2, this honor ultimately belongs -

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
-Philippians 2:9-11

"Every knee" includes the knee of every descendant of every brother of Judah. No person is exempted from the honor which will be bestowed upon Jesus Christ.

*It was fitting for Him, our Lord Jesus
For whom are all things, and by whom they are as well
In bringing many sons to glory, even us
As the precious words of Scripture do tell*

*To make the Captain of our salvation
Perfect through sufferings, His great tribulation*

*For both He who sanctifies
And those who are being sanctified too
Are all one, in His death each of us dies
A marvel in how His children He does accrue*

*For which reason He is not ashamed
To call them brothers, you and me too
Saying "I will declare Your name to my brethren
In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You*

⁹ Judah is a lion's whelp;

Jacob now assigns a striking metaphor to Judah which will continue to be used until the last book of the Bible, that of a lion. He begins with calling him "a lion's whelp." This is a young lion, one of little power. At this point in the history of Judah, he is one among his brothers, with no seeming advantage above them.

However, as a lion, he will act, and as a lion he will grow. He begins like all cats do, feisty and full of activity. And yet cats follow their own course not worrying about their surroundings as they explore. This has been seen clearly in Judah already.

But this is seen in Jesus as well. Very little is recorded of his youth, but at the age of 12, Luke tells us that Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem after a feast while His family headed back to Nazareth, not realizing he stayed behind.

When they found Him, He was in the temple sitting among the teachers, both listening and asking questions. As a lion would be curious of its surroundings, so Jesus acted in the same manner. There He was in the temple, astonishing His audience with His prowess.

⁹ (con't) From the prey, my son, you have gone up.

As the lion matures, they take hold of their own prey and they "go up" with it normally to their mountain lairs to eat. The tribe of Judah eventually matured into a grown lion in its own right. It became the largest of the tribes and was known for its many conquests, defeating prey in all directions as they prospered.

In Jesus' life, He also matured into a formidable Lion. The enemies would gather and He would defeat them. Whether they were the enemies of physical afflictions, demons, the leaders of Israel, or even the devil, He would easily overcome them by standing on the word of God.

^{9 (con't)} **He bows down, he lies down as a lion;**

The symbolism here is of a lion that crouches in a satisfied way over his prey, with no worries about it being taken from him as he devours it. Eventually, he is satisfied with his victory and filled with the meal and he enjoys rest and repose as he lies down. He is at peace and he has no fears.

At the same time, his enemies are vexed by him, always on the alert should he raise himself again to go on the prowl. As a full mature lion, satisfied with the catching of his prey, Judah found itself in this position as well. In 1 Kings 4:25, we read this about the state of affairs in Judah -

"And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon." 1 Kings 4:25

And this is the state of affairs for the Lord too. After His victory over His enemies, Hebrews 1:3 says that Christ "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." He is in a contented state which defines the completion of His work on our behalf. But a lion in such a state is still lion. Christ is never inattentive to His surroundings...

^{9 (con't)} **And as a lion, who shall rouse him?**

The word for "lion" here is an entirely different one than what was said a moment ago. This lion is a fully mature lion, maybe even a lioness which is more fierce than the male, resenting angrily when it is disturbed from its rest.

A lioness is also the caretaker of the cubs and will defend them with ferocity. When Judah had finally subdued her enemies and the people were at rest, the other nations

sought peace with them. Many treaties were made in an attempt to pacify them and stay their desire to conquer them as well.

In Ezra 4:20, in a letter from King Artaxerxes, the following is noted about Judah -

"There have also been mighty kings over Jerusalem, who have ruled over all *the region* beyond the River; and tax, tribute, and custom were paid to them."

-Ezra 4:20

In Isaiah 31:4, this same terminology that Jacob now uses is applied to the Lord -

For thus the LORD has spoken to me:

"As a lion roars,

And a young lion over his prey

(When a multitude of shepherds is summoned against him,

He will not be afraid of their voice

Nor be disturbed by their noise),

So the LORD of hosts will come down

To fight for Mount Zion and for its hill." Isaiah 31:4

The Lord, even now, is reposing in majesty, but someday, He will rise from that position. After the church age, Israel will again be at the center of His focus. And like a lion in defense of her cubs, He will be prepared to defend His children.

Many verses scattered throughout the Bible reflect this metaphor. So, let's take a moment to evaluate the Lord, our great Lion. Either directly called a Lion, or using the symbolism of rising up as one, He is the defender of Israel and the protector of His people. In Isaiah 28, the Lord is said to rise up and break out in His anger -

"For the bed is too short to stretch out *on*,

And the covering so narrow that one cannot wrap himself *in it*.

²¹ For the LORD will rise up as *at* Mount Perazim,

He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon—

That He may do His work, His awesome work,

And bring to pass His act, His unusual act.

²² Now therefore, do not be mockers,

Lest your bonds be made strong;

For I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts,

A destruction determined even upon the whole earth." Isaiah 28:20-22

In Hosea 5, the Lord is likened to a lion to fight against His own people when they depart from Him -

“When Ephraim saw his sickness,
And Judah *saw* his wound,
Then Ephraim went to Assyria
And sent to King Jareb;
Yet he cannot cure you,
Nor heal you of your wound.
¹⁴ For I *will be* like a lion to Ephraim,
And like a young lion to the house of Judah.
I, *even I*, will tear *them* and go away;
I will take *them* away, and no one shall rescue.
¹⁵ I will return again to My place
Till they acknowledge their offense.
Then they will seek My face;
In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.” Hosea 5:13-15

However, in Hosea 11 the Lord is likened to a lion who will roar for His people, re-gathering them to the land of Israel -

“They shall walk after the LORD.
He will roar like a lion.
When He roars,
Then *His* sons shall come trembling from the west;
¹¹ They shall come trembling like a bird from Egypt,
Like a dove from the land of Assyria.
And I will let them dwell in their houses,
Says the LORD.” Hosea 11:10-11

In Joel 3, speaking of the tribulation period of the future, we get a hint as to the ferocity of the Lord -

“The LORD also will roar from Zion,
And utter His voice from Jerusalem;
The heavens and earth will shake;
But the LORD will be a shelter for His people,
And the strength of the children of Israel.” Joel 3:16

And finally, we see that the Lord, Jehovah of the Old Testament, is the Lord Jesus revealed in the New. The Lion of the tribe of Judah is given the scroll to open -

"But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." Revelation 5:5

Jacob has prophesied over Judah in words which point directly to the Messiah. Time and again, his prophecies have echoed throughout history and have alighted on the Lion of the tribe of Judah, our Lord Jesus.

*They shall walk after the Lord
He will roar like a lion at that time
When he roars, as the Bible does record
Then His sons shall come to a land sublime*

*They shall come trembling from Egypt like a bird
And from the land of Assyria like a dove
And He will let them dwell in their houses
Because He is the covenant keeping God of love*

II. Until Shiloh Comes (verse 10)

¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart from Judah,

The scepter is the symbol of rule and authority. This was prophesied by Jacob as ultimately going to Judah and staying there. Judah would be the predominate tribe and the ruling tribe. Eventually, the term "Judah" became synonymous with "Israel." To Judah was given the rule and the acknowledgment of that rule is in the scepter.

^{10 (con't)} Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,

Most modern versions say "ruler's staff" instead of lawgiver. The idea is that the ruler would rest his staff between his feet while sitting on his throne. The older versions, saying lawgiver, implies that a line of lawgivers would descend from Judah. The symbolism of procreation being intended when it says "between his feet."

In the end, they have the same meaning. The scepter is the symbol of rule and so whether it is a person or a thing being spoken of, the idea of rule is what is being conveyed. This rule would continue on, unabated in Judah until a specific point in time...

¹⁰ (con't) **Until Shiloh comes;**

The word Shiloh is understood by almost every scholar, Jewish and Christian alike, to be speaking of the coming Messiah. The exact meaning of the word Shiloh is debated, and it could even be a play on several words. It is from the same root as *shalah*, which is "peace." But it may also be a play on words from a verse used in Ezekiel 21:27 -

"Overthrown, overthrown,
I will make it overthrown!
It shall be no *longer*,
Until He comes whose **right** it is,
And I will give it *to Him*." Ezekiel 21:27

Shiloh would then mean "that which belongs to him." It is the right to rule which is mentioned in the scepter and in the lawgiver. If it is a pun, then it is speaking both of the Prince of Peace mentioned in the famous passage of Isaiah 9:6, and also of the true Lawgiver, mentioned in Isaiah 33:22, which says -

"(For the LORD *is* our Judge,
The LORD *is* our Lawgiver,
The LORD *is* our King;
He will save us)..." Isaiah 33:22

And so a dual meaning is probable. Both speak of Christ the Lord. And we see this in Paul's writings. In Ephesians 2, he calls Christ our peace and in Galatians 3, he says this about Him and the law -

"What purpose then *does* the law *serve*? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. ²⁰ Now a mediator does not *mediate* for one *only*, but God is one." Galatians 3:19, 20

Judah was the lawgiver until the true Lawgiver came from Judah.

¹⁰ (con't) **And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people.**

This is speaking of Shiloh, not Judah. However, because Jesus descends from Judah, it in essence still applies to him as well, but in a more splendid form than before. It is to Christ Jesus, of the tribe of Judah, to whom the obedience of the people will come. Everything so far has pointed to the work of God in Christ. It is all about Jesus.

III. The Blood of Grapes (verses 11, 12)

¹¹ **Binding his donkey to the vine,**

In the land of Judah, vines were more than in great abundance, as they are again today. So much so that a donkey could be tied to them almost anywhere. This then shows the immense productivity and fruitfulness of the land where Judah would dwell.

¹¹ (con't) **And his donkey's colt to the choice vine,**

The "choice vine" is literally "the vine of Sorek." It has a purple berry without any seeds and it is highly valued. And yet, it would be so common that that the donkey's colt would be tied to it. As these words are given by the Spirit through Jacob, it asks us to look at what their ultimate fulfillment is.

The same terms for donkey and donkey's colt are used in Zechariah 9:9 which speak of the coming Messiah -

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your King is coming to you;
He *is* just and having salvation,
Lowly and riding on a donkey,
A colt, the foal of a donkey." Zechariah 9:9

But even the vine has a fulfillment in Him. In John 15, Jesus calls Himself the "true Vine." Under the law, donkeys are considered unclean animals and thus they represent the gentiles - impure and ignorant of spiritual matters and yet we are tied to the true Vine, Jesus, by faith.

¹¹ (con't) **He washed his garments in wine,**

In the land of Judah, wine would be so common, it could be used like water for the most ordinary purpose, even washing clothes.

11 (con't) And his clothes in the blood of grapes.

Next Jacob prophesies that he would wash his clothes in the blood of grapes.

In this seemingly odd parallel thought, there is again a prophetic fulfillment. In Jesus, we have both a Kinsman Redeemer and an Avenger of blood. Both terms come from the same Hebrew word, *goel*. As our Kinsman Redeemer, Christ put on garments of flesh and became like us in His human nature.

He, in fact did wash his clothes (His flesh) in His own blood, becoming entirely red in His apparel, from head to foot in order to redeem us. His bloody garment became our righteousness. And Christ is also our Avenger of blood. In Isaiah 63, we see His work as the Avenger of His people -

"Who *is* this who comes from Edom,
With dyed garments from Bozrah,
This *One who is* glorious in His apparel,
Traveling in the greatness of His strength?—
'I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.'
² Why *is* Your apparel red,
And Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?
³ 'I have trodden the winepress alone,
And from the peoples no one *was* with Me.
For I have trodden them in My anger,
And trampled them in My fury;
Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments,
And I have stained all My robes.'" Isaiah 63:1-3

In His return at the end of the tribulation period, we see the fulfillment of this verse from Isaiah realized in Jesus -

"He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God." Revelation 19:13

Again as with each set of parallel thoughts, the ultimate fulfillment of these verses is found in the majestic work of Jesus Christ.

¹² **His eyes *are* darker than wine,**

The word "darker" here is used only this once in the Bible. Some translate it as "sparkling," "beautiful," "bright," or "red." The idea given here is a richness of the eye from enjoying the pleasure's of life given by God. It is a state of health and contentment.

^{12 (con't)} **And his teeth whiter than milk.**

Again, teeth which are whiter than milk implies health and strength. Such teeth belong to the prosperous and well fed, not the poor or underfed. There is a bountiful blessing pronounced upon Judah in this parallel description.

And again, this points to the work of the Messiah. In Him, there is eternal health, abundance, wholeness, and blessing. In Christ there is the free enjoyment of the good things of life which well up into everlasting contentment. Isaiah speaks of this, using the same elements, wine and milk –

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters;
And you who have no money,
Come, buy and eat.

Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.

² Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread,
And your wages for *what* does not satisfy?
Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is* good,
And let your soul delight itself in abundance.

³ Incline your ear, and come to Me.
Hear, and your soul shall live;
And I will make an everlasting covenant with you—
The sure mercies of David.” Isaiah 55:1-5

In the witness of the stars of heaven that God set in place, Judah is represented by the sign Leo, “the strong lion.” In the heavens, Leo's feet are over the head of Hydra, the great serpent as if descending on it to crush it. A celestial battle reminiscent of the Messiah crushing the serpent's head is seen in this depiction.

Between the feet of Leo is the star Regulus, which means "regal" or "kingship." In verse 10 it said that the scepter would not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh comes.

In an amazing heavenly display, on 17 February 2 BC, the Moon was positioned between Jupiter and Regulus. At 5am, looking at the western horizon, the moon would have been covering up the star Regulus with the lower fifth of its diameter.

Then 82 days later, on May 8/9th the same conjunction occurred again. This time moon covered up Regulus by the top one fifth of its diameter. In essence, the lawgiver departed from between the feet of Leo. Thus, it was a heavenly sign that the Messiah had arrived.

Again, as in last week's blessings upon Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, everything points ultimately to Jesus Christ, even to the point that the stars themselves witness to His glory. It is all about Jesus Christ because it is He who reveals the unseen Father to us.

In Him, we see the heart of God who longs to have a relationship with us, but this isn't possible without Jesus. Only He can restore the relationship that was broken between God and man so long ago.

Closing Verse: *"And it will come to pass in that day That the mountains shall drip with new wine, The hills shall flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; A fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord And water the Valley of Acacias."*
Joel 3:18

Next Week: Genesis 49:13-18 (The Blessing Upon Zebulun, Issachar, and Dan) (125th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Praise of His Brothers

When Jacob blessed Judah his son
He made him ruler over the tribes of Israel
A praise among his brothers
As his prophetic words did foretell

But these words also affect each of us
His blessing upon Judah was spoken thus:

“Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise;
Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;
Your father’s children shall bow down before you.
Judah is a lion’s whelp;
From the prey, my son, you have gone up.
He bows down, he lies down as a lion;
And as a lion, who shall rouse him?
The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes;
And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.
Binding his donkey to the vine,
And his donkey’s colt to the choice vine,
He washed his garments in wine,
And his clothes in the blood of grapes.
His eyes are darker than wine,
And his teeth whiter than milk.

Like all of the Bible, the words point to Jesus
As the Spirit of God, carried Jacob along
Giving out clues of the coming Messiah to us
Words which now fill our heart with song

In Christ we see the beauty of the plan of God
And in Christ we see His hand upon the ages
When in this difficult world we trod
We can contemplate the beauty revealed in the Bible's pages
There we find God's written and precious word
Recorded to give us hope, joy, and strength
It is truly a precious perfect sword
Given to carry us through life's length

Thank You, O God, for Your superior word
This gift which reveals Jesus our Lord

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 49:13-18

(THE BLESSING UPON ZEBULUN, ISSACHAR, AND DAN)

Introduction: Today we will continue on through three more blessings upon three more sons of Jacob. Each word was selected by the Spirit of prophecy which rested upon him to show us what would come upon the tribes of each son.

But each word is also intended to show us the marvel of the work of the coming Redeemer. Zebulun, Issachar, and Dan were real people and their tribes actually existed in the nation of Israel. But God has used them to show us His Son.

Again, as over the past two sermons, we will see how each son and the blessing upon him is actually written in the stars above our heads at night. And again, I will remind you that astrology is forbidden in the Bible. We are not to look to the stars as heavenly portents concerning our lives, futures, or destinies.

But the constellations are there, they were placed in the heavens and are named in the Bible, and they were so placed to show us something much more wonderful - the story of the redemption of man through the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

In the final blessing today, that of Dan, we will see a most striking and clear picture of His work. Many times the Bible gives reasons why Jesus came. Even He made such statements. For example, He said "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." John 6:38.

In John 9:39, He tells us that "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind." In John 10:10 He says that, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly."

These and other reasons are given for us to understand the work of Christ. But in an all-encompassing reason, John explains the main work of God in Christ. Understanding and remembering what John says will always help us to remember that we have a foe, we are in a bad spot without Jesus, but that in Him we have the victory.

So take time to remember these words from our text verse today:

Text Verse: "He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8

The devil is our foe. Without Jesus to undo his work in our lives, we have no hope. But in Jesus, and because of Jesus, we have complete assurance of victory, blessing, and eternal life. For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested. We will see an amazing portion of that work prophesied in our sermon verses and so... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Blessing Upon Zebulun (verse 13)

¹³ **"Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea;**

Jacob, after blessing Judah, now turns his attention to his tenth-born son, Zebulun. Judah was the fourth son of Israel, so this seems out of place, but Zebulun was born to Leah, not to one of the maidservants.

And so the blessing is upon *her* sons first. However, Zebulun has another brother, Issachar, who was born to Leah before he was. And yet, Jacob first blesses Zebulun before Issachar.

The record of Zebulun's birth is found in Genesis 30:19, 20 -

"Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. And Leah said, 'God has endowed me *with* a good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons.' So she called his name Zebulun."

-Genesis 30:19, 20

Zebulun means Glorious Dwelling Place, and so her words at his birth and Jacob's words now are both making a play on his name. Using the thought of "dwelling," Jacob says, "Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea."

In this verse, the word "sea" is plural. Literally, it says *zebulun lekhof yammim yishkon* - "Zebulun at the shore of the seas shall dwell." What it implies is that this tribe would fill the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee, or at least they would have access to it.

The allotment of their land after they arrived in Canaan is recorded in Joshua 19 and it doesn't seem to indicate that they actually have land on either coast at that time. However, the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus confirms that they did. Here's what he says -

"The tribe of Zebulun's lot included the land which lay as far as the Lake of Genesareth, and that which belonged to Carmel and the sea." Antiquities 5, 1, 22

Because the land was granted to them by lot, 200 years after the death of Jacob, it shows us that Jacob was speaking under the Spirit of prophecy by God who knew, in advance, that they would possess this land, reaching across the span of Israel from sea to sea.

Having said this, in the allotment in Joshua, it appears that the tribe of Asher is actually placed between the Mediterranean Sea and Zebulun. In Judges 5:17, it says these words about Asher -

"Asher continued at the seashore,
And stayed by his inlets." Judges 5:17

So how can it be said that Zebulun reached to the Mediterranean? The answer is found in the blessing of Moses upon Israel prior to His death. In Deuteronomy 33:18, 19, it says this -

"And of Zebulun he said:

"Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out,
And Issachar in your tents!

