

BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

GOD RESPONDS TO MAN'S SINFUL REBELLION WITH HIS SOVEREIGN
ELECTION AND PROVIDENTIAL FAITHFULNESS TO HIS COVENANT PROMISES

COMMENTARY ON GENESIS

Paul Apple (November 2018)

For each section:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

Genesis 1:1 “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*”

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BACKGROUND NOTES

J. Sidlow Baxter: Besides being *introductory*, Genesis is *explanatory*. The other writings of the Bible are inseparably bound up with it inasmuch as it gives us the origin and initial explanation of all that follows. The major themes of Scripture may be compared to great rivers, ever deepening and broadening as the flow; and it is true to say that all these rivers have their rise in the watershed of Genesis. Or, to use an equally appropriate figure, as the massive trunk and widespreading branches of the oak are in the acorn, so, by implication and anticipation, all Scripture is in Genesis. Here we have in germ all that is later developed. It has been truly said that “the roots of all subsequent revelation are planted deep in Genesis, and whoever would truly comprehend that revelation must begin here.”

It is important to recognize the relationship between Genesis and the last book of Scripture. There is a correspondence between them which at once suggests itself as being both a *proof* and a *product* of the fact that the Bible is a *completed* revelation. There is no adequate understanding of either of them without the other; but taken together they are mutually complete. There is no going back beyond the one, and not going forward beyond the other; nor is there in either case any *need* to do so. In broad outline and majestic language Genesis answers the question: “How did all begin?” In broad outline and majestic language Revelation answers the question: “How will all issue?” All that lies between them is development from the one to the other.

Gleason Archer: The guiding principle throughout the narrative is the covenant of grace, and God’s gracious dealings with true believers from the time of Adam onward. First there is the selective process whereby the covenant fellowship is narrowed down by stages to a single individual, Abraham; then the elective principle widens to include a large family, that of Jacob. Thus the stage is set for the nurturing of an entire nation in the favored refuge of Goshen in Egypt.

R. Kent Hughes: As deep and weighty as the book of Genesis is, it is no dry textbook. Its narratives of the garden, the flood, and the tower of Babel have captivated hearts for over three millennia and have provided inspiration for the world’s greatest poetry. The earthy, epic lives of Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob and Esau, and Joseph in ‘Egypt are so primary and universal and so skillfully told that they have never ceased to enthrall listeners. . .

Genesis is all about grace. The Apostle Paul’s aphorism, “*where sin increased, grace abounded all the more*” (**Romans 5:20**) sums up this major theme of Genesis. Genesis, far from being a faded page fallen from antiquity, breathes the grace of God. What a time we’re going to have as our souls are worked over by the sin-speech-grace-punishment pattern of chapters 1-11, and by the overall “where sin increase, grace abounds” theme of the whole book. This is good soul medicine – strong meat. It was grace from the beginning – in both primeval and patriarchal history. It always will be grace.

Genesis also provides us with a grand revelation of God’s faithfulness as it recounts God’s fidelity over and over again in the lives of the patriarchs. We see that God remains faithful even when the people to whom the promises are made become the greatest threat to the fulfillment of the promise. Such is God’s faithfulness that the sinful, disordered lives of the promise-bearers

can't about the promises.

W. H. Griffith Thomas: It must be evident . . . that there was no intention of writing an universal history of man, but only of recording the development of the Divine will and purpose for and through Abraham. It is history written with a special purpose. The book might easily have begun with Abraham if the purpose had been to record the ordinary history of an ordinary people; yet inasmuch as Israel was not an ordinary people, but charged with God's purposes for the whole of mankind, it was necessary to show – at least in brief form – the connection between the progenitor of the human race and Abraham, in whom and in whose descendants the Divine purpose was to be realized.

Dr. Jack Arnold: SPIRITUAL LESSONS

- A. Major Events: Four basic questions of mankind are answered
1. Creation: How did the universe begin?
 2. Fall: Why does a good God permit suffering?
 3. Flood: Will God Judge the world?
 4. Tower of Babel: Why do people differ as to races and languages?
- B. Individuals
1. Adam: Object of grace.
 2. Noah: The chosen one.
 3. Abraham: Man of faith.
 4. Isaac: The beloved son.
 5. Jacob: The chosen and chastened son.
 6. Joseph: The suffering and glorified one.

Dr. Thomas Constable:

Throughout Genesis, we see that people in general consistently failed to trust and obey God (e.g., in Noah's day, at Babel, and throughout the patriarchal period).

Genesis also records what God has done to encourage people to trust and obey Him. It is only by living by these two principles that people can enjoy a relationship with God and realize all that God created them to experience.

On the one hand, Genesis reveals much about the person and work of God. This revelation helps us to trust and obey Him. It is through His personal revelations to the main characters in Genesis that God revealed Himself initially (e.g., Adam and Eve, Noah, and the patriarchs).

On the other hand, Genesis reveals much about the nature of man. Not only did God reveal the perversity and depravity of man, but He also identified many positive examples of faith and obedience in the lives of the godly.

In Genesis we learn that faith in God is absolutely essential if we are to have fellowship with Him and realize our potential as human beings.

Faith is the law of life. If one lives by faith, he flourishes, but if he does not, he fails. The four patriarchs are primarily examples of what faith is and how it manifests itself. In each of their lives we learn something new about faith.

Abraham's faith demonstrates unquestioning obedience. When God told him to do something, he almost always did it. This is the most basic characteristic of faith. That is one reason Abraham has been called "the father of the faithful." God revealed Himself nine times to Abraham (12:1-3, 7; 13:14-17; 15; 17:1-21; 18; 21:12-13; 22:1-2; 22:15- 18), and each time Abraham's response was unquestioning obedience.

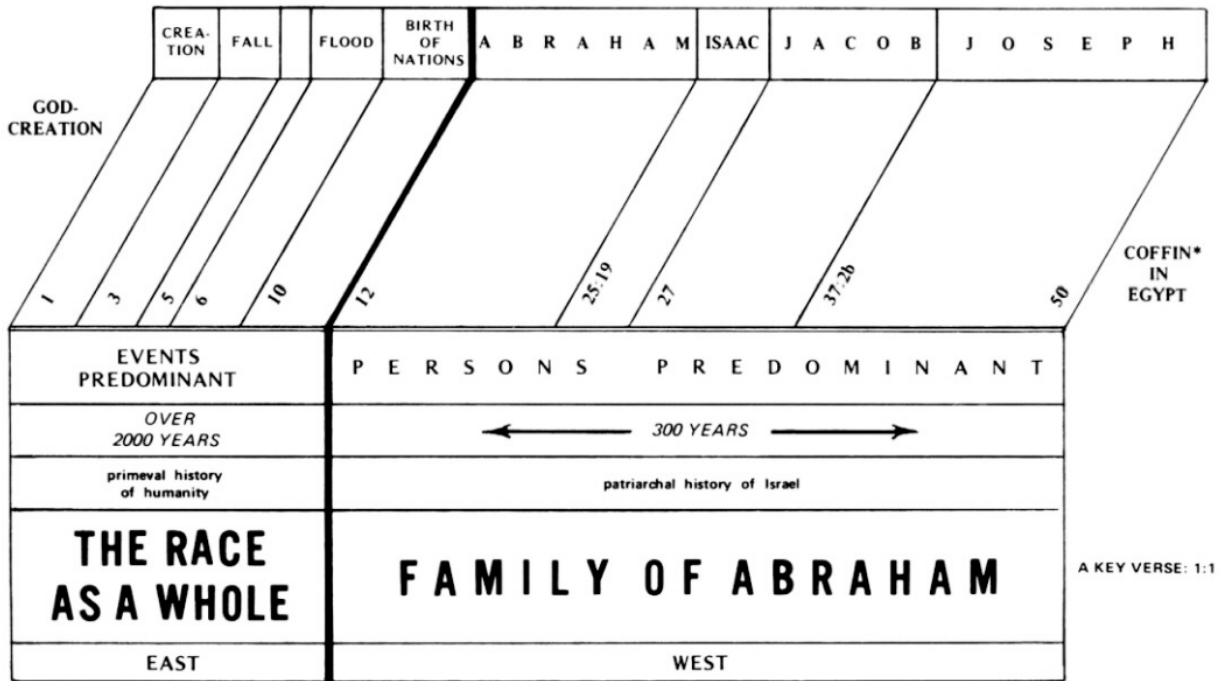
Isaac's faith helps us see the quality of passive acceptance that characterizes true faith in God. This was his response to God's two revelations to him (26:2-5, 24). Sometimes Isaac was too passive.

Jacob's story is one of conflict with God until he came to realize his own limitations: then he trusted God. We can see his faith in his acknowledged dependence on God. God's seven revelations to him eventually led him to this place (28:12-15; 31:3, 11-13; 32:24- 29; 35:1, 9-12; 46:2-4). Most believers today can identify with Jacob most easily, because we too struggle with wanting to live independent of God.

Joseph's life teaches us what God can do with a person who trusts Him consistently in the face of adversity. The outstanding characteristic of Joseph's life was his faithful loyalty to God. He believed God's two revelations to him in dreams (37:5-7, 9), even though God's will did not seem to be working out as he thought it would. Patient faith and its reward shine through the story of Joseph. The Lord Jesus supremely illustrates this quality of faith.

Faith, the key concept in Genesis, means trusting that what God has prescribed is indeed best for me, and demonstrating that trust by waiting for God to provide what He has promised. A "person of faith" is one who commits to acting on this basis—even though he or she may not see how God's way is best.

Chart from [Jensen's Survey of the OT](#):



"Beginnings" in GENESIS:

1. world 1:1-25
2. human race 1:26-2:25
3. sin in the world 3:1-7
4. promise of redemption 3:8-24
5. family life 4:1-15
6. civilization 4:16ff.
7. nations of the world chs. 10, 11
8. Hebrew race ch. 12ff.

The coffin suggested DELIVERANCE from bondage (see 50:25)

A KEY PHRASE: "these are the generations of"



Chart from Charles Swindoll:

GENESIS

	Creation <i>CHAPTERS</i> 1-2	Fall <i>CHAPTERS</i> 3-5	Flood <i>CHAPTERS</i> 6-9	Nations <i>CHAPTERS</i> 10-11		Abraham <i>CHAPTERS</i> 12-25	Isaac <i>CHAPTERS</i> 26-27	Jacob <i>CHAPTERS</i> 28-36	Joseph <i>CHAPTERS</i> 37-50
Beginnings	Beginning of the human race					Beginning of the chosen race			
Result	Confusion and scattering					Bondage in Egypt			
History	Primeval history					Patriarchal history			
Chronology	Over 2,000 years					Approximately 300 years			
Emphasis	Four major events					Four important people			
Key Words and Phrases	"In the beginning" (1:1) "Generations" (5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2)								
Theme	God promises to redeem and bless His people.								
Key Verses	3:15; 12:3								
Christ in Genesis	Pictured in the seed of the woman (3:15); Melchizedek, the high priest (14:18); the humiliation and exaltation of Joseph (chapters 37-50)								

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OUTLINE OF GENESIS – BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

GOD RESPONDS TO MAN'S SINFUL REBELLION WITH HIS SOVEREIGN ELECTION AND PROVIDENTIAL FAITHFULNESS TO HIS COVENANT PROMISES

I. (1:1 – 11:26) THE BEGINNING ON A GLOBAL SCALE – CREATION, FALL, FLOOD, BABEL

A. (1:1-2:25) Creation -- The Beginning of Life Created by God -- Fellowship

1. (1:1-2:3) The Beginning of Earth -- Every Aspect of God's Creation Was Judged to be Very Good by God Himself
2. (2:4-25) The Beginning of Man and Woman
 - (:4) Transition
 - (:5-7) Creation of Man
 - (:8-15) Provision of Perfect Environment for Man = Garden of Eden
 - (:16-17) Provision of Food for Man = Fruit from Trees and Prohibition of Eating from Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil
 - (:18-23) Creation of Woman
 - (:24-25) Institution of One Flesh Relationship in Marriage

Goal: New Creation – of the Heavens and Earth / of Redeemed Individuals

B. (3:1-6:8) Fall -- The Beginning of Human Temptation and Sin – Rebellion / Redemption

1. (3:1-24) The Fall of Man Prompted God to Respond with Severe Curses – on the serpent, the woman, the man and the environment
2. (4:1-2) The Beginning of Procreation
3. (4:3-7) The Beginning of Offerings to the Lord
4. (4:8-16) The Beginning of Strife
5. (4:17-5:32) The Descendants of Adam Through Cain and Seth
 - a. (4:17-24) Descendants Through Cain
 - b. (4:25-5:32) Descendants Through Seth
6. (6:1-8) Growing Population Coupled with Increasing Corruption and Wickedness

Goal: Redemption accomplished by the Seed of the Woman [Rebellion countered by Obedience of 2nd Adam]

C. (6:9-11:32) Flood -- Judgment/Deliverance -- The Beginning of Redemption Amidst Growing Corruption -- Days of Noah and the Flood of Judgment and the Ark of Deliverance – Judgment/Salvation

1. (6:9-22) Covenant with Noah – Deliverance Via the Ark from Universal Flood of Judgment
2. (7:1-24) Details of Noah's Flood
3. (8:1-19) Aftermath of the Flood
4. (8:20-9:17) Renewal of Noahic Covenant
5. (9:18-10:32) Descendants of Noah through Shem, Ham and Japheth

Goal: Destruction of World by Fire and Ultimate Lake of Fire While Sparing the People of God Via Ark of Salvation

D. (11:1-32) Babel -- Dispersion – The Beginning of Division into Nations with Separate Languages -- Pride

1. (11:1-9) Tower of Babel and further dispersion of people speaking variety of languages
2. (11:10-26) Descendants of Shem, Peleg, Reu, Nahor and Terah

Goal: Unity of God's People in the One Family of God [Pride countered by Humility of Christ]

II. (11:27 – 50:26) THE BEGINNING ON A NATIONAL SCALE – THE ELECT PEOPLE OF GOD – ABRAM–ABRAHAM / ISAAC / JACOB–ISRAEL / JOSEPH

[Overlapping outline divisions – tracking each patriarch from birth until death]

A. (11:27-25:11) Abram / Abraham – Life of Pioneering Faith

1. (12:1-9) Faith Moves Out -- Called to Canaan -- Divine call blesses a dependent journey
2. (12:10 – 13:4) Faith is Challenged -- Stumbling in Egypt -- God's Sovereign Purposes Cannot be Derailed by Man's Sinful Blunders
3. (13:5-18) Faith Separates -- Separation from Lot -- Walking by faith frees you up to relinquish your rights because of your confidence in God's promises
4. (14:1-24) Faith Rescues -- Rescue of Lot -- Divine deliverance via a courageous man of faith
5. (15:1-21) Faith Clings to God's Promises – Antidote to Fear, Doubt and Quitting
6. (16:1-16) Faith Failures Make a Mess of Things – Rely on the God Who Sees
 - a. Scheming of Sarah
 - b. Fleeing of Hagar
7. (17:1-27) Faith Sealed by Significant Sign – God Almighty reaffirms His covenant promises and commands circumcision as the sign of His covenant with Abraham
8. (18:1-33) Faith Lives Out Key Theological Questions:
 - a. Is Anything Too Difficult for the Lord? **Greatness of God**
 - b. Shall Not the Judge of All the Earth Deal Justly? **Goodness of God**
9. (19:1-29) Stench of Sodom – Unbelievers Face Terrible Judgment
10. (19:30-38) Legacy of a Loser – Lot demonstrates that a life of worldliness won't end well – Lot's sordid sin with his daughters
11. (20:1-18) Faith is Challenged Again -- God overrules even our besetting sins to accomplish His kingdom purposes – Abimelech takes Sarah into his harem
12. (21:1-21) Sovereignty of God Over Both Child of Promise and Child of Flesh – Birth of Isaac
13. (21:22-34) Faith Receives Guarantees of Possessing God's Promises
 - a. (21:22-32) Guarantee of possession of the promised land via non-aggression covenant with Abimelech –
Sign = ownership of water well at Beersheba
 - b. (21:33-34) Guarantee of possession of the promised land via God's character as the Everlasting God –
Sign = planting of tamarisk tree at Beersheba
14. (22:1-24) Faith Passes the Final Exam – Offering Up of Isaac
15. (23:1-20) Faith Takes Ownership of the Promises of God – Death and Burial of Sarah – Dealing with death reveals our perspective towards eternity and the promises of God
16. (24:1-67) Faith in the Providence of God – God's Providence grants us success as we trust Him for His provision to accomplish His divine plan – A Bride for Isaac
17. (25:1-11) Death of Abraham – the Father of the Faithful

(25:12-18) Aside – Genealogy of Ishmael

B. (21:1-35:29) Isaac – Life of Covenant Blessing

1. (21:1-7) Birth of Isaac
2. (26:1-35) Standing on the Promises of God – God reaffirms His covenant promises to encourage perseverance in times of trial since He is with us to bless and protect – Digging Wells

3. (35:38-29) Death of Isaac

C. (25:19-50:14) Jacob / Israel – Life of Wrestling with God

1. (25:19 – 27:46) Treachery Among Brothers - Jacob Supplants Esau
 - a. (25:19-34) Esau Despising the Promises of God –
Short-sighted carnal value system despises God’s blessing – Jacob supplants Esau

[26:1-35 -- See above regarding Isaac]
 - b. (27:1-46) Jacob Stealing the Blessing --
God can advance His kingdom program despite selfish agendas
2. (28:1-22) Overwhelmed by God’s Gracious Blessing –
The spectacular promises of sovereign grace constitute a divine blessing that cannot be duplicated by
fleshly efforts and evoke a response of consecrated devotion
3. (29:1 – 30:24) – Establishing a Household
 - a. (29:1-30) The School of Hard Knocks –
Sometimes God’s Providence teaches us painful lessons through the school of hard knocks
 - b. (29:31 – 30:24) Fleshly Efforts of Desperate Housewives –
Rivalry and strife fester when we pursue fleshly efforts to achieve selfish goals instead of
praising God for His gracious gifts
4. (30:25 – 31:55) Covenant Blessing
 - a. (30:25-43) Abundant Prosperity –
Despite our faith failures and sinful manipulations, God brings guaranteed prosperity to His
chosen people
 - b. (31:1-55) Return to the Promised Land –
God calls His redeemed people to return to their promised homeland
5. (32:1 – 33:20) Reconnecting with Esau
 - a. (32:1-32) Part 1 – **Wrestling with God – Fears give way to faith in God’s promise when we
are broken of our self-sufficiency and cling to God alone**
 - b. (33:1-20) Part 2 – Peaceful Co-existence – How can the believing community peacefully co-exist
with relatives from a worldly value system?
6. (34:1-31) Vengeance Belongs to God –
There is a reason God forbids humans to exercise vengeance – Vengeance can only be fairly
administered by a holy and just God
7. (35:1-29) Walking with God Along Life’s Roller Coaster Journey –
Pillars of remembrance mark significant milestones along life’s journey for Jacob