¹⁹ They shall call the peoples *to* the mountain;
There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness;
For they shall partake *of* the abundance of the seas
And *of* treasures hidden in the sand." Deuteronomy 33:18, 19

In other words, the land of Issachar is jointly used by Zebulun who has been given priority over Issachar in this blessing of Jacob. This is the reason for Jacob's words first to Zebulun before Issachar, even though Issachar was born first.

Although this might seem trivial and unneeded to know, it shows that the spirit of prophecy upon Jacob was correct, the order of the blessing has meaning, and that God's

word is vindicated as truthful. We have all the assurance that the difficulties we think are found in the Bible are simply our difficulties, not the Bible's.

Difficulties come from our unwillingness to study and check which is in question, not the surety of this beautiful treasure, the Holy Bible.

¹³ (con't) **He shall become a haven for ships,**

The Hebrew here literally says, "and he to a shore of ships." His inheritance includes a shore where ships are unloaded. These words are used to expand on the first words. As Zebulun will dwell by the haven of the sea, he will be a haven for ships that venture onto the sea.

It is a poetic repetition to solidify his previous statement and which shows us that the people of Zebulun will be a people predominantly engaged in commerce. Something which is then confirmed in the final portion of his blessing...

¹³ (con't) **And his border shall adjoin Sidon.**

Sidon was the firstborn of Canaan. His territory was at the northerly end of the land of Canaan and is known for its prominent cities of Tyre and Sidon, cities still known and occupied at Jesus' time. The city of Sidon was at the extreme northern border between Canaan and Lebanon, quite a ways from Zebulun.

But the larger territory was known for the city. This is just like the city of Tokyo in the prefecture of Tokyo. Tokyo city is just a small place, but the prefecture is large. The use of the name of the city for the larger territory is seen in the gospel of Luke -

"But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; ²⁶ but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, *in the region* of Sidon, to a woman *who was* a widow." Luke 4:25, 26

The name Sidon means "catching fish" or "plenty of fish." Because the name is given, the Bible confirms that Zebulun will have a portion of coastal territory. People attempt to tear apart the Bible as wrong because of their own lack of understanding, but Jacob's prophecy was fulfilled exactly as he spoke it to his son Zebulun.

In the witness of the stars, Zebulun is portrayed in the constellation Cancer, the crab. This is because of Jacob's words to him that he would be a "haven for ships." The companion star clusters of Cancer are Ursa Minor - the lesser bear, Ursa Major - the greater bear, and Argo - the ship.

The Greek name of Cancer is Karkinos, which means holding or encircling, which is the exact same meaning as the word used for "haven" in Jacob's blessing. That Hebrew word, *khoph*, means "surrounding" or "enclosing," just as a crab would do. The Latin, Cancer, means the same as well.

As each constellation so far has pointed to Christ, this one does too. Zebulun, or Glorious Dwelling Place, is that place where Christ dwells and where we are promised someday to reside in His presence forever. We are brought into the presence of God because of His work.

The concept of the crab, which holds or encircles us, is a picture of the eternal security of the redeemed. The great bear of Ursa is referred to in Job 38:32. It speaks of it and its cubs -

"Can you bring out Mazzaroth in its season? Or can you guide the Great Bear with its cubs?"

As the Bible notes several times, a bear will guard its cubs vehemently, just as will Christ who is our Defender. The ship star-cluster known as Argo means "a company of travelers" and is speaking of us, the redeemed of the Lord. The reason for mentioning Sidon in this verse is because it speaks specifically of the work of Jesus.

As Sidon means "catching fish" or "plenty of fish" it is speaking of the very work of Jesus in the gospels, that of His work being a Fisher of men. The entire blessing of Jacob upon Zebulun is looking forward to the work of Christ.

God has placed the stars in the heavens to tell us the story of our redemption and he has again used a son of Israel to direct our attention to this wondrous work.

Of Zebulun Moses said, prophesying of future events

"Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out

And Issachar rejoice also in your tents

Rejoice with a resounding, magnificent shout

They shall call the peoples to the mountain

There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness

*For they shall partake of the abundance of the seas
And of treasures hidden in the sand which God did bless*

II. The blessing upon Issachar (verses 14 & 15)

¹⁴ **“Issachar is a strong donkey,**

Jacob now pronounces Issachar's blessing. He is Jacob's ninth son, but the fifth born to Leah. The record of his birth is found in Genesis 30:17, 18 –

"And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. ¹⁸ Leah said, “God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to my husband.” So she called his name Issachar." Genesis 30:17, 18

His name means "He is wages." He is placed into a subordinate position behind Zebulun, but his blessing is a good one none-the less. First he is called a strong donkey. In Hebrew it is *khamor garem* - a donkey of bone. The thought of bone is one of being strong and stout.

In other words, Issachar will be like a strong stout animal. This type of donkey is a servant animal, used like an ox for plowing and other such heavy work.

¹⁴ (con't) **Lying down between two burdens;**

There appears to be a multi-level play on words in this thought. The first is that Issachar will be placed between two borders - the region of Syro-Phoenicia on one side and Samaria on the other. But the word translated here as "burdens" is used only twice in the Bible.

The other time, it is translated as "sheepfolds" in Judges 5. Let's read that now -

"And the princes of Issachar *were* with Deborah;
As Issachar, so *was* Barak
Sent into the valley under his command;
Among the divisions of Reuben
There were great resolves of heart.

¹⁶ Why did you sit among the **sheepfolds**,
To hear the pipings for the flocks?

The divisions of Reuben have great searchings of heart." Judges 5:15, 16

The idea here is that Issachar will be like a servant animal who finds rest in a comfortable spot. This is seen as we continue to the next verse...

15 He saw that rest *was* good,

The word "rest" here, *menukhah*, is the same word used to describe the still waters of the 23rd Psalm, the waters of rest. It is also the word that speaks of the Lord's resting place in the psalms and in this verse from Isaiah 11:10 -

“And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
And His **resting place** shall be glorious.” Isaiah 11:10

So far, we've seen a strong servant animal, enjoying his rest between two sheepfolds. If you know the symbolism, you can already imagine the fulfillment in Christ.

15 (con't) And that the land *was* pleasant;

Jacob prophesied that the dwelling of Issachar would be a delightful place between two areas which would provide him safety and rest.

15 (con't) He bowed his shoulder to bear *a burden*,

Because of his delightful surroundings and his well-placed position between two areas where there is safety and rest, he will be willing to bear a heavy burden upon his shoulder in order to obtain what he desires. Servitude being the key to enjoying the land of delight.

15 (con't) And became a band of slaves.

The words here are *v'hi lemas obed* - and became a forced servant. The word forced is defined as "a burden causing one to faint." In this there is certainly a play on the name Issachar. As his name means "He is wages" the thought is that in his future he will be a man of hire. In other words, his labors will be his pay; he will be a bondservant. Anyone yet seeing Christ?

In the witness of the stars, Issachar is represented by Taurus, the Bull. The strong donkey is, like the bull, used for farming as a servant animal. Jesus Christ is reflected,

particularly in the Gospel of Mark as a servant. In Jacob's blessing, he says that Issachar would rest between the two sheepfolds.

This is seen in Christ, who after accomplishing His work as the Servant, He brought together the two sheepfolds He speaks of in John 10 -

"I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. ¹⁵ As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd."

-John 10:14-16

In completion of this work, we saw Isaiah's words which said that the place of His rest would be glorious, perfectly fulfilling that portion of Jacob's blessing. In this place of rest, the land will truly be pleasant. It will be a return to the perfection that was lost when we were cast out of Eden, the Garden of Delight.

But in order to obtain this, Christ would have to bow His shoulder to a heavy burden, the cross. Thus, He exactly fulfills that portion of Jacob's blessing. In this act, Paul sums up the bondservant ministry of Christ in Philippians 2 -

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross." Philippians 2:5-8

In exact fulfillment of Jacob's blessing upon Issachar, we see the work of Christ as it is testified to in the witness of the stars placed in the heavens by God.

*I am the Good Shepherd; and I know My sheep
And am known by My own, yes they know Me
As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father
And I lay down My life for the sheep willingly*

*And other sheep I have which are not of this fold
Them also I must bring, and My voice they will hear
And there will be one flock and one Shepherd, so behold
My words are true, thus you shall not fear*

*Christ was found in appearance as a Man
He humbled Himself and became obedient
Even to death on the cross to fulfill the glorious plan
To reconcile us to God, His work all-sufficient*

III. The Blessing Upon Dan (verses 16-18)

¹⁶ “Dan shall judge his people

Jacob now pronounces Dan's blessing. He is the fifth son born to Jacob and the first of four born to his two concubines. He is the first born to Bilhah, the maidservant of Rachel. The work of Christ is so exactly referred to in these three verses that we cannot overlook a word. Here is the account of his birth from Genesis 30 -

"Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die!"

² And Jacob's anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, 'Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?'

³ So she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear *a child* on my knees, that I also may have children by her." ⁴ Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her. ⁵ And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.

⁶ Then Rachel said, 'God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son.' Therefore she called his name Dan." Genesis 30:1-6

His name means "Judge." And so both at his birth and now at Jacob's final words to him, a pun is made - In Hebrew he says, *dan yadin* - "judge will judge." Dan shall judge his people. By saying this, it would ensure that Dan and the other sons of the maidservants would be considered as equal in status to the other tribes.

They would have the right to their own independent rule within their tribe. If Jacob didn't pronounce this now, then the other tribes may have subordinated them after his death. And so Dan remained an independent tribe, just as the other sons of the maidservants did. The term judge here means "to plead the cause of" or "to help" as much as it means "one who judges."

In this, we see a prophecy pointing to Jesus, the true Judge of His people. In 1 John 2:1, we see Jesus called our Advocate, something which the term "judge" implies -

"And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John 2:1

However, He is also our Judge in the sense we often think of - one who determines a judgment or sentence concerning a particular matter. This is seen many times in the Bible, such as this from Acts 10:42, 43 -

"And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God *to be* Judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins." Acts 10:42, 43

¹⁶ (con't) **As one of the tribes of Israel.**

In addition to self-rule within the tribe, Dan also produced a judge for all of Israel - Samson, who was from Dan. And like Jacob's blessing upon Dan, Samson himself will also picture Christ.

¹⁷ **Dan shall be a serpent by the way,**

In these words, Dan is likened to a serpent. The word for serpent here is *nakhash*. It is the same word used for the serpent in Genesis 3:1, which speaks of the devil -

"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made." Gen 3:1

Because Dan is likened to this serpent, and because the tribe of Dan isn't listed among the tribes of Israel in Revelation 7, it has been speculated that the antichrist may be a descendant of Dan.

However, even if this is so, this prophecy is still looking forward to the greater work of Christ. The same word is used also in Numbers 21:4-9 during the wilderness wanderings-

"Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. ⁵And the people spoke against God and against Moses: "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For *there is* no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread." ⁶So the LORD sent fiery

serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.

⁷ Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD that He take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

⁸ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery *serpent*, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live." ⁹ So Moses made a bronze **serpent**, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived."

Jesus referred to this exact account in John 3 while speaking to Nicodemus. Yes, when Jesus spoke to "Nick at night." -

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:14, 15

The serpent by the way is figuratively speaking of Jesus hanging on the cross on the highway outside the city of Jerusalem. There at Golgotha, He, like the bronze serpent, was placed on a pole for all the world to look to for healing.

¹⁷ (con't) **A viper by the path,**

The word "viper" here is the Hebrew word *shephiphon*. It is an adder, a horned serpent. Dan is likened to this, but again the word is pointing to Christ. This word, *shephiphon*, comes from a root word, *shuph*, which means to bruise.

This word, *shuph*, is used in Genesis 3 after the serpent deceived Adam and Eve. There, in Genesis 3:15, comes the first explicit hint of the coming Redeemer and His work -

"And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall **bruise** His heel." Genesis 3:15

¹⁷ (con't) **That bites the horse's heels**

The adder, or the horned serpent, is the color of sand and so it's not so easy recognized. Because of this, he can easily bite at a horse or anything else that fails to see it. This snake's bite is both poisonous and fatal. It is a perfect description of the devil who deceives those around him. Paul exactly speaks of such deceit in 2 Corinthians 11:13-15 -

"For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works." 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

The devil disguises himself and deceives us. He melts into the world around us and before we realize it, he bites at the heel. In his bite we sin, and in our sin we die. This is how the Bible portrays the work of this vile serpent.

But we are given hope, help, and a cure for such things, just as the people of Israel were. In the wilderness wanderings as we saw, the people were bitten by snakes. The word for "bite" used three times in that passage is the same word, *nashakh*, that Jacob uses here.

The cure for the bite of the serpent was the bronze snake which pictured Christ. The cure for all false teachings and being deceived by the devil is likewise Christ. Jacob is continually tying the two together. Word after word is pointing back to the fall and forward to the work of Christ - the One who will be bruised in the heel and yet who so marvelously crushes the serpent's head.

¹⁷ (con't) **So that its rider shall fall backward.**

The viper which bites at the heels will cause it's rider to fall backward, implying that he is thrown from his horse. The symbolism is to the fall of man. Adam was to be the ruler of his domain, but the serpent deceived him and he fell.

However, the opposite is true for the One who is coming and who would practice righteousness and justice, Jesus. He will remain in control of His mount and will never be thrown. Jeremiah speaks of this, looking forward to any such king who would come -

"Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, you who sit on the throne of David, you and your servants and your people who enter these gates! ³ Thus says the LORD: "Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the

hand of the oppressor. Do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. For if you indeed do this thing, then shall enter the gates of this house, riding on horses and in chariots, accompanied by servants and people, kings who sit on the throne of David." Jeremiah 22:2-4

Revelation 19 shows us the fulfillment of the reversal of the curse brought about by the viper -

"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes *were* like a flame of fire, and on His head *were* many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. ¹³ He *was* clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. ¹⁵ Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. ¹⁶ And He has on *His* robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." Revelation 19:11-16

"Faithful and true and in righteousness He judges." The words to Dan in this ancient blessing by Jacob are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The same themes keep coming up again and again, permeating the pages of the Bible and showing us the glorious work of Jesus Christ.

Thus far, the blessing upon Dan has looked time and again back to the fall and forward to the One who would undo the work of the devil. And as if in a crescendo of joy and anticipation, Jacob now cries out as if he cannot wait a moment longer for Him to come.

From his beating heart where the home of eternal hope is, he cries out for that moment...

***¹⁸ I have waited for your salvation, O LORD!**

lishuatekha qiviti Yehovah! לִישׁוּעָתְךָ קִוִּיתִי יְהוָה: (2:53)

In the first use of the word *yeshua* of the Old Testament, the Spirit of prophecy which has rested upon Jacob directs him to the greatest pun of all. The word *yeshua* means

"salvation." But it is also the name given to the Lord. Though we call Him Jesus, His Hebrew name is Yeshua.

In essence, and certainly not understanding his own words in their fullness, Jacob cries out for the Redeemer who will undo all the wrongs. He is the promised Seed of the woman; He is the fulfillment of every type and picture one could imagine. He is the anticipation of every story and every hidden treasure of Scripture.

He is Jesus. And so Jacob cries out, "I have waited for Your Jesus, O Lord!" In the witness of the stars, Dan is represented by Scorpio, the Scorpion. According to the work of Dr. Hales, "On the celestial sphere the Scorpion is actually represented as biting the heel of the horse of the archer Sagittarius."

The three clusters around Scorpio are, Serpens - the serpent struggling with the man; Ophiuchus - the man grasping the serpent; and Hercules - the mighty man who is kneeling on one knee, humbled in the conflict, but holding high the tokens of victory and with his foot on the head of the dragon.

It is a picture of the final fulfillment of the promise made all the way back at the fall of man. The serpent would strike the Redeemer's heel, but He would crush the serpent's head. It is the witness of the stars and it is all about Jesus Christ.

Closing Verse: *"Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;*

Let the sea roar, and all its fullness;

¹² *Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it.*

Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the LORD.

¹³ *For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth.*

He shall judge the world with righteousness,

And the peoples with His truth." Psalm 96:11-13

Next Week: Genesis 49:19-21 (The Blessing Upon Gad, Asher, and Naphtali) (126th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Dwelling Place, Wages Paid, and Judgment Rendered

Jacob blessed his sons before he died

And three of them were Zebulun, Issachar, and Dan
By the leading of the Spirit of God, the words he cried
All showing us clues to the redemption of man
These are the words upon these three he did pronounce
The ancient oracles which through him the Spirit did announce:

“Zebulun shall dwell by the haven of the sea;
He shall become a haven for ships,
And his border shall adjoin Sidon.

“Issachar is a strong donkey,
Lying down between two burdens;
He saw that rest was good,
And that the land was pleasant;
He bowed his shoulder to bear a burden,
And became a band of slaves.

“Dan shall judge his people
As one of the tribes of Israel.
Dan shall be a serpent by the way,
A viper by the path,
That bites the horse’s heels
So that its rider shall fall backward.
I have waited for your salvation, O Lord!

In these six verses are treasures of life and of love
Woven into them are pictures of our Lord Jesus
Spoken through Jacob came words from the heavens above
Words that show us of Christ's work for us

How can there be so much love, how can it be so?
That God would send His Son for us, to die
But He did and through the Bible we can know
The marvelous story revealed, every how and why

Thank You for this glorious wondrous word, O God
Thank You for these stupendous things You have done for us
May we forever praise You while in this life we trod
May our lips exalt You through our Lord, our Savior, our Redeemer... Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 49:19-21 **(THE BLESSING UPON GAD, ASHER, AND NAPHTALI)**

Introduction: In the Bible, God records events especially from the central point of Israel and in particular Jerusalem. When directions are noted, they are normally from that vantage point. In the same way, when a celestial occurrence is noted, such as the rising of the sun, it is given from man's perspective on earth.

The sun doesn't really rise. The earth is spinning on its axis and as the earth turns, the perception for us though is that the sun is rising. This, along with many other examples of heavenly occurrences in the Bible, are noted from our perspective on earth. A constellation from any other angle wouldn't be the constellation as we know it.

And yet, God has included constellations in His word, clearly showing us that they have relevance to us from how He placed them, which is from our vantage point, directed from earth looking upward. The same is true with other signs in the heavens which are spoken of in both testaments of the Bible.

These are never to be used for divination, and yet, God shows us what they are to be used for, which is understanding His working on our behalf. Again, as we have seen for the last three sermons, we will witness Jacob speaking under the Spirit of prophecy words which point to the heavenly signs God has placed in the sky - all of which reveal His plan of redemption, centering on the work of Christ.

Text Verse: *He counts the number of the stars;
He calls them all by name.*

*⁵Great is our Lord, and mighty in power;
His understanding is infinite. Psalm 147:4, 5*

God spoke the universe into existence and by the power of His word, it stood firm. From nothing came all things. In a mere six days he fashioned everything suitable for His highest creation, man - a temporal/spiritual being; one intended to fellowship with Him in a unique way.

But before He made the man, He knew the man would fall. The spiritual would be lost and man would be separated from Him. And so, to show that He has complete control over that state of affairs and that the spiritual side of man would be healed, He placed the stars in heaven in a way which would show the entire healing process.

Along with that plan, He slowly revealed Himself through His word. As the heaven's testified, so His word confirmed. There is a plan, there is hope, and there is redemption. And it is all to be found in the giving of His son, Jesus Christ.

Not a story, paragraph, or even a word in the Bible is without relevance. And all of it, even the smallest letter is there because God placed it with infinite wisdom and care. And the care is because it reveals to us His entrance into His own creation in the Person of Jesus Christ.