(36:1-43) Aside – Genealogy of Esau

8. (46:1-34) Drastic Change in Life’s Circumstances – Relocating to Egypt --
Drastic changes need support:
 - From confidence in God’s will
 - From commitment from one’s extended family
 - From counsel from wise leadership
9. (48:1 – 49:33) Final Blessings
 - a. (48:1-22) Crossed Hands of Blessing – Putting Ephraim Before Manasseh --
Jacob’s deathbed blessing reveals his faith in God’s sovereign election
 - b. (49:1-33) Deathbed Prophecies of Abundant Blessing –
Final prophetic blessings and final burial charge issued by Jacob upon his deathbed

D. (30:22-50:26) Joseph – Life of Providential Blessing

Genesis 50:20 / Romans 8:28

1. (37:1-36) Mistreated and Cast Aside – Family Dysfunction --
The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone

(38:1-30) Aside -- Origin of Perez – Ancestor of David –
Sinful scenarios can fulfil covenant commitments

2. (39:1 – 41:57) Trials and Suffering Offset by Prosperity and Blessing --
 - a. (39:1-23) Prosperity in Egypt – Even in Prison –
God uses even injustice and captivity to accomplish His purposes of prospering His chosen people to accomplish His kingdom objectives
 - b. (40:1-23) Serving God in the Pit –
Disappointment and delay present opportunities to glorify God
 - c. (41:1-57) From Pit to Pinnacle –
God elevates Joseph to prominence in Egypt to orchestrate His ultimate promises of divine rescue and redemption
3. (42:1 – 43:34) Preparation for Family Conviction and Repentance --
 - a. (42:1-38) Providential Pressure –
Providential pressure sets the stage for family reconciliation and Messianic blessing
 - b. (43:1-34) When Feasting Replaces Fear –
God’s merciful love and provision far surpass our fears and anxious expectations
4. (44:1 – 45:28) Family Restoration --
 - a. (44:1-34) Transformation of Joseph’s Brothers
Family reconciliation requires transforming repentance
 - b. (45:1-28) One Big Happy Family –
Providential reconciliation blessed by God with abundant provision and inward transformation
5. (47:1-31) Providential Prosperity in the Midst of Surrounding Poverty –
God prospers those who seek first his kingdom agenda
6. (50:1-26) God’s Master Plan – “*God meant it for good*”
Appreciating the Providence of God in accomplishing His redemptive agenda

TEXT: Genesis Overview

TITLE: BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

I. SIGNIFICANCE OF BOOK OF GENESIS

Why Study the Book of Genesis? Significant in 5 key ways

1) Significant from its Title – **Book of Beginnings** (transliteration from the Greek translation of the Septuagint); books named by the first word in the book; **Book of Origins** – looked at this idea last week; need to understand both our **origins** and our **destiny** – Jesus identified Himself by the title: *“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end”*

First book of the Bible and first book of the Pentateuch – 5 books of the Pentateuch are really viewed as 1 book with 1 author – that will be important when we come to discuss authorship. But many evangelical scholars today would question whether Genesis is scientifically accurate when it comes to explaining the origin of life on earth. Maybe it is just a mythological adaptation that has theological application but was never intended to be interpreted literally.

Albert Mohler begs to disagree:

Theological disaster ensues when the book of nature (general revelation) is used to trump God’s special revelation, when science is placed over Scripture as authoritative and compelling. And that is the very heart of this discussion. While some would argue that the Scriptures are not in danger, the current conversation on this subject is leading down a path that will do irrevocable harm to our evangelical affirmation of the accuracy and authority of God’s Word.

So our understanding of the **inerrancy of Scripture** is at stake in how we interpret the book of Genesis.

Certainly it is a **controversial book** – **Derek Kidner**:

There can scarcely be another part of Scripture over which so many battles, theological, scientific, historical and literary, have been fought, or so many strong opinions cherished

2) Significant as the Foundation for so many important doctrines – you can’t expect to skip the level 101 course in any discipline and then fully understand the material that is built on that foundation

J. Sidlow Baxter:

The other writings of the Bible are inseparably bound up with it inasmuch as it gives us the origin and initial explanation of all that follows. The major themes of Scripture may be compared to great rivers, ever deepening and broadening as they flow; and it is true to say that all these rivers have their rise in the watershed of Genesis. Or, to use an equally appropriate figure, as the massive trunk and wide-spreading branches of the oak are in the acorn, so, by implication and anticipation, all Scripture is in Genesis. Here we have in germ all that is later developed. It has been truly said that “the roots of all subsequent revelation are planted deep in Genesis, and whoever would truly comprehend that revelation must begin here.

Our understanding of the rest of the OT and of the NT and of how Jesus Christ fulfills prophecies

relating to God’s plan for redemption must start with an understanding of the first book, the foundational book, the book of Genesis

What doctrines are introduced here? Just some of the basic ones: set against the background of the paganism of the countries the nation of Israel

a. Sovereignty and Providence of God

sovereign in creation ... but not some type of deistic view where God becomes disengaged; instead God is sovereign in governing the world He created and providentially ordering the affairs of mankind to accomplish His purposes

b. Goodness of God

we see that in Creation; we see that in His providence – testimony of Joseph after being so mistreated by his brothers

Gen. 50:20 “*As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.*”

Rom. 8:28 “*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*”

Very practical side to studying Genesis –

Rom. 15:4 “*For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope*”

Story of Joseph and his perseverance should give each of us hope

1 Cor. 10 speaks of the value of OT examples

c. Power of God

d. Divine Election

Parunak: Note alternation between chosen and rejected lines, emphasizing the selection that is going on throughout the book.

Chosen	Rejected
2:4, Heaven and Earth	
5:1, Adam	
6:9, Noah	
	10:1, Sons of Noah
11:10, Shem	
11:27, Terah	
	25:12, Ishmael
25:19, Isaac	
	36:1,9, Esau
37:2, Jacob	

e. Importance of Truth vs. Deception

lies told by Abraham to try to save his life
name Jacob – deceiver; his interaction with twin brother Esau

f. Doctrine of Sin, of Depravity

g. God’s Plan of Redemption

* * * * *

The first promise of redemption is definite but largely undefined in [Genesis 3:15](#): “*He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.*”

Later in Genesis we learn that the world will be blessed through Abraham (12:3).

The line through which Messiah would come was through Isaac, not Ishmael; Jacob, not Esau.

Finally in Genesis we see that Israel’s coming ruler will be of the tribe of Judah: “*The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples*” ([Genesis 49:10](#)).

<https://bible.org/seriespage/1-walk-through-book-genesis>

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Christ is also seen in people and events that serve as **types** (a “type” is a historical fact that illustrates a spiritual truth). Adam is “a type of Him who is to come” ([Rom 5:14](#)). Both entered the world through a special act of God as sinless men. Adam is the head of the old creation; Christ is the Head of the new creation. Abel’s acceptable offering of a blood sacrifice points to Christ, and there is a parallel in his murder by Cain. Melchizedek (“*righteous king*”) is “made like the Son of God” ([Heb 7:3](#)). He is the King of Salem (“*peace*”) who brings forth bread and wine and is the priest of the Most High God. Joseph is also a type of Christ. Joseph and Christ are both objects of special love by their Fathers, both are hated by their brethren, both are rejected as rulers over their brethren, both are conspired against and sold for silver, both are condemned though innocent, and both are raised from humiliation to glory by the power of God.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/1-overview-book-genesis>

3) Significant because it is Widely Quoted in the NT – what did Jesus think about the book of Genesis? What did the Apostle Paul think about the book of Genesis?

John 5:46 “*For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me.*”

Luke 24:27 “*Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.*”

John 1:45

Morris:

There are at least **165 passages** in Genesis that are either directly quoted or clearly referred to in the New Testament. Many of these are alluded to more than once, so that

there are at least two hundred quotations or allusions to Genesis in the New Testament ... there exist over one hundred quotations or direct references to Genesis 1-11 in the New Testament. Furthermore, every one of these eleven chapters is alluded to somewhere in the New Testament, and every one of the New Testament authors refers somewhere in his writings to Genesis 1-11. On at least six different occasions, Jesus Christ Himself quoted from or referred to something or someone in one of these chapters, including specific reference to each of the first seven chapters.

Genesis is quoted from over **200 times** in the New Testament. In fact chapters 1-11 is quoted more than 100 times in the New Testament. It's not just mentioned but you'll find it being quoted word for word over 165 in the New Testament.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/1-overview-book-genesis>

4) Significant because it clearly shows how man is accountable to his Creator.

Platte:

When we compromise the Bible statements about our origin, we invariably end up being confused about our purpose in life and our destiny. Humanistic evolution, for example, denies the creation and says we came by evolutionary forces (chance). The logical consequence would be that there is no real purpose for life, and there is no life after death. We can understand our purpose and goal only when we understand our origin.

If Genesis didn't matter ... If God didn't care if we believe in a literal six day creation, in how He formed Eve out of Adam, in the institution of marriage as between one man and one woman created in the image of God and joined together in a unique one-flesh relationship, in the historicity of the universal flood of Noah's day, in the details of the lives of the Jewish patriarchs, then God would have left Genesis out of the canon of 66 inspired books of scripture.

5) Foundational to a Christian world view – essential in light of Israel's immersion in a pagan culture surrounding by alternative world views just as we are today – [Brian Borgman develops this – we will look at this aspect next week]

II. AUTHORSHIP - MOSES

J. Sidlow Baxter, in his excellent work, *Explore the Book*, sums up the difficulty of authorship by the question, "*Is it Mosaic [from Moses], or a mosaic [tapestry constructed from multiple sources]?"*

* * * * *

Traditionally, Moses has been held to be the author of Genesis over the centuries. A number of inferential evidences favor this conclusion.³ It would appear from a number of passages (e.g., [Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27](#); [Leviticus 1:1; 4:1; 6:1,8,19,24; 7:22,28](#), etc.) that Moses wrote the other books of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). It would indeed be unusual for the first word of Exodus to be "and" unless Moses wrote it as well.

In the New Testament, our Lord seemingly attributes the Pentateuch to Moses ([Matt 8:4; 19:7,8; Mark 1:44; 7:10; 10:3,4; Luke 5:14; 16:29,31; John 5:45,46; 7:22,23](#)). Other New Testament writers follow this same approach ([Acts 3:22, 13:39; Rom 10:5,19; I Cor 9:9; II Cor](#)

[3:15](#)). It is therefore hard not to conclude that Moses wrote all the Pentateuch, in spite of no one air-tight statement to this effect.

Critics have not been content with this conclusion, however. Beginning with J. Astruc (1753),⁴“scholars” have attributed this book to the work of an unknown redactor who skillfully compiled the writings of four or more editors. Generally the four primary sources are referred to as J, E, D, and P. J is the “Yahwist”; E, the “Elohist”; D is the work of the Deuteronomist; and P, the priestly document.

Several lines of evidence are given to support the Graf-Wellhausen or Documentary hypothesis. First would be the different names which are employed for God.⁵ For those who hold to the Documentary hypothesis, the change from Elohim to Yahweh signals a change of author. One major flaw in this approach is that within “E” passages the word Yahweh is also employed (e.g. [Genesis 22:11, 14; 28:17-22](#)) and vice-versa.

Secondly, we are pointed to different expressions referring to some act, such as that of making a covenant. “Cut a covenant,” “give a covenant,” and “establish a covenant”⁶ are variously employed, by the different authors of the Pentateuch. This leaves the author with no opportunity for stylistic change or for a change in the nuance of a word. One would hate to write under such restrictions today.

Thirdly, we are told that the Pentateuch contains “doublets,” that is duplicate accounts of the same event.⁷ One such instance would be the two creation accounts in [Genesis 1](#) and 2. Worse yet are supposed “doublets” where there is any semblance of similarity between two accounts, such as Hagar’s two departures from home ([Genesis 16, 21](#)).

<https://bible.org/seriespage/1-walk-through-book-genesis>

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David Pratte:

The Documentary Hypothesis or Graf-Wellhausen Theory states that different parts of the Pentateuch (not just Genesis but the Pentateuch) must have originally been written by different uninspired authors, whose writings may have been collected by some editors (called redactors) long after Moses died. This view is said to be necessary to explain supposed contradictions and different writing styles found in different sections of the books. But such a theory proves nothing. Many writers use different styles at different times for different purposes. Such an approach could just as easily be used to “prove” that modern books were written by more than one author despite the fact we know each one was written by just one author.

Horne reminds us that Moses wrote this inspired record over 2000 years after the creation and many other events in the book actually occurred. At the time Moses wrote, the nations

surrounding Israel were steeped in idolatry, especially in the land of Canaan that they were promised to receive as an inheritance. In contrast to the fables and myths of idolatry, the record of Genesis served to give a true account of the character and nature of the true God, the true record of the creation of earth and mankind, the origin of sin and of God's plan to provide salvation for mankind, including the role of the nation of Israel in that plan.

<http://www.religionofjesuschrist.com/commentary/law/genesis.pdf>

Gleason Archer, Jr.: Two considerations reinforce this impression of single authorship in Genesis.

- 1) The first is the significant use of the term *toledot* (generations, offspring, descendants) to introduce most of the main sections of the outline.
- 2) The second unitary consideration is found in the technique of the author in dealing with ancestral figures who are not of the chosen line. . . The author's motive in each case seems to dispose more briefly of the non-elect branches of the human line before taking up the genealogy of those patriarchs who had a genuine faith in Jehovah.

III. LITERARY STRUCTURE

A. Grammatical structure

Dr. MacArthur, Van Parunak ... many other Hebrew scholars and bible expositors have adopted this as their central approach to the book. Based on the repetition of the recurring phrase "*the records of the generations of*" the history of, the story of ... *toledot*

But in my way of thinking, this is a pretty bland approach to such earthshaking material.

* * * * *

Genesis traces two lines: the line of the rebellious offspring of the serpent and the line of the blessed offspring of the woman (Gen. 3:15). In Genesis 4, the **rebellious line of Cain** culminates in the seventh generation with the murderer Lamech (Gen. 4:23–24). In Genesis 5, the **blessed line of Seth** culminates in the seventh generation with Enoch, who "walked with God, and he was not" (Gen. 5:24), and in the tenth generation with Noah (Gen. 5:29).

From the Table of Nations in Genesis 10, the narrative zooms in on the blessed line of Shem (Gen. 11:10–26) and Terah, the father of Abraham (11:27–30). The story of Abraham and the patriarchs in Genesis 12–50 revolves around the struggle for the birth of blessed offspring (e.g., Isaac, Jacob) in contrast to the rebellious (e.g., Ishmael, Esau). The line of blessed offspring sets a trajectory from Genesis through the Old Testament, eventually culminating in the genealogy of Jesus, "the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3:36).

<https://www.crossway.org/blog/2014/06/why-study-the-book-of-genesis/>

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B. Geographical structure

Three clear divisions

<u>Geography</u>	<u>Timeframe</u>
1. Mesopotamia – chaps. 1-11	(Creation to ca. 2090 BC)
2. The Promised Land – chaps. 12-36	(2090-1897 BC)
3. Egypt – chaps. 37-50	(1897-1804 BC)

So as the treatment gets longer in terms of number of chapters and focus, the timeframe gets

compressed and more detail is provided – a common characteristic of **Progressive Revelation**.

C. Thematic structure or Overall Content

Two basic Divisions:

1. Primitive History – chaps. 1-11 – widening ruin of man
2. Patriarchal History – chaps. 12-50 – narrowing work of God in redemptive history
 - a. Abraham (12:1-25:18)
 - b. Isaac (25:19-26:35)
 - c. Jacob (27-36)
 - d. Joseph (37-50)

[See handout]

IV. KEY VERSES

[Genesis 1:1](#): *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*

[Genesis 3:15](#): *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”*

[Genesis 12:1-3](#): *“Now the Lord said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”*

[Genesis 17:7](#) *“I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.”*

V. PURPOSE

David Malick:

A. To present man’s revolt against his Maker and its terrible consequences

B. To provide the historical basis for the covenant of promise with Abraham whereby God will graciously bring about the solution to man’s revolt

C. To encourage faith in YHWH by introducing His election and separation of Israel to Himself as a resolution to the terrible consequences to mankind’s revolt

Constable:

The real theme of the Pentateuch is the selection of Israel from the nations and its consecration to

the service of God and His Laws in a divinely appointed land. The central event in the development of this theme is the divine covenant with Abraham and its ... promise to make his offspring into the people of God and to give them the land of Canaan as an everlasting inheritance.

David Murray: Message of Genesis:

- Originally -- God's power to create order in life out of disorder and darkness in the universe and in individual lives should encourage Israel to leave the disorder and darkness of Egypt behind them and confidently move to the order and light of Canaan
- To us today: Should encourage the new Israel of the church to leave the darkness of the old world and move towards the new Canaan

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Dr. David Murray: The Creation of a Covenant People

Name: Naming the book by the first word in the book was an ancient practice;

Theme: human failure and God's glorious purpose; patriarchs and promises;

Calvin: beginning with creation, the book renders God visible to us in His works;

Purpose: revolves around creation, the patriarchs and the promises

Key Verses: 1:1; 3:15; 15:5-6

Key Truths:

- Although sin corrupted the ideal world Israel's God had created redemption would come to God's chosen people
- the life of the patriarchs provides insights into nature of God and His covenant with His people

Author: Moses

Date: after the burning bush and before death of Moses

Historical Analysis:

What was the historical purpose? Prologue to rest of the bible; proclaiming Israel to be a theocratic people in the promised land

Form is historical narrative; not myth – focus on geographical places, real individuals, cultural items, etc.

Chronology – book covers 2,200 years from creation to death of Joseph

Book begins with Creation and ends with a Coffin

Begins with Glory and ends with groaning

Importance of genealogies – look at long length of these lives; humanity is on the way down; order of genealogies is important; dispensing with other lines in order to focus on the elect branches

Literary Analysis – Outlines –

Generation / Degeneration / Regeneration

Construction / Destruction / Reconstruction

Original Audience and Message: 2 options:

- First generation of Israel that came out of Egypt
Concern: Why did you take us out of Egypt? Should we go back? Separate / leave behind
- Second generation on the borders of Canaan about to go into the Promised Land
Concern: Should we enter this land of Giants? Go in and conquer

God powerfully creates Order out of Disorder

Genre: Historical narrative – focuses on heroes

Realism: portrays all of human life – with the good and the bad; all types of sins highlighted; people with all of their warts and flaws and faults; their faults are their foils to greatness with respect to history of redemption

Repeating narrative patterns – cumulative effect – implies that the world has design and purpose;

Narrative typology – foreshadow and anticipate later events; focuses on central themes; not only that God is at work in history; but this history has a goal; events of the past are pointers to events of the future

Thematic analysis: What doesn't begin in Genesis?

- Beginnings
- Covenants
- Election to a purpose

NT analysis: what was begun in Genesis was fulfilled in Christ

Brian Borgman: Introduction to Genesis

Book of first things; also about last things – same themes point us to the end of human history

- Creation points to new creation
- First Adam points us to last Adam
- Creation of light points us to light God shines in our hearts through the gospel of Jesus Christ

NT reminds us that whatever was written in earlier times was for our instruction – Rom. 15:4;

Christ-centered themes – Luke 24

Also lessons that need to be applied to us today

Title: Pentateuch is actually 1 book in 5 parts; intended to be read as one; often called the book or the book of Moses;

Author: book itself makes no claim of authorship; Documentary Hypothesis (JEPD)– 4 different late sources; perspective of unbelief is their presupposition; the book is a unity; the Pentateuch is a unity; Moses wrote it; relied on other sources; small parts may have been added by Joshua or others (like record of death of Moses); a couple of editorial comments possible;

Support:

- consistent view of Jewish tradition;
- - Ex. 24:4 – Moses was author of Exodus ... and Exodus starts with “and” as a continuation of Genesis;
- - Joshua felt that Moses wrote the book of the law;
- dozens of references in the OT to the law of Moses;
- Jesus believed Moses wrote the Pentateuch
- Acts 3:22 – apostles believed Moses wrote the Pentateuch

Date: 15th century BC during wilderness wanderings

Outline: structured around *toledot*; used 10 times in Genesis (2:4; 5:1; etc.)

Significance of genealogies – set up the entire story for patriarchal history; open up story lines;

Importance of Genesis: 3 reasons:

1) provides creation narrative for Israelites which debunk pagan myths of creation – they were immersed in pagan culture with pagan theories of origins – out of Babylonia and Egypt – all involved deities who were territorial, capricious, violent, intensely sexual; an apologetic that defended the One Sovereign God of the Universe

2) foundational to the rest of the Bible; rest of the bible would make no sense apart from these foundational truths – Creation / Fall / Redemption

Promises of God / covenants / etc.

3) foundational to a Christian world view – in the midst of modern paganism –

TEXT: Genesis 1:1 – 2:3

TITLE: THE BEGINNING OF EARTH AND ALL IT CONTAINS

BIG IDEA:

EVERY ASPECT OF GOD’S CREATION WAS JUDGED TO BE GOOD BY GOD HIMSELF

INTRODUCTION:

We live in a culture that resists the authoritative declaration of **absolute standards**. In our world, everything is relative – everything revolves around your individual perception rather than some objective standard outside of yourself. And yet the paradox is that we like to label certain things morally good and others morally evil. What is the basis for those types of evaluations apart from God being the standard for good and evil? Otherwise one culture could establish a norm that murdering is good instead of evil.

God has a lot to say about people who have lost their moral compass; whose conscience and discernment have been so perverted by sin that they call good “evil”, and evil “good.” They have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and end up worshiping and serving the creature rather than the Creator.

As we enter into our study of **Genesis – the Book of Beginnings** – we see God laying the foundation for what He declares to be objectively good and objectively evil. These are the absolute standards that God has never changed and that apply down through the centuries, regardless of the confusion in men’s minds and hearts.

God is able to do this because by nature, He declares that in His very essence He is Good. Remember what Jesus explained to the rich young ruler: “*Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.*” (Luke 18:19) That is why the commandments that He issues are good and right and consistent with a path of goodness and righteousness because they are consistent with the character of God.

As we read through the first chapter of Genesis, what has to strike you is the repetitive phrase: “*God was that it [what He had created] was good.*” In fact when it comes to summing up the entire six days of creation, He feels compelled to ramp up His evaluation and declare “*it was very good.*” (vs. 31)

5 MAJOR TOPICS

Can’t offer any type of exhaustive treatment ... but giving some summary observations; Each of these could easily be a series of messages

I. CHRONOLOGY ISSUES -- THE EARTH’S AGE AND THE DAYS OF CREATION AND THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION

A. Earth is Billions of Years Old or Relatively Young?

Less than 10,000 years old or as **Wikipedia** quotes: Evidence from numerous scientific disciplines contradicts Young Earth creationism, showing the age of the universe as 13.8 billion years, the formation of the Earth as at least 4.5 billion years ago, and the first appearance of life on Earth as occurring at least 3.5 billion years ago. That is quite a contrast in viewpoints.

How to treat verse 1? Have to account for the creation of the **angels and the demons** – Clear from **Col 1:16,17** that they were created by the Triune God – plural of majesty in the plural form of God -- **Elohim**

Parunak: Those who understand 1:1 as a **summary** [with the details then developed in the rest of the chapter] take “*the heavens and the earth*” as a merism expressing totality, like our expression “from soup to nuts” (the first and last courses of a dinner). But the terms are not necessarily thus understood: **Deut 10:14; Ps 96:11; Isa 42:5**; etc.

It is more appropriate to understand the expression of the **two great spheres of creation:** heavenly (including the angelic host) and earthly (the focus of the rest of Gen 1-2).

- This fits better with 1:2, which as a disjunctive clause focuses in on the second of these two: “*Now as far as the earth is concerned, it was without form and void, ...*”

- Arguments from science

Believers in **universal flood geology** attach great importance to the biblical story of Noah's Flood in explaining the **fossil record** and **geological strata**. Major American YEC organizations such as the **Institute for Creation Research** and **Answers in Genesis** support this approach.

The 10 Best Evidences from Science that Confirm a Young Earth

<https://answersingenesis.org/evidence-for-creation/the-10-best-evidences-from-science-that-confirm-a-young-earth/>

Some examples of scientific arguments from various disciplines:

From Biological Evidence:

[DNA in 'ancient' fossils](#). DNA extracted from bacteria that are supposed to be 425 million years old brings into question that age, because DNA could not last more than thousands of years.

From Geological Evidence:

[Scarcity of plant fossils in many formations containing abundant animal / herbivore fossils](#). E.g., the Morrison Formation (Jurassic) in Montana. See *Origins* **21**(1):51–56, 1994. Also the Coconino sandstone in the Grand Canyon has many track-ways (animals), but is almost devoid of plants. Implication: these rocks are *not* ecosystems of an 'era' buried *in situ* over eons of time as evolutionists claim. The evidence is more consistent with catastrophic transport then burial during the massive global Flood of Noah's day. This eliminates supposed evidence for millions of years.

From radiometric dating:

Carbon-14 in [coal](#) suggests ages of thousands of years and clearly contradict ages of millions of years.

From astronomical evidence:

Evidence of recent volcanic activity on Earth's moon is inconsistent with its supposed vast age because it should have long since cooled if it were billions of years old.

From human history:

Human population growth. Less than 0.5% p.a. growth from six people 4,500 years ago would produce today's population. [Where are all the people?](#) if we have been here much longer?

<http://creation.com/age-of-the-earth>

- Appearance of Age – mature earth
- Analogy – Adam appeared to be 25 years old ... but just 15 minutes old; you may have been created 15 minutes ago with false memories ... but that would be somewhat deceptive ... not deceptive to have rocks with appearance of age or tree rings; is God intentionally deceiving us??
- Arguments from the Bible:

Theological:

1) What's the point of a huge gap of time with no people on the earth? What is God trying to accomplish in such a time period? Hard to mesh with concept of History being His Story ...

Genealogies:

1) Sure there can be some gap in the recorded genealogies – skipping several generations; but what is the point if you are skipping huge blocks of time – this only matters from the onset of humanity (not an argument for the overall age of the earth); genealogies are recorded as significant historical records – not meaningless

B. Days of Creation are Literal 24 hour periods of time or representative of long ages of time? Day Age Theory

- **2 Peter 3:8** has nothing whatever to do with the length of the creation week. Genesis 1 needs to be interpreted in its own context; even if you grant the formula 1 day = 1,000 years, you have not added enough years to make a significant dent in the argument; do a study of the Hebrew word “day” (*yom*) in the OT; The Hebrew word *olam* was available to communicate the idea of a long time period if Moses had intended to convey that idea.
- The Hebrew word *yom* is used more than 2000 times in the Old Testament. A cursory examination reveals that in over 1900 cases (95%) the word is clearly used of a 24-hour day, or of the daylight portion of a normal day. Many of the other 5% refer to expressions such as "the day of the Lord" (Joel 2:1) which may not be exceptions at all, since the second coming of Christ will occur on one particular day (1 Cor. 15:51-52), even though His reign extends over a longer period of time. Therefore, even without a context, an unbiased translator would normally understand the idea of "24-hour period" for the word *yom*. Used here in the context with evening and morning which point to a 24 hour period <http://www.icr.org/article/theistic-evolution-day-age-theory/>

- You always run into inconsistencies regarding what was created ahead of what ... and how could it have existed in such a state for millions of years –
- Plants could have survived for 48 or 72 hours without the birds and the bees, but could they have survived 2-3 billion years without each other according to the day-age scenario? Many birds eat only insects. Could they have survived a billion years while waiting for the insects to evolve? <http://www.icr.org/article/theistic-evolution-day-age-theory/>
- Institution of one day of rest in the seven day week – following 6 days of labor; the Fourth Commandment – otherwise would make no sense
- Most importantly, you never have a theological answer to the problem of how **sin** and **death** enters into the world – Bible presents it as connected to man’s sin; it was at that time that God cursed an environment that before that time was judged to be very good **Romans 5:12** *“Therefore as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so death passed to all men, because all have sinned.”*

There is yet another lesson to be learned from this New Testament passage. There is a tendency among neo-evangelicals today to make a false dichotomy between the Bible’s statements of **faith and practice** and statements pertaining to **science and history**. The former, we are told, are accurate; the latter are riddled with errors of fact. This view is also known as the **partial inspiration** or **limited inerrancy** view of inspiration. Romans 5:12 shows that the above is untenable because the passage bases a theological doctrine (man’s sin) upon a historical event (Adam’s fall). Likewise 1 Cor. 15:45 bases the doctrine of the resurrection upon the historicity of Adam as the first man. Many other examples could be cited, but the lesson is clear: the theology (“faith and practice”) of the Christian life is inseparably linked to and interwoven with the historicity and scientific validity of the narrative portions of Scripture. To deny one is to deny the other.
<http://www.icr.org/article/theistic-evolution-day-age-theory/>

C. Each Animal is Limited to Producing After its Kind, or Over Long Amounts of Time creatures evolve from one type of species to a more advanced form?

Where are the transitional forms in the fossil records?? Scientists come up with some imaginative attempts from just a fragment of a bone or of a tooth ... shows they are working from a presuppositional approach as well

Confusion if you equate the biblical concept of “kind” with scientific term “species” – claim against Christians that they believe that the species are fixed – according to what definition of species?? Definition changed over time

Dogs will remain dogs – **variation within dogs** ... but dogs don’t become cats

Example: dogs can easily breed with one another, whether wolves, dingoes, coyotes, or domestic dogs

Cats will remain cats

We are not related to gorillas

II. WORLD VIEW ISSUES -- THE BASIC CHRISTIAN WORLD VIEW IN CONTRAST TO PAGAN THINKING

A worldview is the framework from which we view reality and make sense of life and the world.

For example, a 2-year-old believes he's the center of his world, a secular humanist believes that the material world is all that exists, and a Buddhist believes he can be liberated from suffering by self-purification.

Someone with a biblical worldview believes his primary reason for existence is to love and serve God. <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/christian-worldview/whats-a-christian-worldview/whats-a-worldview-anyway>

Borgman:

6 basic world view questions:

- What is the nature of **reality** / what is the nature of **metaphysics**?
What is the nature of **being** or existence / **ontology**? These 2 are related ...
Evolutionist, materialist, naturalist cannot answer this question with any meaning
“the stuff that I can see and touch”
Reality is just **chance**; matter in motion; accidental events
Genesis asserts the existence of God as ultimate reality – being and existence are in Him;
God is existence Himself – *in Him, we live and move and have our being*

The Christian philosophy view of metaphysics is clearly spelled out in Scripture: “In the beginning [of the cosmos] was the Word [Logos, mind, reason, thought, wisdom, intelligence, idea, law, order, purpose, design], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same [Word] was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men” ([John 1:1–4](#)).

Christian Philosophy and Mind before Matter

The flow of this passage sets the parameters of Christian philosophy—mind before matter; God before people; plan and design before creation; life from life; and enlightenment from the Light. The orderly universe was conceived in the orderly and rational mind of God before it was created. Without the Logos there would be no cosmos. From the Christian perspective it is no surprise to see philosophers and scientists refer to the universe as a manifestation of mathematical law, order, design, and beauty. . .

The current theory of evolution declares the cosmos to be the result of a series of random accidents. Christianity considers this view an entirely irrational notion. Such a position is tantamount to claiming that a skyscraper can come together without an architect, plan, or engineer. It doesn't happen that way in the real world; only in the minds of those who assume there is no supernatural Designer. <http://www.allaboutworldview.org/christian-philosophy-and-metaphysics-faq.htm>

- **Cosmology**; the nature of the world around us – closely related to **Metaphysics** above --
There is a creator and a designer and governor – involved with that which He brought into existence

- What is the nature of man, **anthropology**? All of life is sacred and has dignity; man and woman made in image of God; vs. man is no different in essence than any animal
- What is the nature of knowledge; **epistemology** – How do we know what we know? Because God reveals these truths; God speaks authoritatively and discloses what we need to know – Creation speaks to the General Revelation that God graciously makes known to all mankind so that they are aware of His power and majestic attributes
- What is the basis of **morality**; nature of ethics? Why shouldn't I steal or murder my neighbor? Consensus of the community as the basis for morality?? What about Nazi Germany and Jewish Holocaust?? God lays down the standard of morality – established in the heart and conscience of every human
- What is the **ultimate purpose** of life and history -- our past and future? If you are here by accident you are just here by accident; universe of chance and randomness; where are we headed – talked about ultimate destiny from Rev. 21 in earlier message

How can you tell if you have a **biblical world view** – **George Barma** in his surveys used these litmus test questions

- Do absolute moral truths exist?
- Is absolute truth defined by the Bible?
- Did Jesus Christ live a sinless life?
- Is God the all-powerful and all-knowing Creator of the universe, and does He still rule it today?
- Is salvation a gift from God that cannot be earned?
- Is Satan real?
- Does a Christian have a responsibility to share his or her faith in Christ with other people?
- Is the Bible accurate in all of its teachings?

* * * * *

INTRODUCTION:

Job 38

III. (:26-27) DESIGN ISSUES -- THE IMPLICATIONS OF BEING CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD AND EITHER AS MAN OR AS WOMAN

A. Image of God

Divine dialogue here within the Trinity – “*Let us*” -- different structure than what took place with the rest of creation where God just spoke it into existence ... man is seen to be the crown and climax of God’s creation

Immaterial part of man is the key here – not mainly differences in his physical body from animals because God is a Spirit; and yet man is a **complete being** – body and spirit combined; so there may be some reference to the physical as well – look at how Jesus appeared in His Incarnation and how He maintains a resurrection body even now

Several NT references:

Ephesians 4:24 “*put on the new self, which I the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*”

Colossians 3:10

While God has character traits that He does not share with humanity (e.g., God is self-existent, omniscient, omnipotent), we can still see His **shared attributes** in humanity today, even though they are **distorted by sin**. Attributes such as love, self-awareness, justice, grace, and mercy are distinct from attributes associated with animals. They are part of the very being of **humanity**.

Aquinas: Aquinas locates the image of God in humanity's intellectual nature or reason, but Aquinas believes that the image of God is in humanity in three ways. First, which all humanity possess, the image of God is present in humanity's capacity for understanding and loving God, second, which only those who are justified possess, the image is present when humanity actually knows and loves God imperfectly, and thirdly, which only the blessed possess, the image is present when humanity knows and loves God perfectly

Piper: Man as man—complex physical/spiritual being—in his wholeness, not his parts, is like God. It is not enough to say he reasons . . .
Until we know God fully ... probably not capable of fully explaining in what sense man has been created like God

Several characteristics in the uniqueness of humanity help us understand the meaning of the image of God in man. While this is not an exhaustive list, the following *seven characteristics* reflect *imago Dei*. -- **Don Dunavant**

- **We are spiritual beings.** We are created to represent and worship our God who is Spirit. Human beings are not merely material beings. When God created the first man, He *breathed into his nostrils the breath of life* (Genesis 2:7), making man a

living soul and giving to him spiritual life. Only humans are able to relate to God in worship and communication. A vital component of this spiritual nature is immortality — human beings that will **never cease to exist** but will live forever.

- **We are *personal* beings.** We are created by a personal God, and our personhood reflects that aspect of God. He created humans with personality, as unique individuals with self-consciousness and purpose. While every man and woman share common characteristics, no two people are alike. Since each individual is stamped with the image of God, each human life has significance before God.
- **We are *moral* beings.** God is holy. He created humanity with a moral compass, a conscience that gives each of us an inner sense of the difference between right and wrong. The conscience may be deadened or seared by sin, but it remains hardwired in man. The hardest question for both atheists and evolutionists is how to explain the moral nature in the human race, in every culture, in every people group, and even in every religion. Moreover, man's moral capacity makes him accountable to God for his actions. **Man has a will** -- you don't see animals blushing with shame when they commit a transgression – you do see them want to curry favor rather than rejection from their owner ... but not on the basis of a moral compass or a conscience
- **We are *relational* beings.** God reveals the relational nature of the Trinity in this phrase: *Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness* (Genesis 1:26). God created us with the capacity to relate both to God and to others. Humans were not made to live in isolated individualism. Thus, the image of God is involved in how we relate in marriage and in the fellowship of the church, and how we relate to others in the Great Commandment and the Great Commission (see Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19: 1-12; Galatians 3:26-29). Communicate in language based on words; How we love with purposeful action is very different from how animals relate to one another
- **We are *rational* beings.** God is a God of knowledge. While our knowledge is limited, God created us with the capacity to think, to know, and to learn. Christianity is not a mindless faith. Just the opposite. The intellectual aspect of *imago Dei* means that our minds are a vital part of how we are to love God (Matthew 22:37), that we are to cultivate our minds (Ephesians 4:23), and that we are to renew our minds for transformation (Romans 12:2).