The key to understanding where all of human history is heading is found in His superior word, so let's turn to that wondrous book once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Blessing Upon Gad (verse 19)

¹⁹ "Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him,

In these three sons today, Jacob will continue to bless the sons of his concubines. Dan was the first and he has received his blessing. Jacob now turns his attention to his seventh-born son, Gad. He is the third son born to a concubine and the first born to Leah's maidservant Zilpah. The record of Gad's birth is found in Genesis 30:9-11 -

"When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife. ¹⁰ And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. ¹¹ Then Leah said, "A troop comes!" So she called his name Gad."

The name Gad is an interesting study and it's difficult to pin down its exact meaning or what Leah was thinking when she named him. It could be, as some speculate, that Leah stopped bearing children because Jacob stopped going in to her.

If this is the case, then her giving Zilpah to Jacob seemed as much of a necessity as what Rachel did because she was barren. She may have been desperate to find the love that had eluded her by having more children through the maidservant.

Gad could mean either "troop," as in a large group, or "fortune." If it's a troop, then she was excited about the large family which had come from her - a whole troop. Or if fortune, her exclamation would be that she had good luck in her struggle to find that love and affection she desired.

It seems that either way, the name Gad is a reflection of Leah's sad state. Unlike her other children, she never invoked the name of the Lord when he was born. Instead, He was completely left out of the struggle that existed between herself and her sister in either thanks or praise.

And now, at the end of Jacob's life, regardless of what Leah was thinking when Gad was born, either troop or fortune, Jacob ties his name in with the word "troop" by using the Hebrew word *gedud* which is a marauding band.

In these words of blessing are found a beautiful three-fold alliteration known as a paronomasia which will provide a double-play on the name of the tribe of Gad. Jacob exclaims, *gad gedud yegudennu* (2:59).

Unfortunately, it is lost in translation, but several translators have done their best to keep this amazingly alluring alliteration alive. One translation from Keil says "Gad - a press presses him, but he presses the heel" Another, *The Speaker's Commentary* translates it as "troops shall troop on him, but he shall troop on their retreat."

Jacob's prophecy is looking forward to the character of the tribe that will come from him. They will be warlike as 1 Chronicles 12:8 later describes them -

"Some Gadites joined David at the stronghold in the wilderness, mighty men of valor, men trained for battle, who could handle shield and spear, whose faces *were like* the faces of lions, and *were* as swift as gazelles on the mountains:"

-1 Chronicles 12:8

The reason for Gad being warlike was because of necessity. As a tribe, they settled to the east of the Jordan instead of the land of Canaan. Because of this, they were exposed to sudden incursions of plunderers without the protection of the greater body of Israel around them.

In their many conflicts and difficulties recorded in the Bible, they made war alongside the other tribes who settled to the east of the Jordan. In 1 Chronicles 5:18-22, we read this about them -

"The sons of Reuben, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh *had* forty-four thousand seven hundred and sixty valiant men, men able to bear shield and sword, to shoot with the bow, and skillful in war, who went to war. ¹⁹ They made war with the Hagrites, Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab. ²⁰ And they were helped against

them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all who *were* with them, for they cried out to God in the battle. He heeded their prayer, because they put their trust in Him. ²¹ Then they took away their livestock—fifty thousand of their camels, two hundred and fifty thousand of their sheep, and two thousand of their donkeys—also one hundred thousand of their men; ²² for many fell dead, because the war *was* God's. And they dwelt in their place until the captivity."

Along with these groups, they are noted as fighting against the Ammonites, Moabites, and Arameans. Jacob's prophecy perfectly suites what occurred in the history of Gad. But finally, there was a point where the land of Gad was overrun and occupied by outsiders. This is recorded in Jeremiah 49 -

"Thus says the LORD:
'Has Israel no sons?
Has he no heir?
Why *then* does Milcom inherit Gad,
And his people dwell in its cities?'" Jeremiah 49:1

Despite this exile, Jacob assures them that they would finally overcome as we continue with verse 19...

¹⁹ (con't) **But he shall triumph at last.**

The Hebrew words are *v'hu ygud aqev*. Literally, "and he presses the heel." It is a symbol of victory similar to what is seen in Joshua 10 where Israel stood in victory over the kings they defeated by placing their feet on their necks. Here is how that is recorded -

"So it was, when they brought out those kings to Joshua, that Joshua called for all the men of Israel, and said to the captains of the men of war who went with him, 'Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings.' And they drew near and put their feet on their necks." Joshua 10:24

Some scholars see this as prophecy to Gad fulfilled at the time of David when the Moabites and Ammonites were finally subdued. But this isn't correct. Just a minute ago we saw in Jeremiah that their land was overtaken by the enemy which was after the time of David.

However, just one verse later, the Lord, through Jeremiah, promised that Israel would again assume control of the land. This is recorded in the later chapters of Ezekiel which

speaks of the future, where the tribe of Gad is given an inheritance in the land. And Gad is also one of the sealed tribes recorded in Revelation 7.

Matthew Henry likens this to the cause of God and all his people. In his poetic way of describing things, here is what he says about Gad triumphing at last -

"The cause of God and his people, though for a time it may seem to be baffled and run down, will be victorious at last. It represents the Christian's conflict. Grace in the soul is often foiled in its conflicts; troops of corruption overcome it, but the cause is God's, and grace will in the end come off conqueror, yea, more than conqueror." Henry

This may be true in a certain sense, but the words of Jacob, like all of them thus far, point to the work of Christ. In Micah 5, the word used for "troop" here is used again. It concerns the gathering of the Babylonians against Israel.

But there in the same passage is also the promise of the coming Messiah. This gathering of troops beautifully reflects Jacob's word to Gad –

"Now gather yourself in troops,
O daughter of troops;
He has laid siege against us;
They will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek.

²But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
Though you are little among the thousands of Judah,
Yet out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose goings forth *are* from of old,
From everlasting.¹

³Therefore He shall give them up,
Until the time *that* she who is in labor has given birth;
Then the remnant of His brethren
Shall return to the children of Israel.

⁴And He shall stand and feed *His flock*
In the strength of the LORD,
In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God;
And they shall abide,
For now He shall be great
To the ends of the earth;

⁵And this *One* shall be peace." Micah 5:1-5

In the second half of the prophecy, the Hebrew indicates that He will press them with his heel. The word for "heel" in this verse is used several times in this same construct. Of them, one is in Genesis 3:15 when the Lord spoke to the serpent -

"And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel." Genesis 3:15

Another use is in the 41st Psalm when referring to Judas who would betray Jesus. There it says -

"All who hate me whisper together against me;
Against me they devise my hurt.
⁸'An evil disease,' *they say*, 'clings to him.
And *now* that he lies down, he will rise up no more.'
⁹Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted,
Who ate my bread,
Has lifted up *his* heel against me." Psalm 41:7-8

The symbolism is perfectly clear. Though the devil struck the heel of the Messiah by having one of His own disciples lift up his heel against Him, He prevailed by pressing His own heel to crush the serpent's head. The entire prophecy, though proclaimed over Gad, and also fulfilled in him, is ultimately a prophecy of Christ to come.

In the witness of the stars, Gad is represented by the sign Pisces, the fish. In Hebrew, there is an anagram on his name. Gad is spelled gimel, dalet. Reversing these to dalet, gimel produces the word *dag*, or fish.

The connecting constellations to Pisces are the *Band* which unites the fish, *Andromeda* - the Chained Woman, and *Cepheus* - the Crowned King. The Egyptians called Pisces "the fishes of Him that cometh." The Band specifically means "He cometh." And Andromeda is named *Set*, meaning, set up as a queen.

EW Bullinger notes that this constellation, Pisces the fish, has always been interpreted as Israel. However, there are two fish in the constellation. These two fish of Pisces refer, with certainty, to all the redeemed, both Jew and Gentile.

The picture is clear and easily understood from the prophecy given by Jacob. And how interesting it is that the symbol of the fish, even from the earliest days, has been a symbol of Christianity. The stars witness to the plan of redemption formulated by God from the time of creation.

*Out of you shall come forth to Me
The One to be Ruler in Israel
Whose goings forth are from of old, from eternity
Even from everlasting, as My word does tell*

*Therefore He shall give them up then
Until she who labors has given birth as My word does foretell
Then the remnant of His brethren
Shall return to the children of Israel*

*And He shall stand and feed His flock
In the strength of the LORD
In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God
And they shall abide, this My spoken word*

*For now He shall be great
Even to the ends of the earth
And this One shall be peace
The end of sadness, pain, and dearth*

II. The Blessing Upon Asher (verse 20)

²⁰ **"Bread from Asher *shall be rich,***

The next blessing falls to Jacob's eighth-born son, Asher. He is the fourth son born to a concubine and the second born to Leah's maidservant Zilpah. Genesis 30:12, 13 records Asher's birth -

"And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. ¹³ Then Leah said, 'I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed.' So she called his name Asher."

There is no dispute on the meaning of Asher - it means happy. It comes from a verb, *ashar*, which means "to be straight" or "to go straight." For most of us, we tend to like

the straight and quick path to where we are going, whether literally or in a project. This is what makes us happy.

When an arrow flies straight, it hits its mark. When we put up a wall, we want it to be straight, not crooked. In each of these things, being straight gives us the sense of what is correct and what leads to happiness.

Leah was happy at his birth and gave the reason by saying, "the daughters will call me blessed." As before, she didn't mention her husband, nor did she include the Lord in her statement.

Not much is seen or heard of from Asher in the rest of the Bible, other than standard genealogies and the like. But there is one calling of them, along with other tribes, to go to war in Judges 6 and 7.

Also, after Israel divided into two nations, 2 Chronicles 30 says that some of the people from Asher came to Jerusalem at King Hezekiah's request to celebrate the Passover and humble themselves before the Lord.

But of the times that Asher is noted, the most famous is actually found in the New Testament where a woman of great faith from the tribe of Asher was granted the honor of beholding the Messiah before her death. Something that surely made her happy. She is noted in Luke 2 -

"Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity;³⁷ and this woman *was* a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day.³⁸ And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Luke 2:36-38

Jacob's prophecy of Asher was fulfilled literally in the land allotment to the tribe when it was granted. It is in the lowlands along the seacoast between Mt. Carmel and Tyre and is an area fertile and abundant in both grain and oil.

²⁰ (con't) **And he shall yield royal dainties.**

Because of the rich soil of the area, Asher was certainly fit to provide, as the Hebrew reads, *maadaneh melekh*, or "delicacies of a king." In 1 Kings 4, one of the governors

appointed under Solomon was from Asher and it was his responsibility to provide "food for the king and his household... for one month of the year."

Again, the blessing points to Christ, as each has thus far. Asher's bread shall be rich. This is certainly an illusion to the body of Christ. His words indicate that His body is the richest of all breads. In John 6:35, He said, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

In John 6:41, He then spoke saying, "I am the bread which came down from heaven." And then repeating Himself and expanding on that, He said in John 6:51, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

In the second half of the verse, it says "he shall yield royal dainties." The word "dainties" is from the same root as the word *eden* which is used in Psalm 36 which speaks of the river of pleasures, a picture of the water flowing from the royal throne of God in the New Jerusalem -

"How precious *is* Your lovingkindness, O God!
Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings.
⁸They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house,
And You give them drink from the **river of Your pleasures**.
⁹For with You *is* the fountain of life;
In Your light we see light." Psalm 36:7-9

Though the blessing is upon Asher and his tribe, it ultimately looks forward to what is realized in the coming Messiah. Even the name of Asher which comes from that verb, *ashar*, which I mentioned earlier is used when speaking of the God of Israel, where in Psalm 72 this is recorded –

"His name shall endure forever;
His name shall continue as long as the sun.
And *men* shall be blessed in Him;
All nations shall call Him **blessed**.
¹⁸ Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel,
Who only does wondrous things!
¹⁹ And blessed *be* His glorious name forever!
And let the whole earth be filled *with* His glory.
Amen and Amen." Psalm 72:17-19

In the witness of the stars, Asher, whose bread is rich, is represented by Virgo who is seen holding a full ear of wheat, from which bread is derived.

The three accompanying constellations are *Coma* - the desired; *Centaurus*, the Centaur with two natures, holding a spear and piercing a victim; and *Bootes*, a man walking bearing a branch called Arcturus. Each of these specifically points to the work of Christ in the history of redemption. And each are well detailed by EW Bullinger in his book, *The Witness of the Stars*.

*How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God!
Therefore the children of men put their trust in You
Under the shadow of Your wings and guided by your rod
To You alone are all our praises due*

*We are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house
And You give drink from the river of Your pleasures
For with You is the fountain of life
In Your light we see light eternal without borders or measures*

*To You we look and our hope is in Your gospel story
Only to You who does such wondrous things
And let the whole earth be filled with Your glory
As we behold the unfolding of your counselings*

III. The Blessing Upon Naphtali (verse 21)

²¹ **"Naphtali is a deer let loose;**

The final blessing upon the son of a maidservant falls to Jacob's sixth-born son, Naphtali. He is the second son born to a concubine and the second born to Rachel's maidservant Bilhah. The record of Naphtali's birth is found in Genesis 30:7, 8 -

"And Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. ⁸ Then Rachel said, "With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, *and* indeed I have prevailed." So she called his name Naphtali."

The meaning of Naphtali isn't as easy to determine as some of the others. Naphtali means either "my wrestling" or "my twisting." If it is *wrestling*, then it is referring to the struggle Rachel felt she was in with Leah - one of being the preeminent wife of Jacob.

If so, her exclamation at his birth is, "With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed." They were in a battle and she is now on top.

But the name Naphtali comes from the word *patal* which means to "twist." And so one translator says, "By the twistings of God, I am entwisted with my sister."

The difference in the translation is important because in the first, it is her struggle against her sister and she has prevailed. But in the second it is God's designs that have allowed her to participate in building the family which previously was only by her sister.

If it is the first translation, she was showing an arrogance in condemning her sister even after God had been gracious to her through children. If it is the second, then she was showing gratitude to God for allowing her to be included in His plans as He built up Jacob's home. As you can see, differences in translation really do matter.

But whichever is correct for the naming of him at birth, Jacob's blessing upon him sets him free. Instead of being caught in a wrestling or a twisting, Jacob says that Naphtali is a deer let loose.

In other words, he isn't pursued by hunters, and he also isn't caged up in a pen. Naphtali is free to roam and feed upon any pastures he desires. Again, there isn't much concerning Naphtali in the Bible. In Judges 5, they are noted along with Zebulun for jeopardizing their lives to help in a time of need during a great battle.

They did the same during another battle in Judges 6 and 7. And later in 1 Kings 7, a craftsman named Hiram whose mother was from Naphtali was hired by Solomon to cast the main implements used in the temple in Jerusalem.

²¹ (fin) **He uses beautiful words.**

Whatever the connection to the future of Naphtali that this verse is pointing to, the Bible doesn't make any direct reference to it. Because of this, it is more than likely a prophecy specifically speaking about the ministry of the Lord, and only generally to the people of Naphtali.

Again as before, the words were given by the Spirit through Jacob and ultimately point to Christ. The work of God in Christ is what sets a man free. Using the same symbolism of the deer, we read this about the Lord in the 18th Psalm -

"He makes my feet like the *feet of* deer,
And sets me on my high places." Psalm 18:33

It is the Lord who sets the deer free and allows him to run in the open places. And in Jacob saying that Naphtali uses beautiful words, nothing could be more appropriately said about Jesus.

The power of the gospel, unlike any other power in history, has been displayed more through words of beauty than by any display of force. The land of Naphtali ran all along the shores of Galilee and it is from there that sweet voice of the Lord most strikingly went out. As John Gill notes concerning this verse -

"Galileans, were swift to obey his call, and left all and followed him, and were sent out by him to preach his Gospel; and both he and they may be said to "give goodly words", as the doctrines of the Gospel are, words of grace, truth, and life; wholesome, comfortable, pleasant and delightful; good tidings of good things, of peace, pardon, righteousness, salvation and eternal life by Christ: and the inhabitants of this country in Christ's time were swift to run after him, and hear him; panted after him as the hart after the water brooks, and both received and gave out the goodly words of the Gospel, and were made free thereby, and so like an hind let loose." John Gill

It is to this group of people, along with Zebulun, that Isaiah made his prophecy of the great Light which would fill the land -

"Nevertheless the gloom *will not be* upon her who *is* distressed,
As when at first He lightly esteemed
The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
And afterward more heavily oppressed *her*,
By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan,
¹ In Galilee of the Gentiles.
² The people who walked in darkness
Have seen a great light;
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,
Upon them a light has shined." Isaiah 9:1, 2

Matthew used this very verse from Isaiah to show that it was fulfilled, in its entirety in the Lord Jesus. Certainly every word of the prophecy points to the One who spoke it through the breath of his dying servant Jacob.

In the witness of the stars, Naphtali is revealed by a play on his name *Naphtali*. It is used to form the word *taleh*, which is a ram or a lamb - the sign of Aries. The three conjoining constellations of Aries are *Cassiopeia*, the Enthroned Woman; *Cetus*, the Sea Monster; and *Perseus*, the Breaker.

For those familiar with the rest of the Bible, the imagery, especially of the Lamb is everywhere, pointing to Christ. The other conjoining constellations are very well described by Bullinger in his book and point to the work of the Messiah in defeating the devil and leading His people in a glorious procession.

Particularly exceptional is the connection to Perseus, the Breaker. This work of Christ is wonderfully seen in the words of Micah which say this -

"The one who **breaks** open will come up before them;
They will **break** out,
Pass through the gate,
And go out by it;
Their king will pass before them,
With the LORD at their head." Micah 2:13

The Hebrew name of Perseus is Perez and its where the Greek name we use is derived from. This is the same word used to describe the one who breaks forth in this passage from Micah.

As you can see again, as we have seen in every blessing so far, Jesus is perfectly and exactly revealed in these words of Jacob to his sons.

And likewise, the stars themselves witness to the splendor of what God has done, is doing, and will complete in and through His Son, our Lord Jesus. As David says in the 19th Psalm -

"The heavens declare the glory of God;
And the firmament shows His handiwork.
² Day unto day utters speech,
And night unto night reveals knowledge." Psalm 19:1, 2

Everything that God has revealed is to us shows us His great love for us. Were it not so, He wouldn't have taken the time to give us His plan in the heavens, His word for our guide, and His Son for our redemption. This is how much God loves us and how certain it

is that He desires us to know Him personally. And the only way we can do that is to call on Jesus and come to know Him through His word.

Closing Verse: *Your word is a lamp to my feet*

And a light to my path.

106 I have sworn and confirmed

That I will keep Your righteous judgments. Psalm 119:105, 106

Next Week: Genesis 49:22-26 (The Blessing Upon Joseph and Benjamin) (127th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Triumph, Royal Bread, and Beautiful Words

Jacob blessed his sons before he died
Three of them were Gad, Asher, and Naphtali
By these precious words we are notified
Of a portion of God's plan of redemption in history

Upon these three, these words he did pronounce
Prophecies of things to come which God's Spirit did announce:

“Gad, a troop shall tramp upon him,
But he shall triumph at last.

“Bread from Asher shall be rich,
And he shall yield royal dainties.

“Naphtali is a deer let loose;
He uses beautiful words.