Man has an intellect

- **We are *emotional* beings.** We are made in the likeness of God who Himself is love. It is the emotive facet of our makeup that allows us to experience intimacy with those close to us, to feel compassion for others, and to know the deep awe of God that causes us to delight and find soul satisfaction in Him.

Man has emotions

- **We are *creative* beings.** God is the Creator. His glory is displayed in His creation. We have an insatiable desire to create, whether producing a piece of art, starting a

business, writing a book, or landscaping the yard.

<http://www.sbclife.net/Articles/2009/10/sla6>

Implications flow out of each of these characteristics

Are we reflecting the glory of God??

Brian Borgman:

Man is:

Like God

Represents God

We are called to image God; be an image bearer; dignity and sanctity of being human

B. As Man or Woman

Not a state which you are able to alter ... these sex change operations are changing some outward physical characteristics .. but not altering the DNA of the individual; not making it possible for a person created as a man to then bear children

Borgman:

Equality of personhood of both man and woman – both made equally in the image of God; equal in essence, dignity, worth and importance;

Just as 3 Persons of Trinity are equal in person;

But male and female are amazingly and wonderfully different – males aren't females and females aren't males

Reflect different ways of being human

Complementary – complete each other in God's design; fundamentally different roles based on gender

Expresses the sanctity of human sexuality – marriage is to be heterosexual and monogamous; human sexuality is created by God – for procreation and for mutual pleasure and enjoyment within the bonds of marriage

Bible also commends singleness with its advantages for extraordinary purpose and contribution – never expresses this with any sense of loss

Implications:

- 1) Profound equality between men and women; no denigration of woman as a person – guard against perverted view of male headship – Yes, men are to function as head in the home and leaders in the church
- 2) Feminism which wants to erase basic gender distinctions in order to obliterate fundamental gender roles is in violation of God's created design; no such thing as evangelical feminism
- 3) Perverted forms of sex are clear violation of God's created intention

IV. (:28) DOMINION ISSUES -- THE BIBLICAL REFUTATION OF DOMINION THEOLOGY IN TERMS OF CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTIONISM AND THEONOMY

God had a special purpose for man in His creation – to have rule and dominion over the other forms of life

Cf. Israel worshipping a golden calf – pathetic

David Thompson: 3 Blessings

1) Blessing of Posterity – “*be fruitful and multiply*”

Abortion destroys this gift of posterity

2) Blessing of Position – authority and rule; Satan wanted dominion over this world; he came up with a plan to get control of this world for a time; not God’s plan that man just survive on this earth; our final destiny – we will rule with God on this earth

3) Blessing of Provisions – **vs. 29** – man and animals were originally vegetarians; no death yet; Nutritious, plentiful, sufficient

Don Dunavant: While our creativity is different from God's, who made everything from nothing, the linkage of the image of God in man in creation to the cultural mandate in Genesis 1:26-27 speaks to our creative responsibility. **Nancy Pearcey** observes that the first phrase, be fruitful and multiply, may mean: "to develop the social world: build families, churches, schools, cities, government, laws." She suggests the second phrase, subdue the earth, means: "to harness the natural world: plant crops, build bridges, design computers, compose music. This passage ... tells us that our original purpose was to create culture and build civilizations — nothing less."

This verse is taken by Christian Dominionists as a divine mandate to claim dominion over the earth, physically, spiritually and politically. However, this is taking a large step away from the text, which only says to have dominion over the creatures of earth, and to “subdue” the earth. It is likely that this verse simply means for humanity to

- a) multiply and expand over the face of the earth instead of staying in one place [Tower of Babel is God’s judgment when mankind fails to obey this command] and
- b) keep and take care of all other living things. There were no political entities in Genesis 1.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Christian-dominionism.html>

Dominion theology is also known as **Christian reconstructionism and theonomy**. Dominion theology states that biblical Christianity will rule all areas of society, personal and corporate. Christian reconstructionism reasons that society will be reconstructed by the Law of God as preached in the gospel and the Great Commission. Theonomy is a post-millennial view believing that all of the moral laws contained in the Old Testament are yet binding today. . .

Those who hold these views believe that it is the duty of Christians to create a worldwide kingdom patterned after the Mosaic Law. They believe that Christ will not return to earth until such a kingdom has been established. The principal goal, then, of dominion theology and Christian reconstructionism is political and religious domination of the world through the implementation of the moral laws, and subsequent punishments, of the Old Testament (the sacrificial and ceremonial laws having been fulfilled in the New Testament). This is not a government system ruled by the church, but rather a government conformed to the Law of God.

<https://www.gotquestions.org/dominion-theology.html>

Position: the world should be brought under (reconstructed) the lordship of Jesus Christ in all areas: social, moral, political, judicial, military, family, art, education, music, etc. Christian Reconstructionism advocates the restoration of Old Testament civil and moral laws in order to reconstruct present American society into an Old Testament type Mosaic form and that the three main areas of society - family, church, government - should all be biblically modeled, the Bible being the sole standard. This would include severe punishments for law breakers. Some Christian reconstructionists would advocate death for adulterers, abortionists, idolaters, murderers, homosexuals, rapists, etc. <https://carm.org/christian-reconstructionism-theonomy>

Refutation of Theonomy:

1) Jesus taught the Great Commission – with an emphasis on sharing in His humiliation and suffering and persecution rather than dominion over all the nations

Matthew 24:3-31

2) Jesus taught His kingdom is not of this world

John 18:36

3) Things are getting progressively worse during this age rather than better

2 Timothy 3:13-15

Brian Borgman:

Cultural mandate – to be God’s vice regents in the earth; commanded to rule, to subdue and to take care of and cultivate

Same words used for mandate given to priests to care for and guard for the tabernacle and temple; to develop all the potentialities found in the environment as well as in humanity; develop a God honoring culture; this affects the way we understand the mission of the church; is the church responsible for developing and redeeming godly culture

Observations:

1) Adam failed to rule, to cultivate and guard the Garden – the Fall makes fulfillment of the cultural mandate impossible except through the Last Adam Jesus Christ; the earth has been cursed and is now resistant to man’s efforts; because of the Fall, mankind now has bad intentions in trying to fulfil this mandate – now man-centered in its intention

2) Church’s first and foremost mission right now is the Great Commission – making disciples in the nations; live all of life under the lordship of Jesus – so this impacts the cultural mandate;

3) This results in Christians permeating every area of culture and society – impacting culture for the sake of Christ -- we should be concerned about the poor, the unborn, gay marriage, health, economics even though we are not all about any one issue or realm; you must care about compassion for others and taking care of widows and orphans in distress; Christ calls us to do what we can do wherever we are; we are a positive, redemptive influence

V. (2:1-3) ISSUES OF WORK/LIFE/WORSHIP BALANCE

A. Pattern of 6 days of Work, 1 day of Rest and Focused Worship

B. Day Was Blessed and Sanctified

Designed for man's benefit

C. Foundation for Jewish Rules Regarding the Sabbath – but not Identical

Ex. 20:8-11 – important to maintain this distinction or else we would be bound today by all of the Sabbath laws

Early church switched day of concentrated worship to Sunday, the first day of the week – fitting to honor the resurrection of Jesus Christ

David Thompson: Quality control team for creation was Triune God; they took a day to evaluate and enjoy it; finished creative activity in 6 days; analysis determined that it all was very good; day which honors him for all of His majestic, creative work

5 main differences between seventh day and all others:

- 1) no creation formula
- 2) no ending day formula
- 3) only day that God blesses and sanctifies
- 4) unique – not giving form or filling to anything
- 5) the number of this day is repeated 3 times, not just once

Observation of His created work; complete satisfaction and admiration; special day
Crown to the 6 days of creation

Analyze from 4 Perspectives:

1) Perspective 1 – The Time of this Special Day

Pausing to take a look at everything He had created

2) Purpose of this Special Day

Commemorate time when God rested from His creative work; work of an artist;

Illustration: bust of Rocky in Philadelphia

Number seven means rest and completion;

More to do with ceasing from work rather than resting because you are tired

Why did God rest? Not tired or fatigued; Omnipotence does not need a rest; God at work even on the Sabbath (John 10); always governing all things at all times;

A day that celebrated and honored His creative work; a great day for God; the enjoyment of accomplishment

No man could have designed all of this grandeur

3) Blessing of this Special Day

Some type of blessing of prosperity; Israel learned later that if they would keep the Sabbath, God would prosper them;

If you miss observing this day, you miss out on blessing from God;

4) Application of this Special Day

- **Divine** application – day of God; all members of the Trinity reflected on their work; when humans look at home they build – if I could do it again, I would do this differently; not so for God

- **national** application – Sabbath observance was fully revealed to Israel; **Gen. 4:3 – Gen. 8:6ff** – seven day intervals; some pattern of regular worship established from earliest time; Sabbath day a sign between God and Israel of her separation as a nation; part of the law;

- **spiritual** application – also speaks of a spiritual cessation from works – Heb. 4 – stop relying on our works; relying totally on the finished work of Christ;

- **individual** application – principle needs to be individually applied in every dispensation; principle of regularly meeting together on the seventh day of each week to worship God; work or sports are not more important than worshipping God; wise and healthy to take one day a week to dedicate to God

CONCLUSION:

You can see as we dive into the book of Genesis that we are handling issues of a global magnitude – Issues of Chronology; Issues of World Views; Issues of God’s Design; Issues of Dominion. Genesis is truly a book of Beginnings ... and we need to understand those Beginnings to truly grasp our ultimate Destiny.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How are self esteem issues impacted by what we learn here?
- 2) How could I improve in mirroring God’s image to others?
- 3) Have I fully embraced the distinctive role of God’s design for me as Man or Woman?
- 4) How can I better develop the potentialities of my personhood and of my environment?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Dr. Whitcomb – The Origin of Mankind

Christ is the Alpha and the Omega; involved in Creation directly as the focal point; John 1:3; evolutionists are not very impressed with human beings; we all came from the same ancient ancestor; it’s OK to kill unborn children; but don’t touch a Florida alligator; evolution requires greater faith than creationism – many miracles over a long period of time without any miracle worker

God says all these distinct species have no connection in terms of roots and branches; they stand alone from creation; in fact mutations make each species weaker

All dogs of every variety are 100% programmed from their DNA to function and reproduce as nothing but dogs; same for cats – no cat will ever start to become a dog; enormous barrier that will never be crossed; just 2 basic dogs on the ark; if you let all dogs interbreed over long enough time you will be back at dogs that look like the two that came off the ark

Gorilla not related to us at all:

No self consciousness

No rational thoughts or connection to time

Can't talk – despite being bribed with bananas; they have nothing to say

No moral nature; can't choose right from wrong or make moral decisions; never sinned

No animal ever thanked God, talked to God, worshiped God, praised God – not made in the image and likeness of God

When an animal dies, it is gone forever from the universe

Second Law of Thermodynamics – things tend to disorder and weaker and less effective forms; completely contradicts evolution

Analogy of Sun's rays like dumping gasoline on car with no engine; does not create a positive effect that counteracts Second Law of Thermodynamics

Everybody is dying – *appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment*

Triune god of scientist = time + chance + evolutionary process

JD Hall: The Errors of Theonomy – Pulpit and Pen Ministry

The issue is not whether the culture will change from preaching the gospel; but whether the goal of preaching the gospel is changing the culture and reigning over the culture;

Their conclusion: the govt. should enforce OT law with all of its penalties (e.g. stoning children); Everybody agrees that the gospel is transformational; we agree with where theonomy starts but not with their conclusions;

Gary North, Greg Bahnsen, R. J. Rushdooney, Gary DeMar (American Vision), Kenneth Gentry, Larry Prat etc. are the main proponents

TEXT: Genesis 2:4-25

TITLE: THE ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES -- OF MANKIND

BIG IDEA:

GOD CREATED BOTH MAN AND WOMAN AND PLACED THEM IN THE IDYLIC ENVIRONMENT OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN

INTRODUCTION:

Importance of this subject matter – what does it really matter how you interpret the opening chapters of Genesis?

Jer. 10:6-16

Relationship between Chaps. 1 and 2:

Chap. 1 is an **Overview** – covers the entire first week of creation – by the end of the chapter you have both Adam and Eve created and God resting on the seventh day.

Chap. 2 is a **Flashback** – focusing in on the details of Day 6.

Problem passage is **vv.4-6** – what is being said here?

Parunak: The creation narrative is a **successive zooming in** to the central theme:

[illustration: Google Earth application]

- 1:1, (celestial) heavens and earth
- 1:2-2:3, zoom in on “earth” to see it furnished and populated
- 2:4-3:24, zoom in on second half of sixth day to see man created.

Very specific details given by our Creator; no mystery how He wants us to interpret these opening chapters.

Griffith Thomas: In the first chapter man comes at the end as the crown of creation; here he comes at the commencement as the starting-point of human history.

Our culture has undermined purpose of unique Roles of Man and Woman and role of Marriage and the Family – not understanding and submitting to God’s design

GOD CREATED BOTH MAN AND WOMAN AND PLACED THEM IN THE IDYLIC ENVIRONMENT OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN

I. (:4-7) CREATION OF MAN FROM THE DUST OF THE GROUND – WHERE DID MAN COME FROM?

A. (:4) The Title Statement (Heading) of Initial Creation

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

2 Important structural distinctives that indicate we are starting a new section here:

1) *toledot* – “these are the generations” – repeated 10 times in Genesis to mark off new sections

Chiastic structure of vs. 4:

Heavens and earth
When they were created
In the day that the LORD God made
Earth and heaven

Takes us back to **1:1** --

2) The switch in the **name** that Moses uses to refer to God marks 2:4 as beginning a new section:

R. Kent Hughes: Up to this point in the story, Moses has used only one designation for God, the name *Elohim*. . . the appropriate word for the majestic portrayal of God as creator of the universe, signifying omnipotent deity. (used it five times seven – the number for perfection = 35 times) – the perfect creation of the perfect Creator

But now at 2:4 (where chapter 2 should actually begin), the name for God switches to *Yahweh-Elohim*, “the LORD God” as our translations have it. Here to the end of chap. 4; Yahweh is the personal covenant name of God who relates to and redeems his people; combining both names yields the Creator and Covenant-Redeemer

Griffith Thomas: So far from this usage being a proof of different documents, there are, on the contrary, clear indications that they are used with precision and spiritual meaning.

B. (:5-6) The Condition of the Land Without Man

1. (:5a) Devoid of Small Shrubs and fragile plants

*“Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth,
and no plant of the field had yet sprouted,”*

Day 3 of creation does not include small shrubs and plants that are mentioned here as not yet on the earth until after man had been created and probably not until after the Fall??

Parunak: The point is not that there were no plants, but that two specific types were lacking.

Plant of the field.—Lit. “shrub,” cf. Gen 21:15, the woody desert plants. These are inedible plants, and must be cleared from the land before one can cultivate it.

Herb of the field.—These are edible plants from cultivated ground, including the grains. These two categories anticipate the judgment in 3:18, in which “thorns and thistles” (corresponding to the “shrub of the field”) appear in judgment for man’s sin, and he must eat plants that require deliberate cultivation, the “herb of the field.” Before the fall, people did not have to work for their food, but ate fruit that grew of its own accord on trees. Afterward, they had to contend with weeds and rely on plants that require diligent cultivation.

2. (:5b) Pre-Rain Environment

“for the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth;”

Therefore no weeds and thorns

Was there no rain until Noah's Flood??

To demand that rain didn't happen until after the Flood from this passage has no more logical support than to claim, from the passage, that no one farmed until after the Flood.

Donald DeYoung: If the earth did not experience rain before the Flood, then Noah's ark-building must have appeared especially foolish to his critics. Likewise, the faith of Noah described in **Hebrews 11:7** was especially strong. Noah was warned about things not seen, which is perhaps a further indication that rain was not part of humanity's early experience. Even with this accumulated evidence, a final authoritative answer to this question of pre-Flood rain is not known (Donald B. DeYoung, *Weather and The Bible*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1992, pp. 112,113).

3. (:5c) Lacking the Cultivation that Man Would Provide *"and there was no man to cultivate the ground."*

Therefore no edible plants for food

4. (:6) Irrigated by Underground Springs *"But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground."*

Hughes: picture is of subterranean springs rising up from the ground and watering the arid earth.

State of no rain persisted for some time until the Flood

C. (:7) The Creation of Man

1. (:7a) Material Used in Creation of Man = Dust *"Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground,"*

Careful design at a point in time by a purposeful Creator – not chance mutations over billions of years

Play on words in the Hebrew – formed the man (ha adam) of dust from the ground (ha adama)

Parunak: God "*formed man.*" The verb describes the work of a potter. This event is thus the root of the picture throughout scripture of God as a sovereign potter, forming people and their histories according to his will.

- Isaiah: God protests that he has the right of a potter over his people, 29:16; 45:9; and ultimately they confess it to be so, 64:8
- Jer 18:1-10, his right to punish or to withdraw punishment
- Rom 9:20-24, of God's sovereign election of people and nations.

Gen. 3:19 – “*you are dust and to dust you shall return*”

No room for evolution of mankind here; you are not going to become an ape when you die; you are returning from whence you have come = dust

Apostle Paul understood this concept of being nothing but clay pots designed by the Potter – *we have this treasure in earthen vessels* – all glory must go to God, the Creator; no room for pride or boasting; if we understand our origins we will have proper humility

2. (:7b) The Source of Life

“and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life;”

Very personal – some intimations here of what distinguishes man from the other animals – The image and likeness of God – as specified in chap. 1

3. (:7c) The Resulting Human Species

“and man became a living being.” [Argument – vs “*living soul*”

Same expression used of the fish = living creatures (**1:20**)

Not breathing the divine likeness into a living being (e.g. an evolved member of the ape family); But causing inanimate dust to become a living being.

Parunak: occurs 9x in the OT, and all other cases are with reference to animals [1:20 “moving creature that hath life,” 1:24; 2:19; 9:12,15,16 “living creature,” 1:30 “life,” Ezek 47:9 “thing that liveth”]. Moses here makes no special point distinguishing man from the animals; rather, he identifies them as both **alive, in contrast with the plants.**

1 Cor. 15:39 – “*All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish.*”

II. (:8-17) CREATION OF IDEAL ENVIRONMENT (GARDEN OF EDEN) WITH ONE PROHIBITION AS A TEST OF MAN’S OBEDIENCE – WHERE DID MAN FIRST LIVE?