Just three verses, so short and to the point
And yet filled with treasures immeasurable
Upon the dying lips of Jacob he did anoint
Pictures of Christ which are ascertainable

Such wisdom and splendor revealed in God's word
Hints of the future not discernable in nature alone
Words which tell us of our precious Lord

Of His life and of His death which for our sins do atone

The glory of God is written in the stars above
And it is explained so carefully in His precious book
There we see of the plan, the Life, the love
And so let our eyes to it every day take a look

Be not weary and skip over this pleasure
In it you will find the greatest of treasure

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 49:22-27

(THE BLESSING UPON JOSEPH AND BENJAMIN)

Introduction: So far we've looked at the blessing of Jacob upon 10 of his sons. Today we'll look into the last two blessings - those of Joseph and Benjamin, the sons of his beloved wife Rachel. In these blessings, like all of the others thus far, we will see the future of the sons' tribes revealed.

But more than that, we will again see that every word pronounced points to the work of Jesus Christ. The 19th century Bible commentator, Charles Ellicot, wrote these words about the blessing upon Joseph, a blessing we will look at in just a moment -

"And thus Jacob magnifies again and again, but in obscure terms, his blessing upon Joseph, which, when analyzed, amounts simply to excessive fruitfulness, with no Messianic or spiritual prerogative." C.J. Ellicot

Ellicot looked at the blessing as a mere earthly pronouncement with nothing more in it. In it he found no Messianic or spiritual hints. If this were true, then what would be the purpose of even including it? In fact, what would be the point of the majority of the stories we've looked at in the past 127 sermons?

Without Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of every type, picture, story, and sacrifice that we see, the entire Bible truly makes no sense. It appears disjointed, hard to follow, and without any ultimate purpose. It appears to be a convoluted book of meandering stories that often seem bizarre or irrelevant to the world in which we live.

But when viewed in the greater perspective of God revealing Himself through Jesus Christ, the entire book not only begins to make sense, it becomes a cohesive whole that makes absolute sense. Let us never fail to look for Christ in every story, on every page, and in every detail. He is there and He is telling us that He has a plan and that we can trust in Him.

Text Verse: *"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me." John 5:39*

The Scriptures have their purpose and that is to point us to Jesus Christ. When Jesus spoke these words to those around Him, only the Old Testament existed. What this means is that He is to be found in the Old Testament. If one can search the Scriptures to

find a testimony of Jesus, then the implication is that all of those Scriptures are a testimony of Him.

When we open the pages of the Bible, we are looking at words written about Him. We will see this yet again today, numerous times. In the end, it is all about Jesus Christ and how he deals with us - Jew and Gentile, Israel and the church. So let's go to this superior word now and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Blessing Upon Joseph (verses 22-26)

Today, we will see Jacob bless his final two sons, both the sons of his beloved wife Rachel. He first blesses Joseph, the elder of the two. The record of Joseph's birth is found in Genesis 30:22-24 -

²²"Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.
²³ And she conceived and bore a son, and said, 'God has taken away my reproach.'
²⁴ So she called his name Joseph, and said, 'The LORD shall add to me another son.'"

Unlike all his older brothers, the name Joseph then is based on two words, not one. The duality in his name looked not only backward, but also forward. The word for "has taken" used by Rachel is *asaph*. The word for "add" is *yosef*. Both point to his name.

In taking away the reproach, Rachel looked for the Lord to give her another son and so she named him Yosef - he shall add, increase, repeat, or double. The name he received was literally fulfilled in two ways. First, he had a brother, Benjamin.

But Joseph himself also had two children - Ephraim and Manasseh. In taking away her reproach, God showered Rachel with His grace. The name Joseph, as we have seen through many sermons, has been fulfilled not only literally in a brother and in sons, but in many, many other ways as well.

He has continuously pictured Christ throughout the stories God has given. This blessing upon him will be no different. It is comprised of four divisions.

- 1) His prosperity which is likened to a vine;
- 2) A trial between him and his foes;
- 3) His prevailing over his foes;

4) His receiving the blessing of heaven, sea, earth, and his paternal family. It is an exact comparison to the Person and work of Jesus.

²² **“Joseph is a fruitful bough,**

Ben porat yoseph - literally "son fruitful (is) Joseph." In this, by using the word *porat*, there is a play on the name of Ephraim, a name which we have seen the immense importance of in previous sermons. Without the need for too much detail, we have seen Joseph's entire life pointing to the work of Christ.

The fruitfulness of Joseph in the sons which descend from him is reflective of the fruitfulness of Christ in bringing many sons to glory. Jesus Himself used this same metaphor in John 15:1, 2 -

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit."

²² (con't) **A fruitful bough by a well;**

Ben porat ale ayin - "son fruitful by the well." A vine can only live if watered. If by a well, it will not only live, but flourish. The symbolism of a fruitful tree or vine is given many times in the Bible. Psalm 1 is a perfect example of the spiritual application of this temporal truth -

"Blessed *is* the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
² But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
³ He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper." Psalm 1:1-3

Joseph shot forth two luxuriant branches who were noted as sons of Israel, Ephraim and Manasseh. Christ, the embodiment of the law, is like a Vine who has also put forth branches, from Jew and Gentile - both of which are most fruitful.

22 (con't) **His branches run over the wall.**

banowt saadah ale sur - **daughters** run over the wall. The symbolism is beautiful. The last sections spoke of a son, this one speaks of daughters. It is a family affair! When a vine is by a wall, it absorbs the heat of the wall. As long as it has a continuous source of water, the heat will do as much to make the vine fruitful as the water itself.

Eventually, it will shoot its branches completely over the wall and take advantage of even more space, support, and heat. It is a beautiful metaphor from nature which looks to the work of Christ throughout all of history, past, present, and future.

Like the giving of his name which looked both backward and forward, this blessing does the same. In the past, Joseph prudently gathered the fruit of Egypt for the famine and preserved both Egypt and his family, allowing them to flourish.

But in the future, his son's tribes would spread and flourish throughout the land of Israel, covering territory on both sides of the Jordan. And they would be fruitful at all times of redemptive history as well.

During the time of punishment upon the Jews, the people of Ephraim would in essence run over the wall to become the fullness of the Gentiles. The imagery given by Jacob concerning Joseph is exactly fulfilled in Christ in every way.

*Blessed is the man, one of the winners
Who walks not in the ungodly's counsel
Nor stands in the path of sinners
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful
But in the law of the Lord is his delight
And in His law he meditates day and night*

*He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water
That in its season brings forth its fruit
Whose leaf also shall not wither
And whatever he does shall prosper, for deep is his root*

**²³ The archers have bitterly grieved him,
Shot *at him* and hated him.**

A literal rendering of this verse would be "provoked him, and shot at, and laid snares for him, masters of arrows" (Pulpit Commentary). This, like the previous verse, looks both backward to Joseph's life and forward to Christ.

Using harsh words and actions against someone is often likened to the shooting of arrows in the Bible. A great example of this is found in the 64th Psalm -

"Hear my voice, O God, in my meditation;
Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.
² Hide me from the secret plots of the wicked,
From the rebellion of the workers of iniquity,
³ Who sharpen their tongue like a sword,
And bend *their bows to shoot* their arrows—bitter words,
⁴ That they may shoot in secret at the blameless;
Suddenly they shoot at him and do not fear." Psalm 64:1-4

The actions of Joseph's brothers are described here by Jacob. His brothers reviled him, and acted against him by throwing him into the pit and then selling him off to the Egyptians. Those sermons showed how the events perfectly mirrored the events of the life of Jesus.

Even while on the cross, the symbolism he uses now of archers and arrows comes to mind. From the 22nd Psalm which speaks of the cross, we read this -

"But I *am* a worm, and no man;
A reproach of men, and despised by the people.
⁷ All those who see Me ridicule Me;
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,
⁸ 'He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him;
Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!'" Psalm 22:6-8

Matthew cites this very verse when describing what occurred when Christ was crucified-

"Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, ⁴² 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come

down from the cross, and we will believe Him. ⁴³ He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.' ""

-Matthew 27:41-43

Again, the Spirit of God is calling to mind the work of Jesus Christ as it will unfold in the future of redemptive history.

²⁴ **But his bow remained in strength,**

Despite the attacks by the archers, meaning his brothers of the past and those who come against Christ in the future, the bow of each remained in strength. The word for strength here shows that this is a prophecy of the future and not just what occurred in the past.

It is the word *ethan* which indicates going on forever without cessation, such as flowing streams or the constancy of the eternal hills. And it is the word from where we derive our modern name Ethan. So if you ever meet an Ethan, you can tell him that his name means perennial, ever-flowing, or permanence.

This enduring bow of God is referred to elsewhere in Scripture, such as in the 7th Psalm-

"God *is* a just judge,
And God is angry *with the wicked* every day.
¹² If he does not turn back,
He will sharpen His sword;
He bends His bow and makes it ready.
¹³ He also prepares for Himself instruments of death;
He makes His arrows into fiery shafts." Psalm 7:11-13

Despite being crucified, being vexed, and being shot at, the attacks of the enemies could not prevail against Christ. His bow truly did and does remain in strength as He prepares for battle.

²⁴ (con't) **And the arms of his hands were made strong**

The Hebrew for the words "were made strong" is *pazaz* and is difficult to translate. It probably means more like pliant, or nimble. The only other time the word is used is in 2 Samuel 6:16 where it speaks of King David leaping.

"Now as the ark of the LORD came into the City of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David **leaping** and whirling before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart."

The idea is that despite being attacked, Joseph was able to overcome the attacks and he remained nimble and able to continue with his affairs without interruption. It is a beautiful picture of Christ who was nailed to the tree and yet walked out of the tomb on the third day under his own power, ready to walk all the way to Emmaus that same day without any difficulty at all.

²⁴ (con't) **By the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob**

This term, the Mighty God of Jacob, will be used 5 more times in the Bible, both in the Psalms and in Isaiah. Isaiah 49 says this –

"I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh,
And they shall be drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine.
All flesh shall know
That I, the LORD, *am* your Savior,
And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." Isaiah 49:26

Joseph's hands were strengthened by the Lord and such is the same with Christ. The dual fulfillment of these words is a glorious testament to the Spirit of prophecy being uttered by Jacob.

²⁴ (con't) **(From there *is* the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),**

This portion of verse 24 is very complicated and debated over. It is either speaking of the time of Joseph's exaltation to being the leader of Egypt and thus *he* is the shepherd and the stone of Israel, or it is speaking of the fact that Joseph's strength was derived from the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel, meaning the Lord.

Because of the difficulty, it is certainly referring to both. As Joseph pictured Christ, he was the shepherd of his people and the stone which upheld and supported them, just as Christ is the Shepherd of His people and the Stone of their foundation as a people.

As the same time, it is from God that Joseph received his abilities and authority, as he himself said. And likewise, Jesus came from God. His humanity and His deity are united in such a way that both are true of Him. He is the Good Shepherd of John 10 and He is

the Stone which the builders rejected who has become the Chief Cornerstone which is mentioned in both testaments of the Bible.

The entire passage is spoken as a blessing upon Joseph and his sons after Him and yet it is a prophecy of the greater work of Christ Jesus as presented throughout the entire body of Scripture.

²⁵ By the God of your father who will help you,

These words follow on in a continuous thought from the previous verse. In other words, the God who made his arms strong is the God who will help you. Jacob calls Him "the God of your father" showing his eternity and so He is the Source of all help.

This is perfectly reflected in the 118th Psalm when referring to Christ who is helped by the Lord. These words are found in the same psalm that refers to Jesus as the Stone -

"You pushed me violently, that I might fall,
But the LORD helped me.

¹⁴ The LORD *is* my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation." Psalm 118:13, 14

²⁵ (con't) And by the Almighty who will bless you

Shaddai, or the Almighty is the one who provides fruitfulness, ensures the protection of the people, and gives them an inheritance in the land in which to dwell. The Lord is the Almighty, and it is the Lord in whose name Jesus came and in whose name Jesus was blessed. Again, from that key 118th Psalm, we read this -

"Blessed *is* he who comes in the name of the LORD!
We have blessed you from the house of the LORD." Psalm 118:26

Every word finds its fulfillment in Jesus.

²⁵ (con't) *With* blessings of heaven above,

The blessings of the heaven above in the earthly sense are the dews and rains upon the land, the sunshine, the favorable winds, and the clouds which give relief from the heat. The blessings of heaven above in the spiritual sense are the positions of power, authority, and honor.

²⁵ (con't) **Blessings of the deep that lies beneath,**

The blessings of the deep in the physical world are those things which fill life with abundance and wealth - minerals, metals, oil and gas, fish life in the waters, cisterns of water hidden in the ground, and so on.

In the spiritual world, they are the keys to death and Hades, and the precious souls of men who have been locked up captive in those places.

²⁵ (con't) **Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.**

The blessings of the breasts and of the womb in the earthly sense are how men and beasts are multiplied and nourished. It is a blessing upon Joseph for many descendents as well as large herds of cattle, sheep, and other animals.

In the spiritual realm, these blessings are the increase of the redeemed and the pure spiritual milk of the word by which they are nourished. In the earthly sense, all of these were pronounced upon Joseph. In the spiritual sense, these words are all spoken of Jesus. The blessings of heaven, earth, and fruitfulness all point to Christ.

Again here, as with every word of this chapter so far, all of Jacob's pronouncements have been directed by the Spirit to show the future of Joseph's tribe and at the same time to reveal Christ Jesus.

²⁶ **The blessings of your father
Have excelled the blessings of my ancestors,
Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.**

The NIV translates this verse differently by saying, "Your father's blessings are greater than the blessings of the ancient mountains." This is based on the several different manuscripts of the Old Testament, including the Greek translation of it.

It also would then match the blessing of Moses upon Joseph's tribe which is recorded in Deuteronomy 33, and it would match the continuous thought that Jacob is presenting. Whichever is actually correct, the idea is that Joseph has received an immense blessing.

And, in fact, it is a greater blessing than those received by his ancestors because it includes the double blessing of his two sons. The blessings are so great that they reach

"to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills." This is a way of saying that they shall never end. They are eternal in nature.

Because of this, it is ultimately pointing to Christ, whose throne is forever. And in Him is the greatest blessing of all. The book of Hebrews speaks of the supremacy of Christ and attributes many blessings from elsewhere in the Bible to Him, such as this one -

"But to the Son *He says:*

'Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever;

A scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your kingdom.

⁹You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;

Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You

With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.'" Hebrews 1:8, 9

²⁶ (con't) **They shall be on the head of Joseph,**

The head is the highest point of the man and it is the place which more distinguishes a person from another than any other feature. When a person is anointed with oil as a blessing or conferment of authority, it is upon their head.

When a person is filled with joy, it is said to be upon their head. This is seen in Isaiah when speaking of the ransomed of the Lord -

"And the ransomed of the LORD shall return,

And come to Zion with singing,

With everlasting joy on their heads.

They shall obtain joy and gladness,

And sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Isaiah 35:10

The blessings conferred upon Joseph then are said to be upon his head as a mark of distinction to be seen and enjoyed by all.

²⁶ (con't) **And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.**

The crown of the head isn't talking about *a* crown *on* the head. Instead it is speaking of *the* crown *of* the head - the very top part of the head. The words are parallel to what he just said, but they intensify the words he spoke. Not only is there a blessing upon his head, but upon even the very crown of it. Again, this is reflective of the words of Hebrews 1:9 when speaking of Christ -

"Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

And Jacob finishes with the words, "of him who was separate from his brothers." The word for separate is the word *nazir*. It is the source of where the word Nazirite comes from.

This certainly has a two-fold meaning of not only having been separated from his brothers by a long period when he was persecuted and humiliated, but also the elevation of him to extraordinary dignity and even preeminence.

And this is an exact picture of Christ Jesus in both ways. He was persecuted, humiliated, and separated from His brothers while at the same time being exalted and given preeminence over them. As an interesting connection to the New Testament, Jesus is called a Nazarene in Matthew 2:23 where it says this -

"And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'"

However, nowhere in the Old Testament is the coming Messiah specifically called a Nazarene. This then leaves only a couple possibilities for what Matthew was referring to. One is the word *netser*, which means branch and which is referred to in Isaiah 11:1, or he was speaking of this word *nazir* which Jacob uses. Or, he was referring to both.

The word *nazir* here, and the word Nazarene in the New Testament both mean "consecrated one." As Joseph has consistently pictured Christ, and because Jacob is prophesying by the Spirit of God, it is likely that the words of Matthew are the fulfillment of this ancient prophecy by Jacob over his beloved son Joseph.

In the witness of the stars, Joseph is represented by the constellation Sagittarius, the Archer or Bowman. This is certain because of the words "his bow remained in strength." Sagittarius is commonly represented with bow bent and an arrow drawn up to the head in full strength.

As represented in the constellation, we see this exacting description of Christ given in the 45th Psalm -

"You are fairer than the sons of men;
Grace is poured upon Your lips;

Therefore God has blessed You forever.

³Gird Your sword upon *Your* thigh, O Mighty One,
With Your glory and Your majesty.

⁴And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, *and*
righteousness;

And Your right hand shall teach You awesome things.

⁵Your arrows *are* sharp in the heart of the King's enemies;
The peoples fall under You." Psalm 45:2-5

The connecting constellations to Sagittarius are Lyra, the Harp, which symbolized praise prepared for the Conqueror; Ara, the Altar, which indicates God's fire of judgment on His enemies; and Draco, the Dragon, who is that old serpent the Devil who is cast down from heaven to earth.

The symbolism is clear in the prophecies over Joseph and in the work of Christ presented in the Bible. The heavens declare the message of the Redeemer, our Lord Jesus, prefigured by this blessing upon Joseph.

*God is a just judge, One who is not slack
And God is angry with the wicked every day
Certainly, if he does not turn back
He will sharpen His sword with which to slay
He bends His bow and makes it ready
He also prepares for Himself instruments of death
He makes His arrows into fiery shafts
By which man will breathe his last breath*

*I will praise the Lord according to His righteousness all my days
And to the name of the Lord Most High I will sing songs of praise*

II. The Blessing upon Benjamin (verse 27)

***27 "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;
In the morning he shall devour the prey,
And at night he shall divide the spoil."**

Benjamin's blessing seems at first contrary to what one might expect of a beloved son of Rachel, but it exactly reflects the future of his people and even the work of Christ

himself. A ravenous wolf is bent on its mission and is completely determined in its purposes.

The word for "ravenous" here is *yitrapph*, which indicates to tear. Hence a wolf that tears. The idea of him devouring in the morning and dividing the spoil at night indicates a ceaseless effort. The history of Benjamin in the time of the judges is perfectly reflected in this several times.

In one instance, they came against all of the other tribes of Israel in battle. At that time 26,000 men fought against and prevailed over 400,000. Eventually, they were beaten down to only 600 men, but they came back as a tribe, dividing the spoils of women who became their wives in order to repopulate their numbers.

In the early history of Israel, the first king, Saul, was a Benjamite who devoured his prey on all sides as 1 Samuel 14 records -

"So Saul established his sovereignty over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, against the people of Ammon, against Edom, against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines. Wherever he turned, he harassed *them*.⁴⁸ And he gathered an army and attacked the Amalekites, and delivered Israel from the hands of those who plundered them." 1 Samuel 14:47, 48

At the other end of the Old Testament times, Mordecai and Esther, of the tribe of Benjamin prevailed over the wicked Haman and divided his spoils. Thus Saul tore in the morning and Mordecai and Esther divided the spoils in the evening.