A. (:8) Summary of the Creation of the Garden of Eden

1. Its Origin

“And the LORD God planted a garden”

Master Carpenter is also the Master Gardener

2. Its Orientation

“toward the east, in Eden;”

This is from the perspective of Moses who was in Sinai; in modern Iraq

Parunak: Take the construction in the sense “*facing east,*” which the AV fits nicely. The point is not that the Garden is located east of where the writer is, but that its entrance was toward the east, conformable with 3:24.

Eden = delight
It was luxurious

3. Its Objective

“and there He placed the man whom He had formed.”

To be the idyllic environment where man could live and rule and prosper and enjoy fellowship with His Creator

B. (:9-14) Details of the Idyllic Environment – the Trees and the Rivers

1. (:9) The Trees

a. All the Trees

“And out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food;

Griffith Thomas: The two elements of man’s home call for our attention – the characteristics of **beauty** (*“pleasant to the sight”*), and **utility** (*“good for food”*).

b. Two Trees in Particular

*“the tree of life also in the midst of the garden,
and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”*

2. (:10-14) The Rivers

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

Hughes: Adam was in paradise! The presence of a great river flowing from Eden is indicative of the life-giving presence of God (cf. Psalm 46: and Ezekiel 47:1-12)

Pattern: *the name ...*
 It flows ...

a. (:11-12) River of Pishon

*“The name of the first is Pishon;
it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold. And the
gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there.”*

b. (:13) River of Gihon

*“And the name of the second river is Gihon;
it flows around the whole land of Cush.”*

c. (:14a) River of Tigris

*“And the name of the third river is Tigris;
it flows east of Assyria.”*

d. (:14b) River of Euphrates

“And the fourth river is the Euphrates.”

So important and prominent a river that you do not need the whole pattern of name ... and it flows ...

Parunak: So what is the point of this description?

- The garden is well watered. The presence of a continual river makes rain unnecessary, and life much more certain.
- The references to gold, bdellium, and precious stones reminds us of the tabernacle, and emphasizes the role of Eden as a **sanctuary**.

C. (:15-17) Placement of Man in the Garden with Abundant Provision and One Prohibition

1. (:15) God’s Placement of Man in the Garden with a Specific Commission

“Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.”

Importance of Work – Man was designed to work; work was not a consequence of the Fall; expression of man’s creativity; part of the way in which man worshiped God

2. (:16) God’s Provision for Man

*“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying,
‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely;’”*

Generous and abundant gift of nourishing food from God –

Remember: no eating of meat until after the Fall [probably heretical to say that this is the one good thing that came from the Fall]

3. (:17) God’s Prohibition for Man

*“but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat,
for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.”*

Hughes: the temptation was to seek wisdom without reference to the word of God. It was an act of moral autonomy – deciding what is right without reference to God’s revealed will. This is confirmed by Ezekiel 28 which tells how the King of Tyre was expelled from Eden for his pride -- “I did it my way” is the dirge of death

III. (:18-25) CREATION OF WOMAN FROM ADAM'S RIB AND INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE – WHERE DID WOMAN COME FROM?

A. (:18) The Divine Plan for the Creation of Woman

1. (:18a) Sense of Incompleteness Recognized by God

“Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone;’”

This statement should leap out at you – up to this time, everything proclaimed as good!
Not good in the sense of incomplete

2. (:18b) Solution

“I will make him a helper suitable for him.”

B. (:19-22) The Divine Execution of the Plan

1. (:19-20) Sense of Incompleteness Recognized by Adam

“And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. And the man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.”

This is not a new creation of animals – just a reminder of what God had already done – now the added revelation that Adam was given the privilege and responsibility of naming all of them –
The Ultimate Taxologist –

Parunak: Recall also that naming is an act of authority, as we saw in ch. 1. There God named the products of the first three days, but holds off on the animals, so that the human as his representative can exercise that authority. Thus the naming establishes man's superiority over the animals; we now have God > man > animals.

David Thompson: 8 ways a wife can help her husband:

- Pray for him
- Prepare good things for him; that's what God did for Israel – nice home; good meal
- Promote him
- Be a Partner to him
- Protect him – spot things that are dangerous for him
- Prosper him –
- Pleasure him
- Praise him

2. (:21-22) Solution

“So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh at that place. And the LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.”

Whitcomb: God functioned first as an anaesthesiologist and then as a surgeon

Matthew Henry: not made out of his head to top him, not 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

Both men and women have 24 ribs, twelve on each side. God created Eve with a full set of ribs and their children on down had a full set.

Voddie Baucham: God established male headship here – before the Fall

- The woman was made after the man
- The woman was made for the man
- The woman was made from the man
- The woman was brought to the man
- The woman was named by the man
- Sin of one man Adam = male headship

C. (:23-25) Celebration of God's Design

1. (:23) Celebration of Woman

“And the man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’”

1 Cor. 11 – the woman originates from the man – 4 different types of humanity

- Vast majority of mankind – born from a man and woman union
- Jesus Christ – virgin Mother; no human father
- Eve – made from Adam
- Adam – made from dust of the earth – not just God breathing into an already living organism (some member of the ape family) His divine likeness; you came from dust and you will return to dust – not returning to being some type of animal

2. (:24) Celebration of Marriage

“For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”

Not required to physically leave the living compound ... but in sense of emotional loyalty and the creation of a new household unit where the husband is the head of the home

You would think that this reference would be to the wife leaving her parents; But Husband taking on tremendous responsibility here

3. (:25) Celebration of Innocence

“And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”

MacArthur: With no knowledge of evil before the Fall, even nakedness was shameless and innocent. They found their complete gratification in the joy of their one union and their service

to God. With no inward principle of evil to work on, the solicitation to sin had to come from without and it did.

CONCLUSION:

We will never function properly as Man and Woman if we don't understand God's purposes in Creation – if we don't understand what is involved in being made in the image and likeness of God.

We will never function properly in Marriage and in the Family if we don't understand God's purposes in Creation. What does it mean for Eve to be created as a helper suitable for Adam?

We will never properly anticipate the Paradise that God is preparing for His children right now unless we understand the idyllic environment of the Garden of Eden.

Genesis is the Book of Beginnings; it is foundational to how we relate to God and how we relate to others.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can you reconcile the evolutionist claim that man descended from other forms of animals with biblical declaration that God created man from the dust of the ground?
- 2) What distinctions do you see in mankind vs. animals by virtue of God creating mankind in the image of God?
- 3) Why can we not excuse sin on the basis of environmental challenges?
- 4) If God defines marriage as the union of one man and one woman who emotionally leave their parents and create a new family unit, what right does society have to redefine marriage?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Thompson: vv. 18-25

Society losing sight of unique roles of men and women; losing touch of morality – homosexuality and lesbianism flaunted now; uncontested divorce; safe sex as a common lifestyle; marriage not functioning as a unit – you have your money and I have my money

God made woman to help man; they were ordained to work together; a woman was no coincidence; carefully constructed with uniqueness and purpose
Marriage should be delightful and pleasurable;

1) The Work of the Lord in Creating Woman (:18-22)

a. Lord God foresaw man's need of a woman (:18); Isolation is not good; disagree with counselors who promote quick times of separation in marriage; promote reconciliation instead
Plan, Prepare and Produce a suitable *helper* – term used of God being a help to Israel; a very

strong word; “*suitable*” = an opposite who would fill the void in Adam’s lonely world; complement Adam; emotionally, intellectually, physically, spiritually
Don’t try to dominate your mate

b. Lord God fostered man’s need for a woman (:19) – creates in Adam the sense of need for a suitable helper; naming based on deep insight that Adam had; animals could not reason in this way and speak; all the animals had partners; as Adam was involved in fulfilling God’s perfect will for him – as you are faithful in that area, God will take care of provision of mate He has for you – don’t be so desperate for a mate that you focus just on that

c. Lord God fulfills man’s need of a woman (:20-22) – major surgery best performed if you can put man into a deep sleep; beginning of medical technology; brought the woman to man in sense of bringing Adam a wonderful gift

2) The Response of Man to the Woman (:23)

Ish and *ishah* – related Hebrew words; like man and woman; like male and female

3) Relationship of Man to a Woman (:24-25)

Facts about marriage:

- A union that is totally separate – no stronger tie than Israelite parent and their children; the bond of marriage takes a stronger precedent; form your own family; loosen the bonds and leave; get rid of parental apron strings; wise to seek counsel
- A union that is completely united – one flesh; glued to each other; inseparable;
- A union that is to be sexually united – very honoring to the Lord
- A union that is completely shameless – this couple not walking around with the lights off; hard to imagine a culture that could be so pure that total nakedness would not affect you; the animal world still functions this way – function well without clothing but still have necessary physical attraction to procreate; tragedy that this all has been ruined

Voddie Baucham – Culture Wars – purpose of the Family and Marriage --

If you don’t know the purpose of a thing you will inevitably abuse it; that’s why we don’t let young children use our tools; we are seeing the abuse of marriage and family in our culture;

Problem: what is our source of authority? Man’s word or God’s word?? Do I submit to the Word of God?

Billions of people on planet earth who live on less than \$2 per day; they would give anything to be at America’s poverty line

#1 cause of poverty in America is fatherlessness – woman raising children on her own

Feminist author: “nuclear family must be destroyed; no woman should have to deny herself any opportunities because of her special responsibilities to her children” – what kind of society is that?

Happily married women are considered pathological and dangerous

Find your fulfillment in Christ, not in your marriage;
Ask 16 year old girl: “What do you want to be?” –

Response: “I want to be a wife and a mother” = not an acceptable answer in our culture – shows that most women are feminists even without admitting it

Not saying that every man has to be married – Matt. 19 and 1 Cor. 7 – some given a supernatural gift to remain single

How could Adam name all the animals in a single, literal 24 hour day?

- Did not name every species of animal
- World would only have contained a representative sampling of the animals we know of today – wolf and fox and German Shepherd related; necessary genetic makeup from which other variations could develop – same answer for the Ark issue; every ethnicity that exists today derives from the 8 people on the ark; we all come from 2 people

Theological considerations of project of naming the animals:

- o Adam had no sense of **alone**
- o Adam had no sense of **need**

God gives **purpose for marriage** – procreation (bearing and training children), illustration (triune representation – union and communion; picture of Christ and the church) and sanctification (avoiding immorality; speaking truth in love; learning to live with another imperfect sinner)

After Fall:

- Reversal of Roles
- Man is alienated from God
- Offenders are Cursed
- Redeemer is promised

TEXT: Genesis 3:1-7

TITLE: THE ORIGIN OF SIN – THE FALL OF MAN

BIG IDEA:

FALLING TO THE TEMPTATION TO QUESTION THE AUTHORITY OF GOD’S WORD AND THE GOODNESS OF GOD OPENS THE DOOR TO THE DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

INTRODUCTION:

If God created the world and God is good, then **how did evil come into this world?** There is no question that we live in a world filled with evil and wickedness. It’s a legitimate question and one which will be addressed by Genesis 3. Look at the stark contrast between the Paradise that God created in the Garden of Eden – described by God as very good and characterized in **2:25** as a state of purity and innocence: “*And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.*” Contrast that with post-Fall state of shame and fear and loss of innocence described just 7 short verses later: “*Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.*” Something catastrophic has occurred – something that has altered the condition of man for all time – the Fall of Mankind and the entrance of sin into the world with all of its devastating consequences.

S. Lewis Johnson: The Apostle Paul speaking for the divine revelation in Romans Chapter 5 and verse 12, speaks with the outmost plainness and assurance regarding the entrance of evil into this world. He says therefore, *just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so death spread to all men, because all sinned.* The Apostle claims that sin entered into this world through the fall of Adam and Eve. Later on, he writes in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans about the creation and he says, *for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of him who subjected it and hoped that the creation itself also will be free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.* So that at the present time, what we see is the result of what happened in the Garden of Eden.

This morning we will study more closely this familiar story. It is not a myth or just some type of allegory. It is a literal historical account of the entrance of sin and death into the paradise that had been Eden. We will gain insight into the devious ways in which Satan schemes to attack us and drive a wedge between us and our Creator. By understanding how temptation works we can better devise a strategy for victory over it.

FALLING TO THE TEMPTATION TO QUESTION THE AUTHORITY OF GOD’S WORD AND THE GOODNESS OF GOD OPENS THE DOOR TO THE DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

I. (:1-5) THE CONSIDERATION OF TEMPTATION – A DIRECT ATTACK AGAINST THE AUTHORITY OF GOD’S WORD AND THE GOODNESS OF GOD -- FLIRTATION

A. (:1) Temptation Attacks With Subtle Craftiness

1. Understand How Satan Attacks

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made.”

Apparently, this was an actual serpent; as repulsive as most of us find snakes to be today; before being cursed to writhe around in the dust of the ground, they may have been more appealing creatures. Anyway, it seems that the Fall of Satan as described in **Ezek. 28** and **Is. 14** must have happened between creation and this early point in history so that now Satan is working through this particular serpent. Even though this context does not identify Satan’s involvement, we know this from subsequent NT passages like:

Rev. 12:9 *“And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world”*

Consider other references to snakes and to Satan:

Matt 10:16 *“be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”*

Steven Cole: The word “*crafty*” means shrewd and is used in a good sense of “*prudent*” in Proverbs (12:16, 23; 14:8, 15, 18; 22:3; 27:12). But Satan uses his shrewd knowledge about life to deceive and trap us. [clever]

2 Cor. 11:14 *“for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light”*

David Pratte: Satan knows that, to have success, he must **deceive** as he did Eve here. He cannot present his evil and its consequences in their true light else people will not follow his will. He must therefore **counterfeit** and **disguise**. He must appear to be other than he is, and his purpose must appear other than what it is. One way to achieve this is to work through agents. This is why we must always put teachers and teachings to the test and make sure we know the truth of God’s word (Matt. 7:15-24; 1 John 4:1,6; Acts 17:11).

Parunak: “*Subtle*” is in Hebrew a strong pun with “*naked*” in **2:25**.

John 8:44 – prototypical murderer and liar

Just as God has a will for our lives and it involves what is best for us in light of eternity, Satan has his own contrary objectives and is roaming about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. We must not be ignorant of his schemes.

2. Understand How Satan Twists the Commands of God

“And he said to the woman, ‘Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?”

Notice that Satan picks on Eve here apart from Adam; going around the divine order of headship to get Eve to act independently and in rebellion to God’s authority

Outrageous contradiction of what God had commanded – makes God out to be a Scrooge who withholds good blessings from His children – the exact opposite of the true character of God who delights to give good gifts to His children

R. Kent Hughes: Satan was so subtle, He did not directly deny God’s word, but he introduced the assumption that God’s word is subject to our judgment.

Parunak: He refers to the creator as “*God*,” in striking contrast to the name used elsewhere throughout the chapter, “*LORD God*.” Thus he implicitly denies the personal relationship between man and God, and urges her to consider God simply as an abstract, impersonal, uncaring power.

- Is God Himself really the one who delivered this command?? – questioning source and authority of revelation
- Do you really have the correct interpretation of the meaning of what God intended??

Parunak: Often the temptation comes cloaked with false piety, urging us that any God worthy of our worship would never say such a thing. “A loving God would never require you to do such a thing. You must have misunderstood him.”

“*Indeed, has God said*” is the tactic Satan still uses to introduce doubt regarding the authority of God’s Word and His Goodness; we need to aggressively counter as Christ did in the Temptation account with the confident assertion of “*Thus saith the Lord*” – requires that we know the Word of God and how to apply it to the specific areas of temptation that come up

B. (:2-3) Temptation Thrives on Dialogue

1. (:2) Understand Your Liberty

“And the woman said to the serpent, ‘From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat;’”

Leaving out modifier “*every*” meant that Eve was minimizing the gracious provision that God had given;

This is where **legalism** errs by only focusing on the “Thou shalt nots” and creating additional man-made restrictions

End result is to make God’s commands burdensome and restrictive when they are designed to enhance our freedom to pursue righteousness

Eve rightly starts out with a declaration of liberty as she corrects the serpent’s false claim – this contradiction should have been enough to alert her to break off dialogue with someone who is so out of step with God’s intended purposes – why give the serpent’s words any more consideration??

2. (:3) Respect God’s Boundaries

“but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.’”

Parunak: 2:9 uses this expression [“*middle of the garden*”] to describe first of all the **tree of life**, which was *not* forbidden. Her attention is so focused on the one tree that is excluded, that she ignores the ones to which she is granted access. . .

She does not distinguish between the law of God itself and appropriate safeguards.

Where does this added requirement – *not touch it* – come from?? From God?? From Adam??

Eve could not use ignorance of God's commands as an excuse for her sin

Deffinbaugh: While exaggerating the prohibition to the point where even touching the tree was evil, Eve had unconsciously downplayed the judgment of God by omitting the word 'surely,' and by failing to report that death would come on the day of the offense. In other words, Eve emphasized God's severity, but underestimated the fact that judgment would be executed surely and soon.

R. Kent Hughes: Eve diminished, added to, and softened God's word. Her revisionist approach to the holy word of God put her in harm's way. And it likewise does so today.

Leupold: Eve's reply should have been an emphatic disavowal of the suspicion that God had been withholding good from man. Instead, it becomes a temporizing, a partial refutation, but at the same time a statement that allows room for the suspicion that perhaps God has not been as entirely good and gracious as they had hitherto supposed. But as soon as one does not wholeheartedly and unreservedly trust God, mistrust is gaining ground and sin has entered.

C. (:4-5) Temptation Denies Consequences and Offers False Promises

1. (:4) Denial of Consequences of Sin

“And the serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely shall not die!’”

This is the **INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE** and a **QAL IMPERFECT** from the same root – very emphatic statement in the Hebrew

Key Claim by Satan – lies at the heart of the passage – this is the pivotal statement that must be addressed at the heart of the temptation

Why do people today so blatantly transgress the commands of God? They don't believe they will suffer any devastating consequences.

David Pratte: Many sins are said in the Bible to be *deceitful*:

- drinking alcohol (Prov. 20:1),
- riches (Matt. 13:22),
- and sin in general (Heb.3:12,13).

Yet, sin always leads to harmful consequences, if not in this life, then in eternity (**Eph. 5:3-7; Gal. 6:7-9**).

Eve should have resisted the advances by Satan and he would have fled; God would have given grace; but she entertained his lies

2. (:5) Offering of False Promises

“For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

We can see that Eve is **considering** the temptation; entertaining it; dialoguing with the serpent; not rejecting it outright and **fleeing** from temptation

Cf. example of Joseph

Cf. example of Jesus in the Temptation account in the wilderness

David Pratte: Today homosexuality is called an alternate lifestyle, fornication is called a trial marriage, and murder is called preventing an unwanted pregnancy. And the people who oppose such are said to be unloving, insecure, self-righteous bigots. Multitudes of other examples can be given in which good is called evil and evil good.

R. Kent Hughes: The lie also held out the lure of moral autonomy ... By taking the fruit she would become wise, equal with God, she would autonomously decide what was right and wrong. How intoxicating! She would make the rules [cf. Dean – I want to be the father and make the rules]. She would do it her way. That promise still intoxicates. A funeral director told me that among the unbelieving population Frank Sinatra's "My Way" is in first place as a funeral favorite"

How sad!

II. (:6) THE CONSUMMATION OF TEMPTATION – THE MOTIVATION FOR COMMITTING SIN -- FALL

A. Wrong Desires

1 John 2:15-17

1. Appetizing – The Lust of the Flesh

“When the woman saw that the tree was good for food,”

the desire to **do something** contrary to God's will, i.e, eat the tasty fruit

Parunak: Many other trees met this same qualification, according to 2:9. So she hardly needed this one as a food tree. The issue is not meeting a legitimate physical need, but rather, satisfying a desire to taste that which is forbidden.

Luke 4:3 *command this stone that it be made bread*

2. Attractive – The Lust of the Eyes -- Pleasure

“and that it was a delight to the eyes,”

the desire to **have something** apart from God's will, i.e, possess the beautiful fruit

She longed to possess it; could not take her eyes off it

Luke 4:6-7 *All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. 7 If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. {worship me: or, fall down before me}*

3. Appealing – The Boastful Pride of Life – Pride / Ego
“and that the tree was desirable to make one wise,”

the desire to **be something** apart from God's will, i.e, as wise as God, or gods)

Luke 4:9-11 *If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: 10 For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: 11 And in [their] hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

S. Lewis Johnson: Now then the Fall is described in the sixth verse. I want you to notice this fall is both **internal** and **external**. It is important to see that there is the **sinful inclination** that issues in the **sinful volition**. Sin took place before Eve took the fruit and ate it. She had already sinned and the response of the sinful inclination was the sinful volition, “I will take the fruit,” and the eating of it the sinful action. So there is sinful inclination, sinful volition, sinful action, but the sin takes place with the **inclination**. Mesmerized by the serpent, listening to the creature rather than the Creator, following impressions and not instructions from the word of God, seeking self-fulfillment not the glory of God, Adam and Eve inclined to evil. They volitioned — volitionally took of the fruit and they ate off it and in that act, sin was **complete**.

That is why I am speaking of the **Consummation of Temptation and Sin**

She let her emotions rule her mind and the result was yielding to temptation, which is sin.

B. Wrong Actions

1. On the Part of Eve

“she took from its fruit and ate;”

- God is not the author of sin – **James 1**
- Sin began in the heart with doubt and wavering regarding the word of God and then expressed itself in this act of sinful rebellion

2. On the Part of Eve and Adam

“and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”

Parunak: NT commentary on this episode: **Rom 5:14, 1 Cor 15:22**, all died in Adam. Though the woman went first, he is the one who bears the responsibility, since she was under his authority. We shall see why when we consider the excuses each gives, and God’s verdict on them, in 3:8-13, 14-17.

1 Tim. 2:14 -- the woman was deceived, but Adam was not; both were guilty before God

III. (:7) THE CONSEQUENCES OF TEMPTATION AND SIN – CORRUPTION OF INNOCENCE AND PURITY --

FALLOUT

A. Guilty Conscience

1. New Sight

“Then the eyes of both of them were opened,”

2. New Knowledge

“and they knew that they were naked;”

Not exactly what Satan had promised the experience would yield

B. Man-Made Coverings

“and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.”

Makeshift; man-made attempts to deal with their fallen condition

God would have to provide any type of adequate covering for sin

Parunak: Satan had promised that their eyes would be opened (3:5), and indeed this happened, but the outcome was not as desirable as he had intimated. What they have come to know is not marvelous mystical truths, but their own nakedness. They now know themselves to be immature, children, humble and weak. To remedy this, they take the largest leaves they can find, which are fig leaves, and make belts of them.

Application: Satan’s lies are often half-truths like this. There is just enough truth to lead us astray, if we let down our guard. But be sure that the outcome will be bitter disappointment and disaster if we follow him.

Deffinbaugh: we must give thought to the severity of the consequences of man’s partaking of the forbidden fruit in the light of what seems to be a rather trifling matter. What was so evil about this sin that brought about such a harsh response from God?

CONCLUSION:

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why did Eve even listen to the words of the serpent?
- 2) How should you respond when thoughts come into your mind that would undermine the goodness of God?
- 3) Where do you experience peer pressure to commit sin?
- 4) What characterizes man-made religion?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Pratte: Halley's Handbook describes two ancient seals that almost surely are describing the temptation story.

The "Temptation" Seal ... found among ancient Babylonian tablets, now in the British Museum, seems definitely to refer to the Garden of Eden story. In the center is a Tree; on the right, a Man, on the left, a Woman, plucking Fruit; behind the Woman, a Serpent, standing erect, as if whispering to her.

The "Adam and Eve" Seal ... found, 1932, by Dr. E. A. Speiser, of the University Museum of Pennsylvania ... 12 miles north of Nineveh. He dated the Seal at about 3500 B.C., and called it "strongly suggestive of the Adam and Eve story"; a naked man and a naked woman, walking as if utterly down-cast and broken-hearted, followed by a serpent (p. 68; this is confirmed by Free, p. 34)

Note that, if this date is close to correct, and if we have no significant gaps in the genealogies, this seal would have been made in Adam's lifetime!

These do not prove the Bible account to be inspired, of course, but they do verify that traditions existed independent of the Bible long before Moses' time that agree with the Bible account.

Steven Cole: A STRATEGY FOR VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION:

1. We must beware of "new" twists of doctrine or practice.
2. We must affirm the authority of God's Word.
3. We must affirm God's character as revealed in His Word.
4. We must affirm the reality of God's judgment.
5. We must remember that sin gives fleeting pleasure, but results in pain which far outweighs the pleasure.

Kay Arthur:

1. Sin takes you farther than you ever wanted to go.
2. It costs you more than you ever intended to pay.
3. It keeps you longer than you ever intended to stay.

TEXT: Genesis 3:8-15

TITLE: *WHERE ARE YOU . . . AND WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?*

BIG IDEA:

SIN LEADS TO GUILT . . . AND GUILT CHANGES EVERYTHING – PART 1

INTRODUCTION:

Definition of Guilt: the fact or state of having committed an offense, crime, violation, or wrong, especially against moral or penal law; culpability: -- Accompanied by a sense of shame and regret and the experiencing of the consequences

Guilt is like the red warning light on the dashboard of the car (the engine warning light). You can either stop and deal with the trouble, or ignore the light by disabling it or putting tape over it.

As we get back into the early chapters of Genesis and study the consequences of the Fall . . . it is amazing how **dramatic** are the changes reflected in our text.

- Changes in man's emotions and intellect and will
- Changes in man's environment
- Changes in man's relationships – on both a vertical and horizontal plane

One of the most famous Scripture passages regarding Guilt is the tragic sin of Saul recorded in **1 Samuel 15** – led to the Lord rejecting Saul as king over the nation of Israel.

- Clear command of God (:3)
- Clear disobedience of that command (:8-9)
- Guilty conscience leading to false protestations of innocence (:13)
- Clear indictment (:14)
- Blame shifting (:15ff)
- Tragic Consequences of Sin and Guilt
- Forced Admission of Guilt (:24)

Think of how this sequence of events plays itself out in how we confront our young children with their acts of disobedience.

SIN LEADS TO GUILT . . . AND GUILT CHANGES EVERYTHING – PART 1

Parunak: Note the chiasmic order with the subsequent monologue in 3:14-19, man → woman → serpent → woman → man.

Deffinbaugh: While God questioned in the order of authority (Adam, Eve, snake), He sentenced in the order of the fall (snake, Eve, Adam). The fall was, in part, the result of the reversal of God's order.

Throughout this passage which highlights the guilt of mankind, we also will be struck with the thread of **God's sovereign grace** that is woven throughout and the **initiative** God takes to seek man's **redemption**.

I. (:8-10) A GUILTY CONSCIENCE

A. (:8) Feeble Attempt to Hide From the Presence of God

1. God Draws Near – Gracious Seeking

“And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day,”

What does it sound like for God to *be walking in the Garden of Eden*?

Parunak: Strictly, one could translate “*voice*” here as “*sound*,” referring to the sound of his footsteps, but this would have to modify the entire prepositional phrase, “*the Lord God walking*,” while Adam’s reference to this detail in **v.9** refers solely to “*your voice*,” not “the sound of your walking.”

Application: Our Lord intends for us to have an interaction with himself that goes beyond service. Service is important, but too often we let it press out the enjoyment of God’s presence. There are times when we must march with him to the battle, but it is also important that we stroll about with him in the garden, in a time of pleasant relaxation. Sometimes we see even our “daily devotions” as a duty rather than a refreshing joy. Many of us have not yet discovered what the song writer meant in the words, “There is a place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God.” “Be still, and know that I am God.” Take check of your interactions with the Lord. Do you enjoy the quiet restful times as well as the vigor of service?

Note: one correspondence of mankind being made in the image of God: We prefer the “*cool of the day*” / “*the wind of the day*”

God takes the initiative to seek out sinful man

Ray Stedman: It is most striking to me that all religions, apart from Christianity, begin on the note of man seeking after God. Only the Bible starts with the view of God seeking after man. That highlights an essential difference between our Christian faith and the other great religions of the world.

2. Guilty Adam and Eve Hide

“and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.”

Guilt leads to separation from God

Ps. 139:7-8 “*Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there!*”

Cf. Jonah trying to hop on a ship and flee to Tarshish – **Jonah 1:3**

Steven Cole: Someone has defined the conscience as a **faults alarm**. It goes off to tell us our faults. Of course it’s possible, through repeated sin, to sear your conscience to the point where it no longer functions. But this first couple’s conscience was operating just as God intended--it told them that they had sinned. When that alarm goes off, the fallen human tendency is to deal with it just as Adam and Eve did: Cover it up as quickly as possible. But that inner voice keeps nagging, “Guilty! Guilty!”

Application: most of the world today is making some form of a feeble attempt to hide from the

Presence and Accountability of their Creator

B. (:9-10) Fearful Exposure Before the Penetrating Inquisition of God

1. (:9) God Calls Out

“Then the LORD God called to the man, and said to him, ‘Where are you?’”

Jack Arnold: When a man is lost the most important question he can ask is, “Where am I?” Only when man sees his lost condition in relation to God will he be saved.

2. (:10) Guilty Adam Seeks to Justify His Actions

“And he said, ‘I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.’”

Not confessing here; no repentance here

Leupold: Man’s explanation of what it was that caused such fear is not frank and honest. For while his conscience thunders in his breast that this fear is the outgrowth of his disobedience, his mouth utters the half-truth that it is because of his being naked. One cannot but marvel at what a wreck of his former good self man has become. The damage wrought by sin is almost incomprehensibly great.

II. (:11-13) A GUILTY VERDICT

“And He said,”

A. (:11) Divine Inquiry – 2 Pointed Questions – Gracious Confrontation

1. Question #1 – How Do You Know You Are Guilty?

“Who told you that you were naked?”

Illustration: Cf. Dean: “What is sin?”

2. Question #2 – Have You Disobeyed My Direct Command?

“Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?”

Let’s strip away all the excuses and the smokescreens ... let’s reduce the discussion to whether or not you violated God’s clear command

B. (:12) Blame Shifting by Guilty Adam – Lame Excuse

“And the man said, ‘The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.’”

Guilt leads to fractured human relationships

Parunak: People blame one another for their own failings, and when that fails, they complain that it is a consequence of the way that God has configured the world. This passage shows us that such attempts carry no weight in the court of divine judgment.

R. Kent Hughes: Victimhood. If you read Adam’s sin through the lens of today’s world, you see

the language of **victimhood** – Adam as the poor victim of the woman and of the God who gave her to him. The modern version goes like this: “God, you’re responsible for my situation that has left me so susceptible to sin – my upbringing, my abuse, my inept parents and teachings.” And it plays in our culture in therapeutic exculpation like that of the Menendez brothers who murdered their parents and then asked the court for mercy on the grounds that they were orphans! Given this thinking, only God is responsible for sin – if there is a God.

Leupold: It is a reply that offers further evidence of the complete corruption and contamination of all of man’s nature by his sin. It is a reply that in cowardly fashion refuses to admit plain guilt and in an entirely loveless fashion lays the blame for it all first on this wife and then by a wicked charge upon God Himself.

Now God turns His attention to Eve:

C. (:13) Blame Shifting by Guilty Eve -- Lame Excuse

1. God Calls Out

“Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this you have done?’”

Again, concentrating on the action that was committed ... the infraction ... the transgression ... the violation of God’s holy law

2. Guilty Eve Seeks to Justify Her Actions

“And the woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’”

No confession here; no repentance

III. (:14-15) A GUILTY SENTENCE – UPON THE SERPENT

A. (:14) Pronouncement of Cursing

“And the LORD God said to the serpent,”

1. General Curse

*“Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;”*

2. Specific Curse

*“On your belly shall you go,
And dust shall you eat All the days of your life;”*

(cf. Psalm 44:25; Psalm 72:9; Isaiah 25:12; Isaiah 49:23; Isaiah 65:25; Micah 7:17).

Parunak: Eating dust is elsewhere in the OT the place of a defeated enemy: Mic 7:17; Isa 49:23. Note that even when the earth is returned to its edenic state, the effect of this curse will remain (Isa 65:25). This reflects the distinction between the curses of the earth and of the serpent, above. Man’s sin is forgiven, and the curse resulting from it is removed, but the serpent’s sin is not forgiven.

R Kent Hughes: Does this suggest a new way of travel for the serpent, say, from an upright posture to its belly? Possibly, but probably not. **Derek Kidner** argues “that the crawling is

henceforth symbolic (cf. **Isaiah 65:25**) – just as in 9:13 a new significance, not a new existence will be decreed for the rainbow.” Thus through God’s curse, a new significance was given to the serpent’s distinctive posture.

B. (:15) Pronouncement of Condemnation

1. General Threat

*“And I will put enmity Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her seed;”*

Unbelievers are described as a “*generation of vipers*” (John the Baptist in **Matt 3:7**; confirmed by our Lord in **12:34; 23:33**).

Constable: the seed of the serpent refers to natural humanity whom he has led into rebellion against God. Humanity is now divided into two communities: the elect, who love God, and the reprobate, who love self (**John 8:31-32; John 8:44; 1 John 3:8**). Each of the characters of Genesis will be either of the seed of the woman that reproduces her spiritual propensity, or of the seed of the Serpent that reproduces his unbelief.

2. Specific Threat

*“He shall bruise you on the head,
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”*

Protoevangelium – the first gospel proclamation
Understood in increasing clarity via Progressive Revelation

Parunak: Classically, this is understood as a prophecy of the Messiah. It is highly unusual to identify offspring with the woman rather than with the man. We read of the seed of Aaron (Lev 21:21), David (1 Kings 11:39), Abraham (Ps 105:6), Israel (2 Kings 17:20), Jacob (Isa 45:25), Ephraim (Jer 7:15), or Zadok (Ezek 43:19), but it is rare to identify the seed with the woman. (Even in 1 Sam 1:20, the seed is the man’s, identified only by which wife produces it.) Thus it has long been understood that this passage alludes to the virgin birth of the final seed, which is Christ (cf. Paul’s emphasis on the singular/plural ambiguity in Gal 3:16).

Steven Cole: But God goes on to say that He (singular, a particular seed of the woman) shall bruise Satan on the head, and Satan would bruise Him on the heel. This refers to Christ, born of a woman (**Gal. 4:4**), the last Adam, who would redeem the fallen race. It is a remarkable verse in that it refers to the seed of the woman, not the man. Elsewhere in the Bible descent is determined through the male. But here it is the seed of the woman, not the man, who will bruise Satan’s head. It is a prophecy, veiled at the time, but evident now, of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.

R Kent Hughes: We dare not miss the importance of the gaze of faith. **Numbers 21:9** says, “*If a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.*” The command to look to that uplifted serpent was a gracious foreshadowing of looking to the crucified Christ for our salvation. No wonder our Lord said, “*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up*” (**John 3:14**). Moses raised that serpent up high in the camp and all the dying Israelites had to do was look to that pole and be saved. No matter how horribly they were bitten, no matter how many times they had been bitten or how sick they were, the

opportunity for salvation was there.

CONCLUSION:

We need to listen to our conscience and respond.

We need to allow the goodness of God to lead us to repentance.

We can't live in denial as if the red engine light never came on.

We can't try to shift the blame to others or to our environment.

We must take responsibility for what we do and say.

We need to turn to the Lord Jesus and the redemption that He has provided to deal with the guilt and the consequences of our sin.

Make no mistake ... Guilt changes everything ... and Sin has consequences.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do you deal with the guilt of your sin? Where are you in your spiritual journey? Are you sensitive to the voice of your conscience?
- 2) What types of excuses and blame-shifting do you offer up as rationalization or justification for sinning?
- 3) What evidences do you see in this passage of the grace of God at work?
- 4) What is the significance of God taking the initiative to seek out guilty sinners for redemption and forgiveness of sins?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

R Kent Hughes: The divine oracles – the cures and the judgment – in the garden were strangely interwoven with grace. Indeed, paradise was lost. Depravity and death became the lot of all humanity. But the curse and the judgments given as they were meant that paradise could be regained – by grace.

Brian Borgman: Adam, Where Are You?

Passage begins with an interrogation; then there is the pronouncement of the punishment; the man is the first to be questioned and the last to be punished;

Vs. 8 – Deut. 13 “*hear His voice ...*”; chap. 15 “*if you only listen obediently*” – to hear has the implication of with a view to obedience; man should hear and heed;

“walking” – form of man attributed to God – metaphor, picture – walking in communion with; enjoying fellowship with; Enoch walked with God;

“in the ruach of the day” – not in the breezy evening or cool time of the day; rather symbolizing the idea of God’s presence – in the spirit of the day – God came to enjoy fellowship with Adam and Eve

How many times had this happened before the Fall?? We don’t know – [parallel to our Quiet Times;]

Where do they hide? An admission of guilt; if you run from the police, they want to know why; among the trees of the garden – a display of God’s abundant provision – now they seek refuge there; “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?”