In the morning of the church age, there is Paul of the tribe of Benjamin who started as a ravenous wolf, persecuting the church, but eventually came to Christ. Since then his letters have been and are now church doctrine until this day, even at the end of the age.

When the tribulation comes, the 144,000 sealed of Revelation, pictured by Benjamin in our previous sermons, will complete the work of dividing the spoils before Christ returns to reign on earth. These are the constant patterns seen in the people of Benjamin, all prophesied by Jacob over his youngest son.

Ultimately though, even Benjamin's blessing points to the work of Christ. It is the Lord who tears and the Lord who heals, as we see in Hosea 6 which uses the same word for torn as is used in Benjamin's blessing -

"Come, and let us return to the LORD;
For He has **torn**, but He will heal us;
He has stricken, but He will bind us up.
² After two days He will revive us;
On the third day He will raise us up,
That we may live in His sight.
³ Let us know,
Let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD.
His going forth is established as the morning;
He will come to us like the rain,
Like the latter *and* former rain to the earth." Hosea 6:1-3

It is also the Lord who divides the spoil of his labors. The great suffering Servant passage of Isaiah uses the same Hebrew terms to speak of Him that is used of Benjamin by Jacob-

"Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,
And He **shall divide the spoil** with the strong,
Because He poured out His soul unto death,
And He was numbered with the transgressors,
And He bore the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors." Isaiah 53:12

There are numerous other patterns and pictures of both Joseph and Benjamin which are fulfilled in Christ, but time doesn't allow more than what we've seen. And what we have seen demonstrates that every word spoken by Jacob over his twelve sons points directly to the work of Jesus Christ. And all of it has not only been recorded in the Bible, but it has been placed in the heavens above us to see.

In the witness of the stars, the final constellation represented by Benjamin is Capricorn. On the Egyptian sphere, according to Dr. Hales, it was represented by a goat led by pan, with a wolf's head.

The three accompanying constellations are Sagitta, The Arrow; representing the arrow of God sent forth; Aquila, The Eagle, which is the smitten One falling; and Delphinus, the Dolphin, who is the dead One rising again.

With a few variations in what I have presented over these past five sermons, the book The Witness of the Stars written by EW Bullinger in 1893 gives a snapshot of the redemptive plans of God which are placed in the stars as a heavenly view for us to see.

It would be good to be reminded now as we close that using the stars for divining the future, or as guides for our daily life, is forbidden in Scripture. This is no different than misusing the Bible for these same purposes.

What God has given us in these things is for the purpose of seeing His plan of redemption, centered on Christ. Not a plan for our prosperity which is centered on us. And the reason why is obvious, it is all about Jesus Christ. From Him and for Him and to Him are all things.

We are merely the recipients of His love and grace; a love which is meticulously recorded in the Bible for us to read, believe, and cherish. If you have never called out to Christ to save you, this is the most important thing you could ever do.

Closing Verse: *"He teaches my hands to make war,
So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.
³⁵ You have also given me the shield of Your salvation;
Your right hand has held me up,
Your gentleness has made me great." Psalm 18:34, 35*

Next Week: Genesis 49:28-33 (Jacob Breathed His Last) (128th Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

A Fruitful Bough and A Ravenous Wolf

The blessings of the sons of Israel
Are finished in Joseph and Benjamin
Marvelous things of their future, the blessings do tell
And of Christ the Lord too, words which point to Him
And so upon these two sons, these words he did proclaim
Prophecies of things to come given to each by name:
"Joseph is a fruitful bough,
A fruitful bough by a well;
His branches run over the wall.

The archers have bitterly grieved him,
Shot *at him* and hated him.
But his bow remained in strength,
And the arms of his hands were made strong
By the hands of the Mighty *God* of Jacob
(From there *is* the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel),
By the God of your father who will help you,
And by the Almighty who will bless you
With blessings of heaven above,
Blessings of the deep that lies beneath,
Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.
The blessings of your father
Have excelled the blessings of my ancestors,
Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.
They shall be on the head of Joseph,
And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers.
“Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;
In the morning he shall devour the prey,
And at night he shall divide the spoil.”

With these words the blessings upon his sons are complete
The prophecies have been uttered by the Spirit to each
Some were harsh while others were sweet
But in the end, into our souls they do reach
They ask us to look inside and believe what we have heard
The words were fulfilled in the tribes of each son
But they also speak of more, they tell about our Lord
Pointing to Him and the many great things He has done
And in the skies the story has been shown
With signs pointing to God's beautiful plan for us
To us these wondrous things are made known
Which tell of our Savior, our Lord, our Redeemer - Jesus

Who could hold back from giving Him their praise!
May it never be so, but let us exalt Him all of our days
Great is the Lord, great, majestic, and wondrous
He is worthy of all honor. He is our Lord Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 49:28-33 **(JACOB BREATHED HIS LAST)**

Introduction: When we talk about being "in" something, we mean that we are a part of it in an intimate way. If we are "in" the military, we are a part of the military. We are entitled to all of the benefits and the responsibilities that being in the military entails.

We are accountable to the line of authority in the military, and we are responsible for our conduct which is laid out in specific manuals which detail exactly what we should do, how we should act, even how we should cut our hair.

If one of us were in a rock band, everyone would identify us by that band. Our every action would be associated with the band collectively. And all of the fun things that go along with being in the band would fall on us individually, just as with every member.

This is what it means to be "in" something. It is as if we are fully immersed in it - as if we were to dive into the ocean and be completely covered by it. Today we'll look at how being "in" something, or someone, from a biblical perspective is more important than any other thing we could ever participate in.

Text Verse: *"Precious in the sight of the LORD
Is the death of His saints.*

¹⁶ O LORD, truly I am Your servant;

I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant;

You have loosed my bonds.

¹⁷ I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving,

And will call upon the name of the LORD." Psalm 116:15-17

In our verses today, we will see the final moments of the life of Jacob. They are moments of a man who is living and dying in faith and in anticipation of great things to come in his future, even after his death. In other words, his hopes transcend this earthly existence and are rooted in a great reality, one which is eternal in nature.

The hope of Jacob is the hope of Messiah and the hope of Messiah is realized in the person of Jesus Christ. No other person can give us this hope, and to not be found in Him means a sad eternity awaits. But in Christ, there is hope which has its basis in God's sure word. And so let's turn to that precious and superior word again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. The Twelve Tribes of Israel (verse 28)

²⁸ All these *are* the twelve tribes of Israel,

At the beginning of chapter 49, these words were recorded -

"And Jacob called his sons and said, "Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days:" Genesis 49:1

Since that verse, the blessings have been pronounced. Our first verse of today then shows the completion of the thought from verse 1. And here we see the first use of the term "the twelve tribes of Israel." In this case, it is what is known as a metonym.

A metonym is a word, name, or expression which is used as a substitute for something else with which it is closely associated. We use the term "Hollywood" when speaking of the film industry. We use the term "Washington" when speaking of the government.

In this case, the term, "the twelve tribes of Israel" is speaking of the tribes which will descend from these twelve sons who were just blessed. This wasn't a mistake, nor is it something that we should quickly pass over as if it were unimportant.

Instead it is a prophetic announcement that the son's descendants belong to the sons. They are "in" their fathers before them and those fathers in turn are "in" Jacob. And therefore we can see that the prophecy upon the sons is to be applied to the descendants. The two are inseparably linked.

From a biblical standpoint, we should ask, "Why is this important?" The answer is that the concept of being "in" someone in the Bible indicates being represented by them. In Hebrews 7, we read this about Levi being "in" Abraham who gave a tithe to someone named Melchizedek -

"Now consider how great this man *was*, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. ⁵ And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; ⁶ but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷ Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. ⁸ Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. ⁹ Even Levi, who

receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak,¹⁰ for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him." Hebrews 7:4-10

Time and again, the Bible uses this concept of being "in" someone to remind us that we are all descendants of Adam by blood and thus we are "in" Adam. This is why there are such meticulous genealogies recorded in both Testaments of the Bible.

It is to show the connection which goes all the way back to Adam who was created by God. When Adam sinned, we therefore sinned "in" Adam. Paul explains this in Romans 5:12 -

"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." Romans 5:12

This is also one of the reasons why Jesus' two genealogies are listed, one in Matthew and one in Luke. It is proof that He is truly and fully human and thus qualified to be our representative for human matters. But He is also truly and fully God and therefore He can mediate our human matters with His infinite Father.

Such metonyms as "Adam" which represents all of mankind, and "the twelve tribes" which are represented by the twelve sons of Israel are constant reminders of the importance of Jesus Christ. The reason is that if we are "in" Adam, we are dead; we are spiritually disconnected from God. A transfer has to take place to reconcile this or we will be forever "in Adam."

The wonder of God's plan is that if we are found "in" Christ, then the spiritual connection is restored and thus life, eternal life, is also restored. Reading the words "the twelve tribes of Israel" here asks us to think on a completely different level than what the mere words sound like when they come off our lips.

Instead, the Bible is calling our attention to the grandeur of God's plans for the people of the world in these five simple words - "the twelve tribes of Israel." A beautiful example of this, right from Hosea will show us how God looks at us as being "in" someone.

At the beginning of Hosea 11, the Lord uses the singular when speaking of the people of Israel being called out of Egypt. Though singular, it is speaking of the whole. Here is how it is recorded -

"When Israel *was* a child, I loved him,
And out of Egypt I called My son." Hosea 11:1

However, just a few verses later, speaking of Ephraim, the younger son of Joseph and a single individual, look at how God views his descendents -

"I taught Ephraim to walk,
Taking **them** by **their** arms;
But **they** did not know that I healed **them**.
⁴ I drew **them** with gentle cords,
With bands of love,
And I was to **them** as those who take the yoke from **their** neck.
I stooped *and* fed **them**." Hosea 11:3, 4

Such terminology is everywhere in the Bible and it reminds us that we cannot change who we are. We are in our father, who is a son of Adam and thus we are in Adam. There is nothing we can do about it... but God can. And so the admonition for us is, "O fallen son of Adam, come to Christ Jesus. He will make all things new."

²⁸ (con't) **and this is what their father spoke to them.**

It is to these twelve sons that Jacob spoke his blessing, and he did so under the influence of the Spirit of God. The blessings were fulfilled in the descendants and they are also fulfilled in both the witness of the stars as well as in the precious pages of the Bible which testify to the work of God in Christ.

Only God who knows the future could have laid out the prophecies so exactly and specifically, and yet Moses records the words which say, "and this is what their father spoke to them." God's gracious hand was upon Jacob, directing him, and speaking through him as the two harmoniously blended into the sounds and words of prophecy.

As we saw during those twelve individual blessings, every line pointed to the work of God in Christ. It is amazing how carefully and meticulously everything has been laid out for this purpose.

²⁸ (con't) **And he blessed them; he blessed each one according to his own blessing.**

The twelve sons were blessed at this time, but prior to this, Jacob's two grandsons were adopted into the family and thus became independent tribes. Therefore, depending on

how the tribes are listed, there often seems confusion in who the twelve tribes are. But there is none. Specific names are used at various times for specific reasons.

These twelve sons were blessed independently of Joseph's sons because they are those who are witnesses in the constellations which reveal God's plan. Later in Deuteronomy 33 during Moses' blessing, Simeon will be omitted and Ephraim and Manasseh will take place of Joseph.

In Numbers 2 when counting the tribes, Simeon will be retained, Levi will be omitted and Ephraim and Manasseh will again replace Joseph. And in Revelation, a different order will be used. Each time there are reasons for these changes, not errors or blunders, but wisdom and harmony as God unfolds His plan of the ages before our eyes.

*Wisdom is displayed in the pages of God's word
Every detail carefully selected to show us about Jesus
It is all about Him and He is our Lord
Surely God has so revealed these wondrous treasures to us*

*Search the pages! Look carefully through each line
There we see God's beautiful redemption plan
As if it were a feast, on every precious word we can dine
And see the splendor of how God became a Man*

*Redemption is found in Him, to Him let us look
Fixing upon Him our eyes, and thoughts, and heart
And searching diligently for Him in this precious book
To the Bible! To its message! To the wisdom it does impart*

II. The Cave of Machpelah (verses 29-32)

²⁹ Then he charged them

The word "charged" here in Hebrew is *tsavah*. It is a command or an order. It's the same word seen back in Genesis 2:16, 17 which records these ominous words, the first words ever spoken to man by God -

"And the LORD God **commanded** the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'"

Mi kol ets ha-gan a-kol tochel, uh-me-ets ha-da-at tov va-ra, lo tochal mimenu ki beyom akholkha mimenu mowt tamut (2:44)

Like the commandment of God to Adam, Jacob is not asking, but is rather instructing. "This is what you are to do." It is of such importance to him, that they are spoken with the last breaths of his life. They must follow through with his words.

^{29 (con't)} **and said to them: "I am to be gathered to my people;**

His words are words of faith. To die is one thing. To say "I am returning to the dust" merely implies that we are a product of the ground under our feet and that we will again be a part of that same ground. But to say, "I am to be gathered to my people" implies that his people have not merely returned to the dust.

Instead, it is a form of anticipation that where his people are, there he will be as well. Whether you believe in evolution or creation, you are still acknowledging that your existence is a part of something more than just the dust. If evolution, then your people, like you are random chance - a god all its own.

But if you, like Jacob, believe in creation, then you are in essence returning to your God when you are gathered to your people. This is exactly what Solomon speaks of in the book of Ecclesiastes -

"Then the dust will return to the earth as it was,
And the spirit will return to God who gave it." Ecclesiastes 12:7

Jacob is voicing faith in his Creator by saying that he will be gathered to his people. He is from Isaac, who is from Abraham, who... well, you can go right back to Adam and then to God who breathed the breath of life into him. Jacob is dying in faith.

^{29 (con't)} **bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite,**

For this and the next three verses, Jacob is going to give exceedingly specific detail about the cave where he wishes to be buried. All he really needed to do was to say, "Bury me in the cave with my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, and the rest of the family who are there." That would have been sufficient, wouldn't it?

But instead, he gives names, places, and specific details. Because he does, it is asking us to evaluate his words in the same detail. The Spirit of prophecy is speaking and He asks

us to think. And we will. Before we finish this thought, we will understand why he spoke so exactly.

There are two parts to a man, not three. People speak of the body, soul, and spirit, but man is a soul-body unity. The soul is eternal and the body is temporal. If the soul is reconnected to God before death, then their final destination will be a happy one. If it isn't, then it will be a sad one.

Jacob's soul was to be gathered to his fathers, his body was to be buried with them as well. He has firmly noted a distinction between the two and this distinction is confirmed throughout Scripture. Paul's words to the Corinthians show us this explicitly -

"For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, ³ if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked." 2 Corinthians 5:1-3

Jacob's soul will now be naked, without a body. But his request to his sons demonstrates that he is certain it will not always be this way. He is a man looking forward to the wonderful promise of God which came just moments after the fall of man. He is looking to the promise made to Abraham, and to Isaac, and to him. He is looking forward to the Messiah.

³⁰ in the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place.

The record of this purchase is found in Genesis 23 and is recorded at the time of the death of Abraham's beloved wife Sarah. Jacob has already said the cave is in the field of Ephron the Hittite. And yet, Abraham bought that field when he bought the cave.

He then says that it is in the field of Machpelah, and that it is before Mamre, and in Canaan. The term for "before" is *al pene* or "in the face of." Literally, it is "in the face of Mamre." He then notes that the field was bought from Ephron the Hittite as a possession. The detail is exacting and it shouts out for us to look, research, and determine why.

One commentator said that the particular details were given "because they had been some years absent thence; and to express how much his heart was set upon this matter; and thereby to oblige them to the more careful performance of his command." Poole

Another said all the detail was given because someone may have laid claim to the cave and they would need the details to prove otherwise (Gill), but details don't prove anything without proof. Neither of these explanations are credible. The words are too exact and are intended for us to contemplate in detail.

³¹ There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah.

The importance of every word recorded in the Bible can be seen in this verse. The death of Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac are each recorded in varying detail, however, there is no record of the death or burial of Rebekah or Leah until this verse.

This shows us that God selects details for specific reasons. Those things which are unimportant in regards to His plans are simply ignored. People, places, times, and events are only recorded to lead us to understanding the work of Christ. No word is missing and no word which is recorded is superfluous.

³² The field and the cave that *is* there *were* purchased from the sons of Heth."

Unexpectedly, Jacob refers to the purchase as being from "the sons of Heth." Ephron *is* a Hittite, or a son of Heth, and so this seems to be unnecessary. But it isn't, just like everything else he has said, it is there for a reason.

To fully understand the detail surrounding Jacob's words, you really need to go back and watch the sermon on Genesis 23, there the same detail that Jacob relays concerning his burial spot is given, along with much more.

The entire chapter pointed to the work of Christ. Abraham at that time pictured Christ who made a purchase on behalf of humanity. Jacob relays enough of the details today for us to be reminded of this. It is the hope that all true believers should have and should carry with them. Here then are the names and their meanings:

Ephron means "of the dust." He is a picture of Adam, who was created from the dust as is recorded right at the beginning, in Chapter 2 of the Bible. Therefore, he represents all of us. He is identified as a Hittite which means "terror" or "fear."

The verb which "Heth" is derived from is usually used to indicate a depletion of strength or to take away an essential support or support structure. Thus Jacob calling him Ephron the Hittite is showing us a picture of Adam who has lost his essential support. In other words, the fall of man which brought us to a state of terror.

From this fallen man, Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah. The meaning of Machpelah is "double." It signifies the double delivery from death which Jesus procured for His people. He didn't come to just purchase the title deed to the world for Jews, but He did it for gentiles as well. His death filled this double role. Ephesians 2 explains this –

"Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace,¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father." Ephesians 2:11-18

The next word mentioned is Mamre which means "bitter" or "strong." The idea of bitterness is one of being a strong taste or experience. Mamre represents the bitter, fallen world which Jesus comes to reclaim.

After this, Canaan is named. This comes from the verb *qana* which means "humbled," "subdued," or "lowly." The HAW Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament says, "It denoted bringing a proud and recalcitrant people or spirit into subjection." It therefore pictures those who are humbled.

After this, it again mentioned that the cave was brought from Ephron the Hittite, repeating what had already been said. Then after that, the names of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, and Leah were all mentioned as being buried there. Each is found to be in this cave, a cave which looks forward to the resurrection.

With the inclusion of Jacob in the tomb, there will be the three great patriarchs and their wives, each of which is an ancestor of Jesus. That is six people, male and female, who then represent all humans, *six* being the biblical number of man.

And then, as a final follow up, he mentions one more time that the field and cave were purchased. They have a new owner. The old owners were "the sons of Heth." This name Heth is where the term Hittite comes from.

It means "terror" and is a picture of all the people of the world who are in Adam and who live in fear of death because they cannot meet God's standard of the law. When it was given at Mount Sinai, the people trembled in terror and asked not to hear God speak to them directly again.

Since the law was given, men have lived in terror because there is no way we can live up to its standards. Paul explains this in Galatians 3. It condemns all to death. It is from these sons of Heth, or "sons of terror" that the purchase was made. Hebrews 2 explains the terror of death which permeates mankind –

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Hebrews 2:14, 15

This cave then is symbolic of the earth, the repository for the dead. This is seen time and time again in the Bible. Jacob knows his body is going to that repository now to be buried with his people. And so he begins by asking to be buried in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite.

Instead of saying the cave bought by Abraham, he first says it this way. It is a picture of the world as it is now. Next, he calls it "the cave that is in the field of Machpelah" which shows that it is a double cave. It contains Jew and Gentile, male and female, all who are redeemed by the Lord.

This cave is before, or literally, "in the face of" Mamre, meaning bitterness. It is the state of the world. There is bitterness in death and there is bitterness on the way there as well. But it is in the land of Canaan. It is in the land of those who are humbled and brought into subjection before the Lord.

Because of this, he again notes that the field was bought by Abraham from Ephron the Hittite, from the man filled with terror, who is from the dust, in the land of the humbled, the cave was bought. There in that cave six were buried, and there the field and the cave were bought from the sons of Heth - the sons of terror.

So taking all of this terminology and combining it into what I believe Jacob is saying under the influence of the Spirit, this is what we come up with:

"I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of the man of dust, the fallen man who is filled with terror, in the cave that is in the field of double - Jew and Gentile, which is in the face of bitterness in the land of the humbled, which (the) Father of many nations bought with the field of the fallen man of the dust, the one filled with terror, as a possession for a burial place. There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah. The field and the cave that is there were purchased from the sons of terror." Charlie Garrett's interpretation of
-Genesis 49:29-32

Everything that has been said here is a recalling of what was given in Genesis 23. It is Jacob's hope in the future while being planted in the ground in the present. Through the Spirit, he tells his sons and thus us that he is a seed waiting to sprout forth from this spot to eternal life someday, all because of the work of Messiah.

This is the hope of the redeemed, that though our body will someday be laid in the dust, we are promised and assured of a new one, an everlasting one that will never perish. This is what Paul speaks of in 2 Corinthians 5.

*For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed
We have a building from God, a house not made with hands
This one will last eternally, one forever to be enjoyed
A body which through the endless ages withstands*

*For in this we groan, earnestly desiring
To be clothed with our heavenly habitation
If indeed, for to this we have been aspiring
To be clothed through a glorious transformation
Then we shall not be found naked nor bare
For us glorious garments Christ does now prepare*

III. The Death of Jacob, Who is Israel (verse 33)

³³ And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons,

Again it notes that Jacob had *commanded* his sons. What was spoken was expected to be with all of their participation. He had already secured a guarantee on oath that Joseph would ensure his burial there in Canaan, but now we see that all of the sons are expected to be a part of it.

The meticulous wording concerning his burial is especially important to note because Jacob didn't say all these things when he previously charged Joseph. In chapter 47, when that charge was given, the only words used were these -

"Now if I have found favor in your sight, please put your hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me. Please do not bury me in Egypt, ³⁰ but let me lie with my fathers; you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place." Genesis 47:29, 30

Instead, he waited until all the covenant sons were present to say what he said. Such seemingly unimportant things are actually of the highest importance as we look into the mind of God as the Spirit has revealed it in His word.

The purchase of the cave and field were in anticipation of the resurrection which would be realized in Messiah. All of the sons of Israel were to participate in ushering Him into the world as the sons of the covenant, as the people of Israel. This is why Jacob waited to speak these words in front of all the sons.

Their hope was to be that great hope which will be seen throughout all of the rest of the prophetic writings, right up until the time that John the Baptist cries out the words, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29

It is Israel who would carry the blessing and also the bear the burden of the law which only He could fulfill. Jacob's words were a command which looked forward to the wondrous day when the world of terrified, fallen man would be bought back by the Lord whom he had so intimately fellowshiped with.

And now, at the end of a long life filled with blessings and trials, joys and sorrows, he was ready to receive his final reward...

33 (con't) he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last,

Jacob was born in the year 2169AM to Isaac and Rebekah. He was the younger of twins, and his life was used in the most astonishing way to show us pictures of all of redemptive history. The seven dispensations of time were seen in his movements in and out and throughout the land of Canaan.

The two exiles of the people who would come from him were pictured in events from his life. And the majestic work of Jesus Christ was seen again and again in his actions and movements. God directed his each and every step for us to behold the marvelous work of Christ.

Jacob lived 147 full years and finally expired in the year 2316AM. The most recorded and detailed life in the book of Genesis finally came to an end in a most peaceful way. It says that "he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last."

Having blessed his sons from a sitting position, certainly being sustained by the anointing of the Spirit upon him, he now felt content to lie back down and enter into the splendor of eternity.

***33 (fin) and was gathered to his people.**

Just a few short minutes earlier, he knew that his time was ending. Now it is realized. The soul left the body, thus demonstrating once again that man is more than just a physical being. His request to be buried in Canaan implies that the body is separate from the soul and that the souls of his ancestors were in a separate place than where their bodies lay.

For him to be gathered to his people now, and for his body to be buried more than 70 days later, shows two distinct occurrences; one spiritual, and one physical. There is Jacob the man who walked in this fallen world and who was destined to die.

And there is Israel who fellowships with His God and who continues on through his people after him. It is to and through this group of people that the Messiah eventually came. The hope of fallen man was realized in the Person of Jesus Christ, Jacob's greatest descendant.

And that hope still rings true today. If you are found in Adam when you die, you will

never receive the glorious promises of heaven and eternal life. But if you are found in Christ, they are yours by a covenant settled in His own blood.

Closing Verse: *"Remember these, O Jacob,
And Israel, for you are My servant;
I have formed you, you are My servant;
O Israel, you will not be forgotten by Me!" Isaiah 44:21*

Next Week: *Genesis 50:1-14 (The Burial of Jacob) (129th Genesis Sermon)*

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Death of Jacob

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel
And this is what their father to them addressed
And he blessed them as the Bible does tell
Each one according to his own blessing he blessed
Then he charged them and to them said
"I am to be gathered to my people, but it's alright
Bury me with my fathers in the cave in the days ahead
That is in the field of Ephron the Hittite

In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah
Which is before Mamre in the land of Canaan
Which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron
The Hittite for a burial place as a possession
There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife
There they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife too
And there I buried Leah when her days were through

The field and the cave that is there
Were purchased from the sons of Heth
As each of you is now aware
And when Jacob had finished, his sons commanding
He drew up into the bed his feet
And breathed his last as his life was ending
And was gathered to his people in sleep so sweet

Jacob's death though sad is not the end of his story
He continues on through those who are his seed
And he will someday be raised to eternal glory
Because of his faith in Christ, his greatest deed
And we like Jacob can take hold of the same promise
Eternal life for us can also be our own guarantee
By simple faith in the work of our Lord Jesus
In that one act we can hold on to such a wondrous surety

Thank You O God, for You have done marvelous things for us
Thank You O God, for our sure hope because of Jesus

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 50:1-14 (THE BURIAL OF JACOB)

Introduction: Death is an inevitable part of life. And the rituals that are conducted which surround death vary from culture to culture, but most of them are grounded in a hope which transcends the grave. In the Chinese provinces of Tibet, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Mongolia a ritual known as "sky burial" is practiced.

Being Buddhists, they believe in the trans-migration of the soul and that the body is just an empty vessel which needs to be disposed of. And so they leave it out for the large predatory birds to nibble on until it's all gone. Some people within Christianity believe that one must bury the body and that cremation is a sin. Some even believe you can't be saved if you are cremated.

We usually embalm bodies in the US. I volunteered at a morgue in Japan when I was in the service and it was interesting to see the process of embalming and it was mostly done to keep the body from getting gross before a burial could be performed. This was especially so because of the long travel time back to the US.

Today's sermon will look at the most detailed record of care taken for a body in the entire book of Genesis. What is the importance of all the detail? Out of all of the other deaths recorded, *nothing* like this has yet been seen. Because of this, we can conclude that God is showing us a picture of something else, something in later redemptive history. And surely enough, this is the case.

Text Verse: *"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord God. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. ³¹ Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel?" Ezekiel 18:30, 31*

God spoke to the house of Israel and told them that they would be judged according to their ways. He also promised them a new heart and a new spirit if they would simply repent and turn to Him. However, if they didn't, the House of Israel would surely die. Was He serious? Would this happen? Yes and Yes.

Israel went from life to death. But in Christ, there is the hope of new life and even the resurrection to life from the dead. We'll see this pictured in today's sermon in another

carefully placed passage which is intended to get us to wake up and pay attention to our surroundings, the world we live in, and our relationship with God.

It is all to be found in His superior word, and so let's go to that word now and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Worthless Physicians (verses 1-3)

We now arrive at the last chapter of Genesis. This amazing book has been divided into three principle sets of instruction for man -

- 1) From creation and the fall to the Flood of Noah.
- 2) From the time after the flood until the call of Abraham.
- 3) From the call of Abraham until the death of Jacob and Joseph which is the completion of the history of the chosen family.

After his blessings and final words to his sons about his burial, the last verse of the last chapter said, "And when Jacob had finished commanding his sons, he drew his feet up into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people." With that, we enter into chapter 50.

¹ Then Joseph fell on his father's face, and wept over him, and kissed him.

Back in chapter 46, as Jacob was preparing to leave the land of promise for the last time, God called to Jacob in a vision in the night. Here is what he was told at that time -

"So He said, 'I *am* God, the God of your father; do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there. ⁴ I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up *again*; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes.'" -Genesis 46:3, 4

As God promised, Joseph was there at his death to fall on him, weep over him, and to surely close his eyes. But it also notes that he kissed him. In all of the life of Joseph, he is only noted as kissing on two occasions. The first was when he revealed himself to his brothers in chapter 45 -

"Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept on his neck. ¹⁵ Moreover he kissed all his brothers and wept over them, and after that his brothers talked with him." Genesis 45:14, 15

And now, at the death of his father, he kisses Jacob's remains. There is a reason for the two kisses which are recorded. As always, when things are noted twice, there is a contrast and yet a confirmation of something. The first was when there was a *reunion* after a long separation. The second is when there is a *departure* for a long separation.

The first was *at* the surety of *life*; the second is the surety of *hope of life* even in *death*. The first was after a journey *from* the land of promise; the second is prior to a journey *to* the land of promise. The first resulted in a physical reunion and pictured a spiritual awakening in the brothers. The second resulted in a physical separation and yet in the hope of restored life to the father.

In the first, the brothers were given garments for covering. In the second, Jacob's soul was made bare without his earthly garment, his body. In these two kisses, there is a contrast and yet there is a confirmation. There is the physical and there is the spiritual. And yet they confirm the whole state of man.

Nothing is random in the Bible and even the kisses of Joseph give us insights into the nature of man in his spiritual and physical makeup. Joseph now weeps over the loss of the physical and takes his farewell of his father as people do. Sending him on his journey until they meet again.

² And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father.

The people being referred to here as "the physicians" are literally known as "the healers." In Hebrew *ha'rophiim*, or in the singular *rapha*. The word is used 67 times in the Old Testament and is translated as "heal," "physician," "purify," etc. One memorable use of the word is in the Suffering Servant passage in Isaiah 53:5 -

"But He *was* wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him,
And by His stripes we are **healed**." Isaiah 53:5

To us, using this word doesn't really make sense. Why would a healer be used on a dead body? But in considering the state of man, it begins to make sense. Almost nobody would dispute that there is a difference between the physical body and the soul.

There may be disagreement on what the soul is, but there is a physical body and there is something that animates that body. When that which animates departs, the body

ceases to function; it dies. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5 that a soul without a body is naked. Here is how he describes it -

"For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, ³ if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked." 2 Corinthians 5:1-3

But still why would a "healer" be used on a dead body? The answer is that to the Egyptians, the soul - the *ka* as they called it - would return to inhabit the body. Once the mummification was done, it would be ready for occupation once again. Otherwise, it would rot away, and thus it would leave the soul naked.

This word, *rapha*, for healer implies to "mend" or to "sew together" and hence to heal, like a physician would after an operation. This same word corresponds to the Greek work *rapho* "to sew" which is then tied to the word "needle" or *raphis* which is found in Jesus' words in Matthew 19 -

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a **needle** than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

²⁵ When His disciples heard *it*, they were greatly astonished, saying, 'Who then can be saved?'

²⁶ But Jesus looked at *them* and said to them, 'With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'" Matthew 19:23-26

There is the universal desire to live forever. As Solomon says in Ecclesiastes 3, eternity itself is written on our hearts -

"He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end." Ecclesiastes 3:11

Because of this, the Egyptians embalmed the bodies of their dead, hoping for eternal life when the soul would reunite with the body. Estimates are that as many as 420 million bodies were mummified in this way during the years in which Egypt followed this custom.

But the problem with mummification was that it only treated the physical body, not the spiritual person. The problem with man and the reason man dies is sin. Without healing this condition, the disconnect between God and man remains.

Job 13, although not speaking about embalmers, uses the same word and applies it to his friends during their discourse. It is a sentiment which still beautifully reflects the state of the embalmers who sew the dead body, but do nothing for the soul. He says -

"But you forgers of lies,
You *are* all worthless physicians." Job 13:4

All of the work and cost involved in embalming did nothing to bring the person one step closer to true life. Instead of their worthless efforts is the glorious contrast in why Jesus came. That passage from Isaiah which used this word said that by His stripes we are healed. Peter explains what that means in his first letter -

"...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed."
-1 Peter 2:24

Although that verse is very often incorrectly used to imply physical healing, Peter explains that it is the healing from sin that is being referred to. And that then ties directly into Jesus' words to His disciples about the "eye of the needle" or the *raphis*. With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. The healing is effected in Christ, and by His work we are restored to God.

This is what the embalmers of Egypt, the *rophiim*, were hoping for, but it is that to which they could never attain. So, if embalming didn't accomplish the purpose for which it was intended, then why do we have these words which follow as verse 2 continues?

^{2 (con't)} **So the physicians embalmed Israel.**

This is the only time that the name Israel or Jacob is used of him in the entire chapter. Later both names will be used in relation to the family, but not specifically about him.

There are a couple of reasons that Joseph gave an order for his servants to embalm his father. The first is because it was the standard custom of the land. People generally follow the customs of the land around them in such instances.

The second reason is that the body would have to be taken all the way back to Canaan according to the promise Joseph made. The trip would be rather displeasing as the body degraded in the heat of the middle east and so the embalming was very much necessary.

The process of embalming in Hebrew comes from the word *khanat* which means to "make spicy." And this is exactly what occurred. The process was long and involved, but much of it concerned the use of spices. The word is only used five times in the Bible.

Three times it is speaking of Jacob and once it is speaking of Joseph and all four of these are in this chapter. The only other time it is used is in the Song of Solomon 2:13 -

"The fig tree **puts forth her** green figs,
And the vines *with* the tender grapes
Give a *good* smell.
Rise up, my love, my fair one,
And come away!" Song of Solomon 2:13

In the end, it is a testimony to the lowly state of our bodies that when the soul departs, it immediately begins to break down, smell, and become offensive to every sense of those left behind. It is *from* this world of corruption, not *to* this world of corruption, that the Christian looks.

The embalming of Jacob and Joseph were temporary measures in anticipation of their eternal state, not expected solutions to it. And the same is seen later in both testaments of Scripture. In 2 Chronicles we see that bodies were prepared for internment as a temporary measure for king Asa -

"So Asa rested with his fathers; he died in the forty-first year of his reign. ¹⁴They buried him in his own tomb, which he had made for himself in the City of David; and they laid him in the bed which was filled with spices and various ingredients prepared in a mixture of ointments. They made a very great burning for him."
-2 Chronicles 16:14

In the New Testament, Israel's greatest and true King was likewise buried in a mixture of spices according to the custom of the Jews.

"And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. ⁴⁰ Then they took the body

of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury." John 19

What the Jewish people did *was not embalming*, but preparation for burial. After the body degraded, the bones would be collected and placed in a stone box.

³Forty days were required for him, for such are the days required for those who are embalmed; and the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days.

Ancient writers such as Herodotus and Diodorus both closely agree with the timeframe that the Bible mentions here. The embalming process took forty full days to complete and in conjunction with this for a royal person, as Jacob would be considered, there was a period of seventy days of mourning.

This would be comparable to what we do in the US when a president or some other highly respected person dies. The flag will be lowered to half staff for a given period as a reminder of the loss to the nation.

Later in Israel's history, there will be a period of 30 days of mourning for Aaron and Moses. After that, at the death of Saul, a period of seven days of fasting will be noted. From a biblical perspective, there is no set time of mourning for the Christian who loses a loved one. The duration will vary with the personal feelings and emotions of the ones left behind.

*Assuredly, it is hard I do tell
To enter heaven's kingdom, for a man who is rich
And again I say to you it is easier for a camel
To go through the eye of a needle, used to make a stitch*

*For a rich man to so enter the kingdom of God
Is a most difficult path in the shoes which he is shod*

*Who then can be saved!
This message to our heart, sorrow it brings
Worry not, My friends, with men this is impossible
But it is possible with God who can do all things*

II. To Fulfill a Vow (verses 4-6)

⁴ Now when the days of his mourning were past,

Only after the days of mourning were accomplished is any further action taken in regards to Jacob. To do what he intends to do in fulfilling the promise any earlier would be considered disrespectful to the people of Egypt, and thus to Pharaoh their ruler.

It would be comparable to one military base raising its flag back to full staff while all the other bases remained at half staff against the directive of congress or the president. In allowing the full time to pass, Joseph is ensuring that every protocol is met without causing anyone to later have a case against him.

^{4 (con't)} Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, "If now I have found favor in your eyes, please speak in the hearing of Pharaoh, saying,

Instead of speaking directly to Pharaoh, it says that he spoke to the "household of Pharaoh" in anticipation of them then going to speak directly to Pharaoh on his behalf. Many suggestions have been offered as to why he would do this.

Some say that it was because he was wearing mourning outfits and that no one in such garments would be allowed into the presence of the king. This was the case later at the time of Esther during the Persian Empire, but there is nothing here to even suggest that.

Further, the time of mourning had ended and so that seems unreasonable. The reason for going through the household is probably threefold. First, he was leaving his duties which would mean they would be unattended to while he was gone.

As a courtesy to them, he is passing it through them so that they know he isn't trying to lay unnecessary work on anyone else. The second reason is that the priests would be included in Pharaoh's inner circle.

As they were responsible for the religious beliefs of the people, especially the dead, to exclude them would be tantamount to saying that they were unsuited for the jobs they held. It would be a slap in their face. To avoid such a misunderstanding, he includes the household in the presenting of his desires to Pharaoh.

And thirdly, as we will see in a couple verses, most of these people will travel with him. Thus, by going through them, he is extending a courtesy that they know in advance of his desires and intentions. These seem all the more certain by his next words to them...

⁵ ‘My father made me swear, saying, “Behold, I am dying; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me.”

In this, Joseph states the threefold obligation that he is under. He has sworn to his father; he has made a promise to a dying man who is now dead, so it cannot be amended; and his father explicitly commanded him concerning the details.

Because this is his father's will, and because it is in a spot that his father dug for himself out of the cave which was bought by Abraham, it would be unreasonable to think Pharaoh would say no. Pharaohs were known throughout their history for being more conscientious about their burial graves than they were about the palaces they lived in.