Vs. 9-12 – careful investigation; of course God knows where they are; drawing out the reality of what they have done; Parents ask questions of their children and they know the answer; designed to elicit a confession; you are not where you are supposed to be; feels the guilt of his sin and shame; fig leaves are not enough to hide his shame; Adam realizes that God knows; so he makes his grand confession; repetition of the word “gave” is key in his reply; a penultimate blame = the woman; ultimate blame = God; I was just standing there minding my own business

Remember that suitable helper you gave me? Didn’t turn out so well; what was I supposed to do?

Vs. 13-14 – God doesn’t ask Why; He asks What; eliciting from Eve what is in her heart; brilliant shifting of blame; I am the victim here; he was so sneaky; enamored with a talking snake;

Pattern that works itself out in all of life – nobody takes responsibility for their sin;

The serpent is not questioned; not given an opportunity to speak; no redemption for fallen angels; nothing for Satan to learn; judgment applies to both the serpent and to Satan; there is moral culpability for the deception; places a curse; humiliation and total defeat; imagery of eating dust – those who have been defeated –

Vs. 15 – natural for humans to hate snakes; the proto gospel promise in the bible;

Serpent was able to draw Eve in and gain her affection; so curse places enmity between them; Her seed (the righteous in the plural and the Messiah in the singular) and the children of Satan = natural humanity that is opposed to God; world divided between those who belong to the seed of the woman and those that belong to the seed of the serpent; cf. her first offspring – enmity demonstrated in first homicide; elect vs reprobate;

John 8:44 “You are of your father the devil” – in that long lineage of those who follow Satan; not that he sired them

Rev. 12 – woman representing Israel about to give birth; serpent ready to devour the man child that will be brought forth; serpent makes war against the woman and all of her children;

Very beginning of spiritual warfare;

“bruise” – same word in both phrases – to crush or to strike; the location of the strike is crucial; where would you rather be crushed; both are serious and fatal or not fatal;

Every time you see an enemy of God getting his head removed or crushed it is an echo of this promise; starts a long tradition of head-crushing

Is. 53 “Father was pleased to crush Him” on the cross; but serpent had his head smashed

Steven Cole: Where are You?

God graciously seeks, confronts, and offers reconciliation to the guilty sinner.

Let me direct God's first question to you: Where are you? Are you hiding, afraid of God, because of sin in your life? Maybe you're trying to cover your sin with the fig leaves of your good works. Perhaps, like Jonah, you are one of God's children, and yet you are running from His purpose for your life. You have sin you have not confessed to Him. Your guilt may make you think that God is after you to punish you. The Bible says that God is after you to save you from the judgment your sin deserves. He is graciously calling, "Where are you?" If you will come to Him and confess your sin, He will deliver you from Satan's domain of darkness and transfer you to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom you will have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (**Col. 1:13-14**). That's how to deal with your guilt.

S. Lewis Johnson: The Sting of Death and the Seed of the Woman.

He means by that the final effects of the cross shall take place and the work of Satan shall come to its final ultimate end. But in the process of crushing the head of the serpent, our Lord Jesus Christ's heel is crushed and it is necessary for him to die to go forth into death, burial, and come forth in resurrection as the seed of the woman who now has carried the John's head in victory to the right hand of the throne of God as a sovereign majestic Lord and savior, seed of the woman who has crushed the serpent's head but he does it through death. I think it is rather interesting too that this first reference to the atoning work of the Lord Jesus relates the atonement to the hold that Satan has over men. John puts it this way, "*He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil.*"

TEXT: Genesis 3:16-24

TITLE: SIN MAKES A MESS . . . BUT GOD MAKES A WAY

BIG IDEA:

SIN LEADS TO GUILT . . . AND GUILT CHANGES EVERYTHING – PART 2

INTRODUCTION:

Sin makes a mess . . . there's no way to sugarcoat that awful reality. It has been like that since the Fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. There are always **consequences** for our sinful choices. What might seem pleasurable for a moment can turn into a lifelong struggle against obstacles and bondage. Think of the choices that lead someone into the devastating lifestyle of addiction. We heard this week of a family friend that is in treatment for cocaine addiction. He was raised in a Christian family but he made a series of bad choices. God has said that He will not be mocked – whatever a man sows . . . that shall he also reap. There is no getting away with sin. Sin makes a mess.

I spent some early years when we first moved to Baltimore working in a ministry with a gifted Christian counselor. What struck me as couples or individuals would come into the office in desperate situations seeking hope and deliverance was what a tangled mess sin makes of our lives. It is like a ball of twisted yarn. You can pull on one thread and seemingly make some progress but it is so difficult to straighten out a life gone down the wrong path.

But we are also going to see in this passage, that **God makes a way**. Where man tries to cover up his sin with the futile attempts of a patchwork of fig leaves, God provides the seed of the woman to offer up His sinless life as a sacrifice for sin. Only God can clothe us with the righteousness of Jesus Christ and by His grace shower undeserving sinners with His grace and compassion and mercy and forgiveness. We are all undeserving sinners. We are all in bondage to sin and guilt and death apart from the salvation offered freely by a gracious God.

This morning we get back to the roots of humanity – the origin of sin in the human race and some of its devastating consequences. But we will also witness the grace of God at work behind the scenes.

SIN LEADS TO GUILT . . . AND GUILT CHANGES EVERYTHING – PART 2

I. (:8-10) A GUILTY CONSCIENCE

II. (:11-13) A GUILTY VERDICT

III. (:14-15) A GUILTY SENTENCE – UPON THE SERPENT

IV. (:16) A GUILTY SENTENCE – UPON THE WOMAN

“To the woman He said,”

A. Pronouncement of Cursing – Impacts Childbirth

*“I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth,
In pain you shall bring forth children;”*

In all of the gender confusion over the role of man and woman in today's culture, nobody disputes that it is only the woman who gives birth to children. The role of man and woman remains distinct from a biological sense just as God testifies that there are unique roles for men and women to perform in the home and in the church.

Here we see the consequences of sin for Eve directed towards that fundamental arena of giving birth to children. We have Moms here this morning who can testify to the pain involved in childbirth. This multiplied pain came about because of the sin of Eve. As we bring new life into this world it is a reminder that our nature has been transformed to one of sin and depravity just as the world around us reflects the brokenness and pain of sin.

“toil, heart-break, sorrow and pain.”

Parunak: These two clauses both speak of the woman's “*sorrow*,” particularly in childbearing. Hebrew has a number of words that are commonly used for labor pangs, but Moses chooses here two derivatives of another term, *`ecab*. Once again he shows his penchant for puns, for the first two consonants of this term are the same as those of the word for “*tree*,” *`ec*. She was fascinated with the tree, so now she is doomed to remember it in the pain she must endure.

Dr. Jack Arnold: A mother's sense of success or failure in life is related to her children. A mother's heart is wrapped up with the life and career of her children. She lives in and by her children. The meaning of her life is revealed in them, and if they succeed, she has succeeded, but if they fail, she has failed.

1Tim 2:12-15

“But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.”

Steven Cole: God mercifully tempers the pain with the great joy which children give. As Jesus said, *“Whenever a woman is in travail, she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no more, for joy that a child has been born into the world” (John 16:21).*

B. Condemnation to Conflict – Impacts Marriage Relationship

1. The Wife Must Restrain the Sinful Urge to Be in Control

“Yet your desire shall be for your husband,”

Dr. Jack Arnold: But as a result of the Fall, there is a struggle and tension inside the woman, in which she is torn between the natural God-given desire to yield to her husband, and at the same time the awakened desire to exert her will against his, a perverse urge to rivalry or domination.

Steven Cole: Two views are the most likely. The first is that in spite of the woman's increased pain in childbearing, she would continue to have sexual desire toward her husband. Sex was not cursed by God. The woman has as much right to enjoy sex in marriage as the man. Two things commend this view. The word “*desire*” is used in **Song of Songs 7:10** to refer to the desire of a lover for his beloved. And, the woman's pleasure in sex serves as a gracious blessing to offset the preceding curse of pain in childbirth

[other view explained by **Parunak** below]

2. The Husband Must Restrain the Temptation to Rule in Domineering Fashion
“And he shall rule over you.”

Instead of joyfully responding to the loving leadership of the head of the home, the wife will chafe against the leadership the husband exercises.

Of course this is no ticket for the husband to dominate his wife in an unloving fashion. The standard has been set for husbands in Ephes. 5 to love their wives in a humble and sacrificial fashion as Christ has loved the church.

But God wants Eve to know in no uncertain terms that this marriage relationship will be a struggle for the woman and source of tension and frustration.

Parunak: close parallel in 4:7

In 4:1-5,

- Cain and Abel are born,
- And take up their respective work as tiller of the soil and shepherd.
- Each makes an offering to God of his produce.
- God accepts Abel and his offering, but not Cain. When we get to **ch. 4**, we will consider the reason for this.
- Cain is upset. Subsequently, this upset is so severe that it leads him to murder Abel (**v.8**).

In **vv.6-7**, the Lord expostulates with Cain over his disappointment. He places a choice before Cain. Note the double contrast:

If you do well,	You shall be accepted (lit. <i>rise up</i>)
If you do not do well,	Sin <i>lies down</i> (like a lion in its lair) at your door.

The verb used to describe sin’s posture at Cain’s door is characteristic of a wild beast in its lair (**Gen 49:9; Ps 104:22**). The point is to picture his position as precarious. Every time he sets foot out of his house, he must walk past the den of Sin, which may snare him at any moment (and in fact, does, when he rises up and slays his brother).

Concerning sin in this figure of a lion in its lair, God continues in terms nearly identical to **3:16**: “*Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*” Two things are clear here:

1. Sin’s desire for Cain is not **affection**, but a desire to **overpower him and control him**.
2. The statement about Cain’s rule over sin is not a prediction, but an **exhortation** that Cain unfortunately does not heed. It is Cain’s duty to resist sin’s ambition to overtake him, and remain in control.

The same understanding fits perfectly in **3:16**.

1. “*thy desire shall be to thy husband.*” This is a prediction of the battle of the sexes, the origin of feminism. Instead of being the channel for God’s help to him, you will wish to dominate him, to assert your agenda rather than his. Just as the judgment on the serpent instituted enmity between believers and unbelievers, the judgment on the woman institutes **enmity** between male and female. Note that the woman here is confirmed in her sinful behavior, according to God’s harvest law (**Gal 6:7**). She has sowed rebellion against the man’s authority, and now reaps it as her steady portion.

2. Nevertheless, it remains the husband’s responsibility to control the rebellious wife. “*He shall rule over you*” is normative, not declarative; a statement of his **responsibility**, not a prediction. This was always his responsibility. Adam failed to exercise it when his wife offered him the forbidden fruit. Now it is still his responsibility, but made more difficult because of the woman’s propensity to rebel.

[This also fits **Cant 7:10**, where the woman, truly overcome with love for her husband, cedes to him the right to direct the relation by accepting his desire over her. Note the progression from **2:16** (possession) and **6:3** (putting him first) to surrender (**7:10**).]

NT Consequences

We now have the pieces we need to understand **1 Tim 2:12-14**. Woman is not to teach in the church, for two reasons:

1. The order of creation. She is to be a helper to the man, not his replacement.
2. The circumstances of the fall. By her own confession, she was deceived in the sin (“*the serpent beguiled me*”), and the judgment pronounced on her emphasized her tendency to usurp authority over the man, and his responsibility to maintain control over her.

Feminist propaganda suggests that women tend to be abused by their husbands, and that dictatorial husbands are the rule rather than the exception. Certainly, there are such husbands, but this understanding suggests that another situation is far more common: strong-willed women, and men who find it easier to let them have their way than to give godly leadership. (Given the male ego, it is not surprising if this situation is underreported.) The responsibility of believers in light of this judgment:

1. The husband is responsible to lead his wife, even if she resists his leadership. This responsibility does not excuse tyranny or abuse; the standard is **Eph. 5:25**, “*as Christ loved the church.*” Still, he must lead. If unfallen Eve could divert her husband from godliness, so can even a regenerate wife, if the flesh slips into the picture. The situation is analogous to the responsibility of parents to keep their children under control. Do not confuse love with permissiveness.

2. The wife is to recognize her fleshly tendency to rebel, and submit herself to the husband in everything as the church does to Christ. Only thus can she be his helper as originally intended.

Echoes Later in Genesis

The efforts of women to control their men, often with devastating effects, are common throughout the book.

- **16:3**, Sarah urges her handmaid on Abraham, leading to the birth of Ishmael and later bitterness in the family.

- **27**, Rebekah conspires with Jacob to deceive her husband Isaac and obtain the blessing that belonged to Esau.
- **29-30**, Rachel and Leah seek to manipulate their husband in their competition with one another.
- **38**, Tamar manipulates her father-in-law when he does not provide her a husband
- **39**, Potiphar's wife has Joseph imprisoned when she cannot bend him to her will.

Constable: "The "*curse*" here describes the beginning of the battle of the sexes. After the Fall, the husband no longer rules easily; he must fight for his headship. The woman's desire is to control her husband (to usurp his divinely appointed headship), and he must master her, if he can. Sin had corrupted both the willing submission of the wife and the loving headship of the husband. And so the rule of love founded in paradise is replaced by struggle, tyranny, domination, and manipulation." [Note: Foh, p69. See also her article, "What is the Woman's Desire?" Westminster Theological Journal 37:3 (Spring 1975):376-383; **Mathews**, p251; and **Waltke**, Genesis, p94.]

Deffinbaugh: To those men and women who wish to disregard God's instruction I must say, that is precisely what Satan desires. Just as he drew Eve's attention to the restriction of the one tree, so he wants women to ponder the restriction placed upon women today. "Throw off your shackles," he urges, "Find self-fulfillment." "God is keeping you from what is best," he whispers. And it is a lie! God's rules have reasons, whether we understand them or not.

MacArthur: the woman is also given a curse in the realm where she lives her life. It affects her childbearing and her relationship to her husband. The home is where God designed a woman to be. That is her realm. That is her sphere. And so God places a unique curse on her realm so that she is going to find life particularly difficult in her relationship with her children and her husband. Childbirth itself will take her right down to the edge of death . . .

She desires to have her own way and have her own will and dominate, and he controls her. So there in the very sphere of her life she finds the curse operating which is a constant reminder, designed by God to be a constant reminder of the terrible nature of sin

V. (:17-19) A GUILTY SENTENCE – UPON THE MAN

"Then to Adam He said,"

A. (:17a) Reason for the Curse

1. Abdicating Role of Leadership

"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,"

Adam should have maintained his role of headship and leadership.

2. Transgressing the Command of God

"and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you,

saying, 'You shall not eat from it;'"

Note:

- Contrast in the **source** of the spoken word –
 - o Helper / Wife – created by God as a suitable helper for Adam
 - o God the Creator Himself
- Contrast in the **intensity** of the spoken word –
 - o Suggestion from the woman
 - o Commandment from God
- Contrast in the **authority** of the spoken word --

B. (:17b-19) Pronouncement of Cursing

“Cursed is the ground because of you;”

The environment has every reason to be upset at humanity – all of creation is in a state of groaning – waiting for the coming redemption – because of the sin of Adam

Work was designed to be a pleasurable experience with the environment cooperating in every way; but now the ground fights against the efforts to cultivate the soil and produce the necessary crops for man’s sustenance

C. (:17c-19) Condemnation to Conflict and Death

1. (:17c-19a) Condemnation to Conflict in Working for Food

*“In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life.
Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
And you shall eat the plants of the field;
By the sweat of your face You shall eat bread,”*

Men, Why are we surprised when we face **difficulties at work?**

We need to adjust our expectations.

It is going to be a grind.

We are going to have to toil and labor and sweat and groan and suffer exhaustion.

Dr. Jack Arnold: Work itself is not a curse; It is the sweat, anxiety and pressure of trying to get more and more out of reluctant nature.

Psalm 127:2 *"He eats the bread of sorrow."*

Parunak: The phrase here has the specific meaning of **grain, which requires cultivation**, as opposed to the fruit trees with which the garden abounded.

MacArthur: [Message of book of Ecclesiastes] Verse 17, "I hated life for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me because everything is futility and striving after wind, so I hated all the fruit of my labor for which I had labored under the sun for I must leave it to the man who will come after me." And the worse part is I've done so well, I've got a whole lot, I'm going to leave it to somebody. "I don't even know...verse 19...if he'll be a wise man or a fool,

but he'll have control over all the fruit of my labor for which I have labored by acting wisely under the sun, this too is vanity." I don't like the whole idea. I don't like the idea of working. I don't like the idea of working and succeeding and having to leave it to some fool and they waste it. Verse 23 says, "Those days of labor are painful and grievous and even at night his mind doesn't rest." Can you identify with that? You work all day, you go home and you can't go to sleep because you've got a problem at work you've got to solve or because you've got some problems in your job, or you've got some bad relationships, or you might lose your job, or you don't like the things the way they're going. Work, work, work, work.

We groan trying to get to 65-70 to retire – look at how long Adam had to work – died at 930 years – must have really been worn out

2. (:19b) Condemnation to Death

*“Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.”*

VI. (:20-24) DIVINE PROVISION AND PROTECTION FOR GUILTY HUMANITY

A. (:20) Posterity Impacted by the Fall – But Not Wiped Out

*“Now the man called his wife's name Eve,
because she was the mother of all the living.”*

Adam understands that the hope for humanity for restoration to paradise lies in the seed of the woman and so he renames his wife Eve as a reminder that she will bear offspring – one of which will be that victorious seed that conquers Satan and sin and death

Parunak: Up to this point, the woman's name has been properly only *'ishah* “woman,” assigned in **2:23-24**. Now Adam gives her a new name, “Eve,” derived from the root for “life.” Both names are based on the divine actions that led to that point.

- “Woman” is based on God's action in creating her from man's rib.
- “Eve” is based on God's promise that she shall bear seed.

Though each individual is condemned to die through her sin, yet through the bearing of children, the race will continue. Thus by giving her this name, Adam is reflecting a degree of faith, however slight, in the promise of God that goes beyond the judgment.