This would then be found reasonable to those who would have to stay behind and assume his duties while he was gone and also to the priests as well. He has meticulously worked to appease everyone involved in the matter in order for there to be no misunderstandings, jealousies, or complaints against him.

^{5 (con't)} Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father, and I will come back.”

Finally, to reassure those who will have to attend to his duties, he lets them know that he intends to conduct the burial and return. He isn't planning on a site seeing tour afterwards, but to simply fulfill the request made by his now departed father.

⁶ And Pharaoh said, “Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear.”

The approval is given. An oath was made and the oath must therefore be performed. This is a principle which is explicitly stated throughout the Bible. When a vow is made, it is to be performed.

When an oath is made, it is to be fulfilled. Pharaoh understood this and was ready to ensure that Joseph would not be found guilty of negligence in this matter.

*I will go into Your house with burnt offerings
I will pay you my vows, my heart I will redouble
Those which my lips have uttered through my profferings
And my mouth has spoken when I was in trouble*

*I will offer You burnt fat of animal sacrifices
With the aroma of rams, ever so sweet*

*I will offer bulls with goats pleasing as spices
For all of my needs You faithfully did meet*

*You have tended to me when in my time of need
I will pay my vows to You, and do so with speed*

III. The Funeral Procession (verses 7-9)

⁷ So Joseph went up to bury his father;

Seven times in this chapter, the term "up" is used to indicate travelling from Egypt to Canaan. This is not because Canaan is north of Egypt in the manner we use north today. It is also not because Canaan is at a higher elevation than Egypt.

It is because Canaan is God's land. No matter what direction one travels to get to Canaan, it is always up. And the same is true with elevation. As one moves toward Canaan and toward Jerusalem, the term "up" is used. It is the Bible's way of showing the preeminence of the land of Canaan, God's land, over all other places.

^{7 (con't)} and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt,

The details leave no doubt that not only did Pharaoh approve the request, but that he honored it, allowing and probably directing his servants, house elders, and elders of the land to go too.

These people would be comparable to the chief of staff and administrators at the White House, the Secretary's of the major departments, and the other Ambassador positions in our administration. In all, it showed the highest honor to Joseph, and the greatest respect for his loss.

⁸ as well as all the house of Joseph, his brothers, and his father's house.

Everyone in the entourage who came to Egypt, plus any who had grown up in Egypt would have been included in this procession. The number, combined with the previous officials from Pharaoh's people, would have reached into the thousands.

^{8 (con't)} Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds they left in the land of Goshen.

The journey here is in excess of 300 miles and so the children and animals would be left behind in Goshen. This is the last time that the name Goshen will be used in Genesis. After this, it will only be used of this spot two more times in the book of Exodus.

The same place was previously called the "Land of Rameses" in Genesis 47:11. Again as always, God uses specific words and names to show details and pictures of later events in redemptive history. Goshen means "drawing near" or "approaching."

⁹ And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen, and it was a very great gathering.

Along with the many mourners went a multitude of charioteers and horsemen to guard the procession. Because of the arrangement of those in procession, it would not be considered a military threat under normal circumstances, but because of the large number, there could have been a misunderstanding by the people in Canaan.

So sending along the chariots and horsemen was both a sign of military honor as well as a wise means of conducting the convoy.

IV. The Burial of Jacob (verses 10-14)

¹⁰ Then they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan,

Eventually, the procession arrived at the threshing floor of Atad, which is said to be "beyond the Jordan." This is only the fourth time the Jordan has been mentioned in the Bible. Its name means "descender" or "to descend." Atad means a "thornbush."

The problem with the phrase "beyond the Jordan" is that it doesn't explain from what reference point. So it could be on either side of the Jordan. However, the terminology suggests that it was on the east side of Jordan, outside of the land of Canaan. The journey would have been longer going this route, but it would probably have been safer and easier.

¹⁰ (con't) and they mourned there with a great and very solemn lamentation. He observed seven days of mourning for his father.

There at the threshing floor, the procession stopped to collectively mourn the honored patriarch one last time. In all, another seven days of mourning were observed before his body was moved to its resting place.

¹¹ And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, "This is a deep mourning of the Egyptians." Therefore its name was called Abel Mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan.

There is in this verse a play on words. The Canaanites looked and saw the great mourning going on and they certainly heard it as well. The middle eastern funeral can be an exceptionally loud affair and with the number of people in attendance, it would sound like the noise heard in a large football game today.

The play on words then is the name given to the location. The word for "mourning" is the word *ebel*. But the word for "meadow" is *abel*. Both are spelled the same way, but carry different vowel points. And so as occurs often in the Bible and as we do in our own language with similar words, a pun is being made.

Ebel-mitzraim would mean the "mourning of the Egyptians" while Abel-mitzraim would mean the "meadow of the Egyptians."

This name however, *abel-mitzraim*, or the Mourning of the Egyptians, along with *goren ha'atad*, or the Threshing Floor of Atad, are only used in this story and nowhere else in Scripture.

¹² So his sons did for him just as he had commanded them.

This verse is given to show that what Jacob had commanded in the previous chapter was fulfilled exactly even though it is stated before the burial, not afterward. The same word for "command," which in Hebrew is *tsavah*, is used both times. Here is what Jacob commanded from our sermon last week -

"Then he **charged** them and said to them: 'I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that *is* in the field of Ephron the Hittite, ³⁰ in the cave that *is* in the field of Machpelah, which *is* before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place. ³¹ There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah. ³² The field and the cave that *is* there *were* purchased from the sons of Heth.'"

-Genesis 49:29-32

In fulfillment of his command and in acknowledgment of its accomplishment, we are given the next verse...

¹³ For his sons carried him to the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre, which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron the Hittite as property for a burial place.

We can assume that the Egyptians stayed on the other side of the Jordan and only the brothers bore the body of Jacob across to his resting place. Even if bodyguards or anyone else went along, they aren't mentioned. The honor of the final leg of the journey is reserved in recorded history only for the sons of Israel.

The detail here is a modified repeat from Genesis 23 and then the previous chapter. All of it, as we saw in the previous sermon, points to the work of Christ as he secured from this fallen world a sure hope for believers. If the names are translated into their meaning, this verse would say as follows -

"His sons carried him to the land of the humbled, and buried him in the cave that is in the field of double, in the face of bitterness, which (the) Father of many nations bought with the field from the man of dust, the fallen man, as a property for a burial place."

It is to this place that the sons carry their father to be buried. It is a resting spot awaiting the day when Messiah will come and raise him to eternal life. It is a sign of hope in the promises of God and the faithfulness He displays to His word.

***¹⁴ And after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers and all who went up with him to bury his father.**

With the internment complete by Joseph - as he is the representative for all the brothers, they together returned to the land of Egypt along with the entire entourage who had accompanied him.

Like several other sections of Genesis, when I started typing this, I had no idea why it was here. After typing up the analysis of the words and verses, I still had no idea. And so, throughout the night and the next morning, I thought about it, talked to the Lord about it, and went back over the entire passage again and again.

There is so much detail that it must have some significance, but I couldn't imagine what. More detail is given to this burial than almost every other burial in Genesis combined. Other than the purchase of the cave in chapter 23, nothing like this comes even close in detail.

And then I realized, unless it is connected with the previous chapter it lacks sense, but when tied to that, it clears up. Jacob had just finished blessing all his sons, a set of blessings which looks forward to the entire scope of Israel's history. This story about Jacob's burial then isn't a chronological picture like most of Joseph's life has been. Instead, it is an insert of Israel's history, like Chapter 34 and chapter 38 were.

Jacob here pictures corporate Israel which has died. This occurred in 586BC when they were exiled to Babylon. Although they were brought back after 70 years, they remained under external control until their next dispersion in AD70. The entire time is considered under the time of punishment detailed in Ezekiel 4.

But great detail is given concerning his embalming. He is the only person embalmed in the Bible other than Joseph, and only he is given this detail. This is showing us the care that God has taken for the corporate body of Israel, whom he pictures. Even though the spirit has left them, just like the spirit left Jacob, the body has been maintained in order to restore it to life. This is pictured in the Valley of Dry Bones passage in Ezekiel 37.

The care concerning the details of his burial place also look forward to the restoration and resurrection promised by God. This is why the term "Israel" is never used again in these verses when speaking of either Jacob or the people who descend from him.

They are living in gentile land and are still under the 400 years of servitude that was spoken by God to Abraham back in Genesis 15. Those 400 years picture the entire time of Israel's exile and affliction seen in Ezekiel 4; they are the "times of the Gentiles" spoken about in both testaments. Joseph and the other sons, listed individually, not as a whole, go to bury Jacob.

Along with them though "go all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt." The servants and elders of Pharaoh would be the whole heavenly host and the elders of Egypt would be the kings of the nations. Only the little ones and the flocks remain in Goshen, the land of "drawing near."

In other words, there is a spectacle that all creation should see. The spirit is supposed to return to the embalmed body according to Egyptian thinking, but only Christ can truly make that happen. When He was born the great heavenly host witnessed it. After His resurrection, all the nations heard of it.

And so they come to the threshing floor of Atad, "the thorn," across the Jordan, which means "descend." This is the time of Christ's visitation which is spoken of in Ephesians 4:7-10 –

⁷ But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

⁸ Therefore He says:

"When He ascended on high,
He led captivity captive,
And gave gifts to men."

⁹ (Now this, "He ascended"—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? ¹⁰ He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

There the Canaanites note "This is a deep mourning of the Egyptians." It is the *gentile world* who mourned over Christ and His crown of thorns, pictured by the threshing floor of Atad. Therefore, the place was called Abel Mizraim - the meadow of Egypt, which is beyond the Jordan. It is in gentile land; the land of double distress.

After this, it says his sons carried him to Canaan and buried him in the special cave which looks forward to the resurrection. It doesn't call them the sons of Israel though, just "his sons." And then it notes that Joseph and "his brothers" returned to Egypt. The significance of this is seen in Jesus' words to his disciples -

"Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. ²⁵ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His *own* glory, and *in His* Father's, and of the holy angels." Luke 9:23-26

Those who are His brothers are those who have trusted him individually from Jew and Gentile. It is these who have stayed faithful to Christ even in the gentile lands and even after corporate Israel, pictured by Jacob, has died.

This is why the two kisses of Jacob were noted at the beginning. The first was when there was a *reunion* after a long separation. The second is when there is a *departure* for a long separation. The first was *at* the surety of *life*; the second is the surety of hope of *life* even in *death*.

The first was after a journey *from* the land of promise; the second is prior to a journey *to* the land of promise. The first resulted in a physical reunion and pictured a spiritual awakening in the brothers. The second resulted in a physical separation and yet in the hope of restored life to the father, who pictures corporate Israel.

It is looking to the long separation of Israel from God during the time of the Gentiles and yet in the hope of restored life to them in the future. This will continue to be seen in the next section of chapter 50, but it is exactly written about by Paul in Romans -

"For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴ if by any means I may provoke to jealousy *those who are* my flesh and save some of them. ¹⁵ For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?"

-Romans 11:13-15

The story of Jacob's death and embalming, the mourning over him before his burial, his choice of burial place - all of it is a picture of the history of Israel during their time of rejection of the Lord who called them. And yet we see His meticulous care of them, even then, as He prepares to bring them back to life once again.

The hope of Jacob in his choice of resting place is the same hope that we believers have in Christ today, and the same hope that we have for Israel when they as a nation call on their Messiah. It is all about Jesus and what He is doing at different times in redemptive history. There is a time when all of the faithful will be raised to eternal life - both from Israel and from the gentile peoples. We are given this as an offer and as a choice.

We can accept it by calling out to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, in faith, or we can reject His offer. The choice is up to each of us.

Closing Verse: *I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it," says the LORD.*" Ezekiel 37:14

Next Week: Genesis 50:15-26 (Grace, Mercy, and Faith - The Final Words of Joseph)
(130th and last Genesis Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

The Burial of Jacob

Then Joseph fell on his father's face
And wept over him, and kissed him there in that place

And Joseph commanded his servants, he did tell
The physicians to embalm his father
So the physicians embalmed Israel

Forty days were required for him
For such are the required days
For those who are embalmed
Lest the body decays

And the Egyptians mourned for him seventy days
This is the time frame according to their ways

Now when the days of his mourning were past
Joseph spoke, he did apprise
To the household of Pharaoh, saying,
If now I have found favor in your eyes

Please speak in Pharaoh's hearing
The message I am now relaying
Words without any fearing
Are what my father made me swear, saying
Behold, I am dying you understand
In my grave which I dug, this is my plea
For myself in Canaan the land
There... you shall bury me

Now therefore, please up let me go
And bury my father, and I will come back, as you know

And Pharaoh said, "Go up to there
And bury your father, as he made you swear

So Joseph went up to bury his father
And with him went up all of Pharaoh's servants at hand

The elders of his house
And all the elders of Egypt the land

As well as all the house of Joseph
His brothers, and his father's house, all went along too
Only their little ones, their flocks, and their herds
They left in the land of Goshen, and were not part of the retinue

And there went up with him as well
Both chariots and horsemen
It was a very great gathering, as you can tell

Then they came to the threshing floor of Atad
Which is beyond the Jordan's demarcation
And they mourned there
With a great and very solemn lamentation

Seven days of mourning for his father he observed
For this mourning these seven days were reserved

And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites
Saw the mourning at Atad's threshing floor
They said "This is a deep mourning of the Egyptians
A mourning grievously sore
Therefore its name was called Abel Mizraim
Which is beyond the Jordan, east it would seem
So his sons did for him
Just as he had commanded them
For his sons carried him to the land of Canaan
And buried him in the cave
Of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre
This place became his grave

This Abraham bought with the field, all the space
From Ephron the Hittite as property for a burial place.
And after he had buried his father
Joseph returned to Egypt the land
He and his brothers and all who went
Up with him to bury his father, in a procession so grand

The hope of God in Christ is eternal life
From the moment we call on him, this we receive
And from that moment ends our enmity and strife
God forgives our sins and our burdens He does relieve
Some day, Israel will call on Jesus as a nation
And at that time will come life from the dead
There will be in heaven and on earth joyous celebration
When Israel receives Christ as their Head

Until then the gentiles will continue to proclaim
The wondrous gospel message of life in Jesus
It is in this exalted and glorious name
That salvation and eternal life is granted to us

Hallelujah and Amen...

GENESIS 50:15-26

(GRACE, MERCY, AND FAITH - THE FINAL WORDS OF JOSEPH)

Introduction: Today we will look over the final verses of Genesis. It is our 130th sermon in this book and I would hope and pray that God is not displeased with the poor attempt that I have made to analyze and share this amazing treasure of the book of foundations with you.

No matter how much study, how much reading, and how much presentation could be done on it, I don't think we could ever plumb the depths of the mysteries hidden in this single book. And yet, we have 65 more ahead of us and we must move forward.

I know that I will never again look at Genesis the same way again. And in turn, I will never look at the Bible as a whole in the same way again either. The journey of these past few years has only solidified in me the thought that God's word is to be handled carefully, researched diligently, and read continuously.

We will have no excuse when we stand before God and are evaluated for where we spent our time. If we neglect this precious treasure now, we will only have ourselves to blame. I would ask you to commit to never letting up in your pursuit of the treasures which are stored in the pages of the Bible.

Text Verse: *"You are my portion, O Lord;
I have said that I would keep Your words.
58 I entreated Your favor with my whole heart;
Be merciful to me according to Your word.
59 I thought about my ways,
And turned my feet to Your testimonies.
60 I made haste, and did not delay
To keep Your commandments." Psalm 119:57-60*

For the redeemed, the Lord is our portion and so we should keep His words, think on our ways in relation to them, and turn our feet to His testimonies. In the verses ahead, we will see the close of the record of the lives of the immediate family of Jacob.

They are verses of reconciliation between once estranged brothers. It pictures the same story which we saw in expanded form in the previous chapters, but it is given to prepare us for pictures of the future which are coming in Exodus as well.

And we will also see the last words of Joseph and the record of his death. God used his life to point us to Jesus and now a new figure from history will arise to do the same. Joseph will enter his time of rest in anticipation of that glorious day when God will raise His people to everlasting life. The promises are true, and they will be fulfilled. Every one of them is contained in His superior word. So let's go there now and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. Please Forgive the Trespass of Your Servants (verses 15-17)

¹⁵ When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him."

If we can remember from the previous sermon, the term "Israel" and "Jacob" are never mentioned after the first verse of the chapter in relation to Jacob the man. And now, these are called "Joseph's brothers," not "the sons of Israel."

Further, it notes that "their father was dead" but it doesn't mention him by name. Little clues like this make a big difference in discerning what is happening. In these verses think of Joseph as Jesus and the brothers as the Jewish people of today.

The wording here in the Hebrew is in the imperfect, or future tense. It could be rendered something like "If Joseph hated us, or pursued us hostilely, then what would become of us?" It is "setting forth a possible but undesirable contingency." (Pulpit)

In Hebrew, it says, *v'hashev yashiv lanu* - "if returning he caused to return upon us." They are worried about the evil they committed, and that at some future point, he might change his mind about the lost years and the lost time from his father and take it out on them. As the Geneva Bible says about this verse, "An evil conscience is never fully at rest."

Despite the assurances of the past, they still felt the weight of their previous transgressions and they knew how they would respond if they were in the same situation. They couldn't see that Joseph was more forgiving in himself than they would have been.

¹⁶ So they sent *messengers* to Joseph, saying, "Before your father died he commanded, saying,

It's interesting that, according to the scholar Charles Ellicott, "Many Jewish expositors consider that this was untrue, and that Jacob was never made aware of the fact that his brethren had sold Joseph into slavery." Why do you think they would hold this view?

Considering what Joseph's life has continuously pictured, it's quite evident. He has been a perfect type of the coming Christ in all ways. The entire story drips with the wrongdoing of the brothers and their culpability in what happened.

If Jacob learned about it after the reunion, which he certainly did, then it implies that any who would keep on denying it would continue to be guilty of the transgression. In the same way, how many Jews of today are made aware of the story of Jesus and yet deny it. The story of Joseph is an obvious indictment on the disbelieving Jews who have rejected Christ.

There are Jewish websites which are rabid in their condemnation of Jesus, believing Jews, and even Christians in general. The conscience is a very heavy weight and one way to attempt to stifle it is to lash out against the truth we know but won't acknowledge.

We see this in politics all the time. Something will be proven 100% false, like global warming. But instead of acknowledging guilt in the matter and moving on, those who were the perpetrators of the lie will often simply berate and degrade those who challenge their conscience.

It is a weakness of the mind and a type of overweening pride that causes some to simply refuse to acknowledge their guilt. And so, some scholars say that the brothers are now lying by making up words which Jacob never said. There is no hint that this is correct and it violates the premise that the Bible would acknowledge it as a lie if it were the case.

For example, in Genesis 34:13, when the brothers did in fact lie, the Bible notes it so that the reader is aware of it. Here is that verse - "But the sons of Jacob answered Shechem and Hamor his father, and spoke deceitfully, because he had defiled Dinah their sister."

What is being said here is simply an unrecorded conversation between Jacob and the sons. They surely acknowledged their guilt to Jacob at some point, probably even back in Canaan. Then before his death, they reminded him of it and may have even asked Jacob to speak on their behalf, as they now are relaying to Joseph.

In this message to Joseph, they use the same word, *tsavah*, which was used by Jacob twice in Genesis 49 when he commanded his sons, including Joseph, where to bury him. In other words, the charge which will be relayed is as important as his burial request.

17 'Thus you shall say to Joseph: "I beg you, please forgive the trespass of your brothers and their sin; for they did evil to you."'

This half of the verse are the words of Jacob as relayed by the brothers to Joseph. It is, in essence, a call from beyond the grave petitioning his son to forgive the sin and the evil that the brothers committed against Joseph.

If Jacob was desirous of him forgiving the lost years and the many heartaches associated with what happened, then Joseph should be too. Especially considering that the same lost years and heartaches were felt by him. It is in essence a request to be merciful because he was merciful.

Jacob never made a reference to what they did to Joseph in any of his blessings upon the twelve sons. Unlike Reuben, Simeon, and Levi of whom he brought back to memory their wicked deeds, nothing of what happened to Joseph was stated.

Instead, Jacob saw what happened just as Joseph did. It was a way for God to effect His purposes for the family of Israel. Before he died, he blessed his sons when he could have cursed them. He is asking for the same attitude in his beloved Joseph. His words are *sa na pesha akhekha* - forgive now the trespass of your brothers.

17 (con't) Now, please, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of your father."

This half of the verse is from the brothers, repeating Jacob's request in petition for themselves. Their words are *v'attah sa na l'pesha* - "now forgive we pray you the trespass." But instead of saying, "your brothers" they say *abdi elohe abikha* - "the servants of the God of your father."

Instead of petitioning him as brothers, they do so as servants of the same God as that of Jacob, the hope of Israel. It is a stronger appeal than even the bonds of family. In essence, they together with Joseph serve the one true God.

In this is a deep sense of humility mixed with sincere repentance, and the surety that their words are earnest and truthful concerning their relationship to him and to their

God. No other words could be added that would make any greater difference in Joseph. If he were to reject this petition, nothing further would do.

17 (con't) **And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.**

What they failed to realize is that Joseph had placed his fate and his life in the hands of the Lord from the earliest days. He accepted his lot at Potiphar's house; he accepted it in the prison, and he accepted it when elevated to the highest position in Pharaoh's land.

The naming of his children demonstrated faith in God's provision as well. Everything in Joseph's life accepted that God was directing him and that it wasn't his position to buck against that. What his brothers intended for evil, God intended for good.

And because of this, when he received their words, he broke down and wept. First, that they still didn't fully comprehend God's hand in all of what occurred. Secondly, because of their fear concerning this matter and how it would affect them. And also because of their lack of trust in him, even after his many demonstrations of care for them over the past 17 years.

They desired forgiveness from a brother who had long ago forgiven them. They desired his embrace when they had forgotten that many years earlier he had embraced them. And they desired his fellowship when it was only their own insecurity which hindered what they desired.

*Preserve our lives, though we have done you wrong
You are our brother, our souls are in your hand
Save your servants who trust in You!
Be merciful to us, O brother, here in this foreign land*

*For we petition you all day for our lives
Rejoice the souls of Your servants today
For to You, O brother, we lift up our souls
Extend to us your mercies, this to you we pray*

*For we know you are good, and ready to forgive
Please extend to us this mercy, that we may live*

II. The Sovereignty of God (Verses 18- 21)

¹⁸ Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, "Behold, we *are* your servants."

This verse seems to contradict what has happened in the preceding two verses. Verse 16 said, "So they sent *messengers* to Joseph." Then verse 17 said, "And Joseph wept when they spoke to him..." And now it says they "also went and fell down before his face."

This might agree with verse 16, where they sent a messenger and then they later went, but not with verse 17 where it says they spoke to him. How could they go to him and fall down before him if they already spoke to him?

This isn't a problem. The word "messengers" is inserted by the translators." Young's literal translation of the Bible says, "And they gave a charge for Joseph" instead of "So they sent messengers." In other words, they went to see Joseph and were probably standing right there all the time, maybe standing back from him in fear.

When they saw him weeping at the message they gave him, they drew near to him and fell at his feet. There is nothing contradictory at all. The only problem is the choice of words used in the translation. Reading different versions and studying the different possibilities of what a word means always helps at times like this.

Once a translator inserts a word, like "sent messengers" we tend to trust that this is what happened, but the same word is translated in other ways without ever using the inserted word "messenger." So with understanding that, we can know that it was Joseph's emotions, which they saw with their own eyes, that prompted them to fall before him.

Thus for a final time in their lives, they have fulfilled the dream which Joseph dreamed when he was a young boy. In Genesis 37, this is what was recorded -

"Now Joseph had a dream, and he told *it* to his brothers; and they hated him even more. ⁶ So he said to them, 'Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: ⁷ There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.'" Genesis 37:5-7

Before learning his identity, and again now when their father is dead, they have humbled themselves and offered themselves as his servants. And both times, the

parallel to Jesus is evident. At first they thought they were bowing to the ruler of the Great House.

At that time, it pictured the Jews bowing in the temple without realizing that Jesus is the Lord. In the future, it will be when they realize his true identity. The two accounts contrast and yet they confirm. They contrast in that in the first case they were bowing to the unknown ruler, in the other, to their known brother.

This pictures Christ in His divine and in His human natures. He is Jehovah of the Temple worship, and He is the human Jesus who is of the stock of Israel. And this is certain because in verse 17, they called themselves "the servants of the God of your father."

Now they say "Behold, we are your servants." The picture will be exactly fulfilled in what will transpire in the future after they know who Jesus is. The pictures laid out here are precise and wonderful.

¹⁹ Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God?"

Every single translation I reviewed, which is many, translates this verse in this same way - in the form of a question. And yet, the word "am" is inserted by the translators. And so it appears as if Joseph is asking if he has the right to judge them.

Taken in connection with his next words, that may seem to be a valid way of looking at it and scholars are *almost* universally in agreement with this. And yet, one brave scholar stepped forward and states the verse as a statement of fact, rather than a question.

Wordsworth translates it as, "I am in God's stead" meaning he stands in the place of God for judgment. And of course this is exactly what Joseph is relaying to them and will relay to them in the next verses. This is certainly the correct translation.

Only translating it this way fulfills the picture of Jesus accurately. In other words, Joseph *is* relaying to them that "I am a minister to you on God's behalf for good."

²⁰ But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day,

Once again, the sovereignty of God is written all over this verse, as it is throughout the entire Bible. The words literally read, "and you were thinking evil against me; Elohim

was thinking for good." The verb for both is the same and it sets in contrast the purposes of man with the purposes of God.

He took then, and He can take now, our evil actions and work through them for an ultimate good. If that thought isn't one that reassures you, I can't think of what else ever would.

²⁰ (con't) **to save many people alive.**

The term here is *l'hakhayot am rav* - to save alive numerous people. This is exactly what occurred 2000 years ago when the Jewish people first crucified their King and then rejected Him after His resurrection. They intended evil against Him, but God intended that many people would survive *because* of Him.

It wasn't just the Egyptians, but all the surrounding countries that were saved by Joseph. He was Lord to all the Gentiles. And so it is true with Jesus. In Him has been found the salvation of many. Paul explains this in detail in Romans, but it can be summed up in this-

"For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. ²⁶ And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written:

'The Deliverer will come out of Zion,
And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

²⁷ For this *is* My covenant with them,
When I take away their sins.'" Romans 11:25-27

This picture in Genesis was given to show us exactly what would transpire in the ages following the first advent of Christ. We are coming to the end of that time now and we are certainly within a short time of His return for the church and the final fulfillment of these beautiful types and pictures written so very long ago.

²¹ **Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones."**

This entire narrative from verse 1 until now, has been an insert of the history of Israel as we saw last week. The bowing of the brothers to Joseph has brought us back to the time after their acknowledgment of Jesus which was recorded in Genesis 45.

We have now returned to the time of the tribulation period which was pictured by Jacob's move to Egypt and their settling in Goshen. These words now then are a repeat of what he told them in that chapter which said -

"You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near to me, you and your children, your children's children, your flocks and your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹ There I will provide for you, lest you and your household, and all that you have, come to poverty; for *there are* still five years of famine." Genesis 45:10, 11

The repetition in today's verses is to show us that this is where we are in history as we set to close out the book of Genesis and to enter into Exodus with the great redemption of God's people.

The symmetry of the Bible is more than astonishing. It shows wisdom far above what could have been planned by even the greatest of human minds. Instead, it shows preplanning and continued care throughout the entire 1600 or so years that it took to write.

²¹ (con't) **And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.**

The words here reflect reassurance and care. By his actions and by the words he spoke to the brothers, they knew that the past was forgotten. He speaks softly and with grace, letting them know that they were forgiven. As it says in Hebrew, *v'dabber al livam* - he spoke to their hearts.

It is a beautiful representation of Christ; pardoning sin, forgiving iniquity, and speaking to the hearts of the people He loves and whom He calls "brothers." The life of Joseph is one which was chosen to reflect the longsuffering, forgiving, gracious, and yet exalted King who rules with mercy and wisdom - our Lord Jesus.

*For I do not desire, brethren
That you should be ignorant of the mystery I now tell
Lest you should be wise in your own opinion
That blindness in part has happened to Israel*

*Until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in
And so all Israel will be saved, I profess
As it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion
And He will turn away from Jacob their ungodliness*

*For this is My covenant with them, I do apprise
When I take away their sins before their very eyes*

III. The Death of Joseph (verses 22-26, and the completion of the book of Genesis)

²² So Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he and his father's household.

Joseph lived 54 years after the death of Jacob. During the rest of his life, he remained in Egypt. As he was sold to there at the age of 17, it means that he was there 93 years. During all that time, only the trip to bury his father in Canaan is recorded. Other than that, all of his time was outside the Land of Promise.

²² (con't) And Joseph lived one hundred and ten years.

Joseph was born right around the year 2260 Anno Mundi. He lived 110 years and so his death came at approximately 2370AM. Interestingly, it is noted by Egyptian records that the age of 110 was believed to be the ideal age to die.

And as an added bit of interest Joshua, a descendant of Joseph, and the one who took Joseph's bones to their final resting place, also died at the age of 110. Both of their lives were used as types and figures of the coming Christ.

In all, Joseph was in his high and exalted position in Egypt for 80 full years, having ascended to the right hand of Pharaoh at the age of 30. During all of that time, even during the famine which ravaged the earth, Egypt grew in both prosperity and wealth. At the same time, the people of God who were in their infancy when they arrived in Egypt, also grew and flourished exceedingly.

²³ Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation.

This means that Joseph saw his great-great grandchildren. In all then, there were five generations of Joseph's family living at the same time. This is much more than some of the other records, such as Moses who was the fourth generation from Levi who entered Egypt. Moses, only four generations later, led Israel out of Egypt.

In other words, the family of Ephraim was extremely fruitful and was so at early ages. This then is an early fulfillment of Jacob's blessing of Ephraim over Manasseh before his death as is seen in the continuation of verse 23...

23 (con't) The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were also brought up on Joseph's knees.

In the line of Manasseh, only his grandchildren are noted during his life. Being "brought up on" his knees might imply adoption as his own. In the Song of Deborah in Judges 5, Machir is listed as equal among the other tribes of Israel who went to war because he was the head of the tribe of Manasseh to the west of the Jordan.

24 And Joseph said to his brethren,

Which of his actual brothers were still alive at this time is unknown. This is probably a general statement to all of his kinsmen from all of the tribes. It is to the collective group of people who are Israel that he is certainly speaking to and to whom he is tying himself to, even in his final breaths.

24 (con't) "I am dying; but God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

With the sure knowledge of his coming departure, Joseph utters words of faith, *v'elhoim pakowd yiphkowd etkhem* - "...and God visiting you will surely visit you." This repetition is given to show the absolute faith he has that the promise sworn to Abraham and which was passed on to both Isaac and Jacob will come about.

This verse then is an anticipatory statement which prepares us for the next book of the Bible, Exodus. After the death of Joseph, not another word will be uttered concerning the years in Egypt until the time of the birth of Moses, a period of about 64 years.

25 Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here."

Just like his father before him, Joseph now requires an oath from the sons of Israel. He believed that the promise would come about and he wanted to lay at rest among his people rather than in the noble state he would have enjoyed in Egypt.

Despite bearing an Egyptian name, having an Egyptian wife of the priestly class, and being the second ruler of the land, he remained always and forever an Israelite. His desires for his people and his land never faded and his devotion to his God never waivered. He is an exact picture of Christ in all ways.

And so once again, he repeats the surety of the matter concerning God's presence among them as he says *pakowd yiphkowd etkhem elhoim* - "visiting you, will surely visit you, God." When he does, he wants his bones carried up from there with them. They are the last recorded words of Joseph. Of all of the honors and accolades of his long and fruitful life, they are the only words recorded about him in the hall of fame of faith noted in Hebrews 11. There we read this brief summary of his life –

"By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones." Hebrews 11:22

Despite all of the many things he did and the faithful patience he exhibited towards his circumstances and those around him who afflicted him, he is above all noted for his faith in the unseen future. It is, like Jacob, a testimony for us that God desires simple faith in His word. Above all else, this is what most pleases Him.

The request that he made was fulfilled by the Israelites as they marched out of Egypt. In Exodus 13, it specifically says that they carried Joseph's bones out with them. And eventually another generation of Israelites carried them into the land of promise and buried him as is recorded in Joshua 24 -

"The bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel had brought up out of Egypt, they buried at Shechem, in the plot of ground which Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for one hundred pieces of silver, and which had become an inheritance of the children of Joseph." Joshua 24:32

And so the narrative of the immediate family of Israel ends with the promise of redemption from Egypt which is based on the oath made first to Abraham. This oath had been carried and remembered for approximately 286 years - "We are God's people and He has a plan for our future."

This visitation of God is in accord with His promises, but it is also in accord with His nature. God visits man in two main ways in the Bible. The first is through grace and mercy. The second is in judgment due to a violation of His just, righteous, and holy nature.

The greatest demonstration of His visitation in and among the realm of mankind is in the person of Jesus Christ. After 4000 years of failings and backslidings by those He created, He stepped out of His eternal realm and united with the flesh He once breathed the breath of life into.

Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, spoke of this coming visitation in Luke chapter 1-

"Blessed *is* the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited and redeemed His people,
⁶⁹ And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of His servant David,
⁷⁰ As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,
Who *have been* since the world began..." Luke 1:68-70

The many pictures and stories found in the Old Testament merely point to a greater fulfillment in the New Testament in the Person of Jesus Christ. Joseph is one of the individuals in human history who has been so greatly honored to picture Him. And he did it in numerous and remarkable ways.

Surely he will be astonished when he is raised to his eternal home and looks back on how God so carefully and meticulously guided the events of his life to show us something even more majestic. But now, he awaits that day as we see in our final verse of the book of Genesis...

***²⁶ So Joseph died, *being* one hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.**

So Joseph died. It is now about 1635 years before the coming of Jesus Christ. Instead of his body being taken to Canaan and buried, his remains were kept in Egypt, probably among the Israelites. And so we have an interesting contrast to the saints of the Tribulation period of our future.

Joseph remained in Egypt *in body*, though his spirit had departed. Jesus will continue to remain with His saints *in Spirit* until He physically returns. Both however, are signs to the people that God's promises will be kept.

At the Exodus, God will judge Egypt by plagues and the redeemed will come out carrying Joseph's bones. During the tribulation, God will judge the world by plagues, and the redeemed will hail the return of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Again, his age is noted at 110 years. But this time the Hebrew says *ben meah v'easer shanim* "a son of 110 years." The years of his life are personified. Though years are

inanimate objects, they are - as the Bible often does with inanimate things, brought to life.

They are made to represent birth, growth, understanding, speech, and all the other things that humans do. In this verse, the years are used as a summary of the life of Joseph, from his birth all the way until his death.

And upon his death, he becomes the second and last person noted in the Bible as being embalmed. After this, his remains were placed in a coffin. The word for "coffin" is the first use of the word *arown* in the Bible, a word which when next used will be to describe the Ark of the Covenant.

Joseph's coffin would probably have been made of the same wood as the Ark, shittim wood. It is an incorruptible wood which was selected and used because of this. The book of Genesis began with the creation, including that of man; he became a living being.

No sooner is that recorded than the spiritual death promised for disobedience was highlighted. Since that time, the premise of the Bible is that man is born to die which in turn implies that man is born spiritually dead. Thus, physical death is inevitable.

The book of Genesis ends with this sad fact unresolved. Joseph has nothing recorded in his life which would otherwise indicate a sinful man, and yet he died. The death was inherited from Jacob, who inherited it from Isaac, who inherited it from Abraham... and this goes all the way back to Adam.

It is a sad commentary on humanity. But there at the beginning, right after the fall, came a promise. One would come to undo the curse and free us from the life of troubles, afflictions, and inevitable death that we all face. Joseph lived under the curse and he died under the curse, but he lived in faith through it.

His promised reward is coming and it can come for you too. The Bible is working slowly and methodically through an amazing plan, devised and implemented by God before the foundation of the world. And it is all centered on His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Closing Verse: *Remember me, O LORD, with the favor You have toward Your people.*

Oh, visit me with Your salvation,

⁵ That I may see the benefit of Your chosen ones,

That I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation,

That I may glory with Your inheritance. Psalm 106:4, 5

Next Week: Short series on the book of Ruth. That will be Ruth 1:1-5 (Famine and Heartache) (1st Ruth Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you and He has a good plan and purpose for you. Call on Him and let Him do marvelous things for you and through you.

Words of Grace, Mercy, and Faith

When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead
"Perhaps Joseph will hate us, they said

And us he may actually repay
For all the evil which we did to him
We threw him in the pit and then sold him away

So they sent messengers to Joseph, as if praying
"Before your father died he commanded, saying

Thus you shall say to Joseph
I beg you, please forgive
The trespass of your brothers and their sin
Though they did evil to you, mercy to them give

Now, please, forgive the trespass
Of the servants of the God of your father
And Joseph wept when they spoke to him
Their words pained, his heart they did bother

Then his brothers also went
And fell down before his face
And they said, "Behold, we are your servants
We are yours here in this place

Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid
For am I in the place of God?
And so to them no wrath he displayed

But as for you, you meant evil against me
But God meant it for good
In order to bring about as it is this day, you see
To save many people alive, surely you have understood

Now therefore, do not be afraid
I will provide for you and your little ones
And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them
To the other eleven of Israel's sons

So Joseph dwelt in Egypt
He and his father's household
And Joseph lived to one hundred and ten
The years of his life as we are told

Joseph saw Ephraim's children to the third generation
The children of Machir, the son of Manasseh
Were also brought up on Joseph's knees, bringing him elation

And Joseph said to his brethren
"I am dying; but God will surely visit you
And bring you out of this land
It shall come to pass, His promises are true

To the land of which He swore
To Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob
It will be our possession forevermore

Then Joseph took an oath from the children of Israel
Saying, "God will surely visit you
And you shall carry up my bones from here
This promise and the oath I request of you

So Joseph died being one hundred and ten years old
And they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt
Until the promise would come of which he foretold

And so closes out Joseph's life story
And also closes out the book of Genesis too

Each page has progressed towards the glory
Of the coming of Christ who will all things renew

Lord God Almighty, thank you for this wondrous book
Thank you for the pictures that look ahead to our Lord Jesus
He is found in every passage if we will but just look
All of these wonders you have given to us

Praise You O God and may you rejoice in our praise
And may we never cease to pursue You all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...