Steven Cole: After the morbid words of verse 19, you would expect something like, “Now Adam called his wife's name the Grim Reaper, because she was the mother of all the dying.” But instead of the Grim Reaper, Adam calls her “Eve,” which means “life-giver.” And even more strange, she has not yet had any children.

B. (:21) Provision of Covering Garments

“And the LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.”

Only God can provide the covering we need for sin; man's attempts are inadequate

Importance of the Grace of God = Undeserved Favor – cf. dinner last night to celebrate 40

years of ministry for **Dan Broadwater** – it’s all about the grace of God – from start to finish

Parunak: The tunic is distinctively a priestly garment, and the verb “to clothe” (hiphil) is used of the vesting of priests. Cf. **Exod 29:8; 40:14; Lev 8:13. Exod 28:40-41** has both verbs “make” and “clothe.” The purpose of the priestly clothing is explicitly to cover their nakedness, **Exod 20:26; 28:42**. Given so much further sanctuary symbolism in these chapters, it is likely that we are to see here a hint of the sacral role that God intends the man to fulfill, and thus a further mark of grace.

MacArthur: This introduces for the first time in Scripture the matter of atonement or covering of the sinner through the death of an innocent substitute. This is the sovereign work of God. God chose the animal. God killed the animal. God took the skin of the animal and covered the sinners. This is the first death in the world--never been death before this. The first death is the death of an animal killed by God to cover sinners. My, what a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus, who is the Lamb slain by God from before the foundation of the world, the Lamb slain by God from before the foundation of the world.

C. (:22-24) Protection from Hopeless Lost Condition – Removal from the Garden

1. (:22) Experiential Knowledge of Evil

“Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’—“

Parunak:

“To know” in Hebrew commonly has the sense of “to experience.” Consider **Ecc 8:5**, “*Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel yeda` no evil thing.*”

By their disobedience, Adam and Eve have come into the experience of evil as well as good.

The exclusion from the tree of life spares them from living forever with the consequences of their sin.

The first exclusion (in **2:16-17**) was by a command. They have demonstrated that they cannot be trusted with a command, so he must remove them physically from the danger (and along with it, from the attendant blessings of the garden).

MacArthur: “*Behold, the man has become like one of Us*”--only in the sense of knowing good and evil. But not in the sense that God knows good and evil, because God is good and there is no evil in Him. Man is evil predominantly, and only by the grace of God is there any good in him. But the simple truth is man now knows what’s good and what’s evil. That is true. They know it from the inside. God knows it from the outside. God knows it because He knows everything. But God doesn’t experience it. Adam and Eve along with us know it from the inside because we experience it. So in that sense, “man has become like one of us”; only for him this is a debilitating, overwhelming, overpowering personal experience of evil in his own heart. They know evil because it’s in them. They know evil because it drives them. They know evil because it’s in their nature. They know evil because it is their constant experience.

2. (:23-24a) Expulsion from the Garden

“Therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out;”

3. (:24b) Eternal Security

“and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life.”

CONCLUSION:

Steven Cole: So the curse shows us that God allows us to suffer consequences for our sin. Sometimes those consequences are directly related to some sin we have committed; at other times we just suffer the consequences of living in a fallen world. While God graciously tempers the severity of the consequences with glimmers of grace, the consequences are real. They remind us that with the holy God, sin is serious. But God’s grace triumphs in that He doesn’t leave us to suffer the ultimate consequences of sin:

So Sin makes a mess ... but God makes a way

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can a wife discern whether she is sinfully seeking to usurp the leadership role of her husband?
- 2) What was different in the pre-Fall relationship between husband and wife?
- 3) What would be a realistic expectation for a man regarding the level of difficulty and frustration he might have to fight through in his job situation?
- 4) What happened to the Garden of Eden after the Noahic Flood?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacArthur: So what are the elements of salvation that we see here? Faith, on the part of Adam and Eve, who took the word “Eve” as the name because she was going to be the fulfillment of the promise of God. They believed God. We see the element of atonement, and we see the element of security. God provides the sacrifice that covers sinners, and God secures sinners. All of this points to Christ. Christ is that sacrifice, and Christ is the one who keeps and holds His

own.

David Thompson:

“multiply” – hiphel stem – God will not just tolerate what anybody does

4 direct punishments from God Eve would experience:

1) experienced in her pain – a gracious punishment; I am going to let you live long enough to bear children; had said: *in the day you eat you will die*

We have modern medicine that can do wonderful things ... but can't take away all the pain of childbirth;

2) evidenced in her childbirth – idea of swelling; **Gen. 16:4**; she started showing; conception refers to the entire process of pregnancy; discomfort in the pregnancy;

3) evidenced in her delivery – grace of God in the midst of these penalties; the pain is tolerable; aftermath is great joy

3) evidenced in her subjection – destined to be somewhat dominated by men; prior to this judgment there would have been great harmony and wonderful union in the relationship;

Desire – to usurp the role and rule of her husband; times when she will want to be the dominating force and frustrated because she isn't;

Only spirit-controlled, godly woman who will choose to be meek and mild and submissive to her husband;

Great majority desire to take charge and take control

It is a man's world;

At times there is friction in marriage relationship – just the reality because of this curse;

5 direct punishments against the man:

1) affects the **ground** – not easy to take piece of ground and turn it into crop-producing parcel

Gen. 5:29 – testimony of Lamech

2) affects his **happiness** – toil – life a painful, hard struggle just to get food

3) vs. 18 – affects his **prosperity** – your life will be filled with some negatives; prosperity is still obtainable; no easy job

4) affects his **effort** – by the sweat of your face – you are not going to enjoy it like you would have apart from sin; at times work will seem more like a chore than a blessing

5) affect our **existence** – you are going to die

2 reactions to the news of these penalties:

1) Adam names the woman – named her life instead of death; God permitted this couple to bear children;

2) God clothed Adam and Eve – modern nudists avoid this verse; not natural to walk around without clothing

Judgment against both (:22-24):

Living in God's paradise requires that you be as holy as God is

Expulsion is both disciplinary and gracious

TEXT: Genesis 4:1-26

TITLE: *SIN MAKES A MESS . . . BUT GOD MAKES A WAY*

BIG IDEA:

CULTURE MAY DEVELOP IN WAYS THAT SEEM IMPRESSIVE, BUT THE ONLY HOPE FOR DEPRAVED MANKIND LIES IN CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

INTRODUCTION:

Keeping the title the same these past 3 weeks:

SIN MAKES A MESS . . . BUT GOD MAKES A WAY

Not because my creative juices have dried up . . . but really this is the story of all of Scripture. Think of our own lives and the way that God has made for each of us.

Importance of the promise of **Gen. 3:15** underlies this entire chapter. We are going to track this enmity and warfare between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman.

Structural signposts in the text:

3 sections – each introduced by the formula: “*had relations with*”

:1-16 Cain and Abel

:17-24 Seed of the serpent – line of Cain

:25-26 Seed of the woman – replacement line of Seth (after murder of Abel)

Remember that Genesis is the **book of beginnings . . . of origins**. Here just in chapter 4 alone we see the origins of:

- Procreation – first children born
- Death and Murder – plenty of that surrounds us here today – spread and intensification of sin = one of the major themes of chap. 4
- Construction of first primitive settlement – not a city with skyscrapers like we know it today – but a primitive village where families could dwell together
- Initial Cultural accomplishments in a wide variety of arenas

CULTURE MAY DEVELOP IN WAYS THAT SEEM IMPRESSIVE, BUT THE ONLY HOPE FOR DEPRAVED MANKIND LIES IN CALLING ON THE NAME OF THE LORD

I. (:1-16) ADAM AND EVE’S OFFSPRING – CAIN AND ABEL – THE SEED OF THE SERPENT VS. THE SEED OF THE WOMAN -- PERSISTENT PATTERN OF SIN AND PUNISHMENT – ORIGIN OF MURDER

A. (:1-2) Family Origins – Distinction in Occupations

1. (:1) Birth of Cain

“Now the man *had relations with* his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, ‘I have gotten a man-child with the help of the LORD.’”

Lit: “*I have formed a man with the Lord.*” By His instrumentality

Maybe she thought this was the one that would crush the serpent's head

I have gotten a Man-child .. the Lord" – expression of Messianic expectation; believes she had just given birth to the promised seed;

2. (:2a) Birth of Abel

"And again, she gave birth to his brother Abel."

Parunak: Possible that they were twins -- If this is so, the animosity between them is even more reprehensible, and a prototype of the competition between Jacob and Esau.

- **Cain** means "smith," one who forms, and is distantly related to the verb in Eve's statement, "I have formed."
- **Abel** means "breath, vanity," and anticipates the shortness of his life.

Abel turned out to be a believer

3. (:2b) Career Paths

"And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground."

Both followed in the footsteps of their father who was involved in both occupations; Nothing is said here to elevate one occupation over the other

B. (:3-5a) Family Offerings – Distinction in Divine Reception

1. Two Different Offerings

a. (:3) Offering of Cain

"So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground."

Maybe a long time later – don't know how many years; coming to the entrance of the Garden of Eden to offer worship

b. (:4a) Offering of Abel

"And Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions."

Leupold: there can be no doubt that the significant words "*of the first-born*" and "*some of the fat pieces*" in addition to "*of his flock*" aim to show a distinguishing feature of this sacrifice. Since one merely gave of what he had acquired, but the other gave "*firstlings*" and "*fat pieces*" of what he had acquired, it is evident that the one gave because it was time and custom to give – pure formalism; whereas the other gave the best – pure, devout worship.

Parunak: —So what is the difference between their persons? We have two NT comments on their offerings, one on Abel's and one on Cain's.

• **Heb 11:4** comments on Abel's offering. Abel offered a "*more excellent*" offering, namely "the firstlings ... and ... the fat," a selective and costly sacrifice, and did so by faith, that is, by trust in God. Recall that both labor under the judgment of eating bread by the sweat of the

brow, 3:19. Getting adequate food was a struggle, and the choicest produce would be highly prized. Abel could sacrifice the very best that he had, because he recognized it all as a gift from God, and trusted God to provide his needs. Cain does not set aside the very best for God, but simply brings mediocre produce.

• **1 John 3:12** reports of Cain's offering, "*his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*" Cain's evil works can only be his sacrifice. Thus we learn that carelessness in worship is not simply neutral, but positively wicked, in view of the holiness of the one whom we approach. Cf. **Mal 1:13,14**; there, such a careless attitude brings a curse upon the worshipper.

Hughes: It is often supposed that that the answer is simply that animal offerings were more acceptable to God than grain offerings, that blood sacrifices are superior to harvest offerings. But this is certainly mistaken, because the old Testament Scriptures honor both types of offerings. Moreover, the context says nothing about the priority of blood sacrifice. **Micah 6:7-8** – Cain was singularly unjust, unmerciful, and unhumble.

2. Two Different Responses by the Lord

a. (:4b) To Abel's Offering

"And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;"

b. (:5a) To Cain's Offering

"but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard."

How did God show approval for the type of sacrifice offered?? Consumed it with fire?
Chereub ignited it with flaming sword??

C. (:5b-7) Family Counseling – Distinction in Ways to Live

1. (:5b) 2 Negative Reactions from Cain

a. Reaction of Anger

"So Cain became very angry"

It burned to Cain exceedingly

His sacrifice just sat there – unaccepted

If the problem was that Cain had disobeyed by bringing the wrong sacrifice – bloodless – than Cain would have no cause to be so angry – he would have immediately understood why it was rejected – but the difference between mere formalism and faith is more subtle

Parunak: Anger and discouragement, implying that the Lord has done something wrong. His attitude reflects that of the serpent, casting blame on the Lord, rather than accepting our place as contingent, created beings.

Borgman: this only makes sense if you are a narcissist; if you think you are the most important person in the world; requiring him to conform to God's standards; type of insanity that informs the vast majority of the human race

b. Reaction of Angst

"and his countenance fell."

Comic strip this week: face of xxx

2. (:6-7) Response by the Lord

a. You Have Only Yourself to Blame

*“Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry?
And why has your countenance fallen?’”*

b. Two Ways to Live

1) Doing Well

“If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up?”

2) Not Doing Well

*“And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door;
and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”*

Parunak: His casual, inattentive sacrifice assumed that by default he was right with God. In fact, as a child of Adam and Eve, he inherited their propensity to sin. He must recognize that holiness never comes naturally;

Cain not interested in God’s way but acting independently; I will live life my way

D. (:8) Family Hatred

1. Premeditated Planning

“And Cain told Abel his brother.”

Parunak: His real purpose, though, is deceitful and malicious, to get Abel away from their dwelling, into the field where no one could come to his aid. The crime, like that of Eve and Adam, is not the result of a sudden burst of passion, but something planned and arranged for in advance.

2. Horrific Homicide

*“And it came about when they were in the field,
that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.”*

Even worse than just murder – this was killing your own brother – possibly your twin brother
Fratricide

1 John 3 – he killed him because he was embarrassed and envious of his brother
Satan using Cain as his willing instrument

E. (:9-10) Family Accountability

1. (:9) Confrontation

a. Question

“Then the LORD said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’”

Similar to earlier record of the Lord coming to Adam

b. Response

“And he said, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?’”

Luke 11:49-52 what prophet was murdered at the foundation of the world? Abel = a spokesman for God according to Jesus; Satan trying to stop the spokesman of God

Borgman: calloused response; feigned innocence; Do not answer God with a rhetorical question! Probably thought he was being clever

2. (:10) Condemnation

a. Question

“And He said, ‘What have you done?’”

Trying to provoke Cain to repentance

b. Response

“The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground.”

Heb. 12:24 – blood of Jesus speaks better than the blood of Abel – cries **Forgive** instead of **Vengeance** – story of two bloods

F. (:11-16) Family Punishment

1. (:11-12) Intensification of the Curse Upon Mankind

a. Profaning of Human Life and of Its Source = the Ground

“And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.”

Before God had cursed the ground – now he curses man, made in the image of God
Remember man was made from dust and condemned to return to the dust;
Violation of sanctity of human life for Cain to prematurely take the life of his brother and shed his blood upon the ground

b. Punishment on Two Fronts

1) No Productivity

“When you cultivate the ground, it shall no longer yield its strength to you;”

Just trying to eke out a meagre existence; curse of Fall made work difficult; now for Cain it will be extremely difficult

2) No Home – a Wandering Fugitive

“you shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.”

Parunak: This is an intensification of the curse resulting from Adam's sin.

o Eden: food with no work

o Adam after the fall: food, but only with hard labor.

Cain experienced this prior to his offering.

o Cain: No productivity, even with labor

2. (:13-14) Irrationality of the Complaint of Cain

a. (:13) Emotional Complaint of Overall Severity

“And Cain said to the LORD, ‘My punishment is too great to bear!’”

Claiming that God is unfair to him; no repentance or remorse (Not “My iniquity is too great”)

Parunak: Application: There are two ways in which one can respond to God’s judgments: we can either complain against them (as Cain does), or beg for his mercy (which Cain does not).

b. (:14) Exaggerated Complaint of Specific Penalties

1) Penalty of Becoming an Outcast From God

“Behold, Thou hast driven me this day from the face of the ground; and from Thy face I shall be hidden,”

I can’t approach the entrance to the Garden of Eden anymore and offer sacrifice

2) Penalty of Becoming a Hunted Prey

“and I shall be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth, and it will come about that whoever finds me will kill me.”

3. (:15) Indemnification to Protect Cain From Vigilante Justice

[to compensate for damage or loss sustained]

a. Divine Vengeance – a Threat

“So the LORD said to him, ‘Therefore whoever kills Cain, vengeance will be taken on him sevenfold.’”

“Sevenfold” has the sense “completely, perfectly.”

b. Divine Protection – a Sign

“And the LORD appointed a sign for Cain, lest anyone finding him should slay him.”

What is this sign?

- Mark on forehead?
- ??

Longsuffering of God – giving man opportunity to repent

4. (:16) Epilogue

“Then Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.”

Land of wandering

II. (:17-24) CAIN'S WICKED OFFSPRING – THE SEED OF THE SERPENT – FOCUS ON ENOCH AND LAMECH -- PERSISTENT PATTERN OF MURDER AND REVENGE

A. (:17) Family Units Developing Into Larger Cultural Contexts

1. Cain Raises Up a Seed = Enoch

“And Cain had relations with his wife and she conceived, and gave birth to Enoch;”

2. Cain Raises Up a City = Enoch

“and he built a city, and called the name of the city Enoch, after the name of his son.”

I am going to settle down in defiance of what God said

Parunak: Cain himself builds the first city. (Is this an effort to frustrate the divine judgment that he will be a fugitive and a vagabond?) – [precursor to **Tower of Babel**]

Ps. 49:11 “Their inner thought is that their houses are forever and their dwelling places to all generations; they have called their lands after their own names.”

B. (:18) Fathering Pattern of Genealogies

*“Now to Enoch was born Irad;
and Irad became the father of Mehujael;
and Mehujael became the father of Methushael;
and Methushael became the father of Lamech.”*

C. (:19-22) Focus on Lamech and His Line of Posterity – Cultural Accomplishments But a Heart of Depravity

1. (:19) Origin of Bigamy

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

Introduction of sin of bigamy – God’s design was for marriage to be between one man and one woman

they mean “pretty” and “sweet-voiced.” No spiritual component here

2. (:20-22) Origin of Cultural Developments

- a. (:20) Tent-dwellers and Farmers/Shepherds

“And Adah gave birth to Jabal; he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.

- b. (:21) The Arts

And his brother's name was Jubal; he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.”

c. (:22) Technology

“As for Zillah, she also gave birth to Tubal-cain, the forger of all implements of bronze and iron; and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.”

Advanced technology long before Noah’s Flood – not ignorant cavemen; very advanced in intelligence and skills

Parunak: God can redeem elements of culture and use them for his purposes:

- the tabernacle was a tent;
- musical instruments feature prominently in the temple worship;
- Bezaleel and Aholiab, the tabernacle craftsmen, were skilled in metalwork;
- The Spirit of God spoke through David, Solomon, and most of the prophets in poetic form.

Still, we must recognize that it is the ungodly who typically excel in cultural activities, and we must not mistake cultural excellence for godliness, nor despise those who though culturally simple are devoted to the Lord.

Hughes: No combination of agricultural abundance, the arts, and technology can save society.

D. (:23-24) Familiar Achilles Heel of Persistent Sin = Murder and Revenge

1. Arrogant Boasting

“And Lamech said to his wives, ‘Adah and Zillah, Listen to my voice, You wives of Lamech, Give heed to my speech,’”

Wives must have been sick of listening to the voice of this tyrant

2. Murderous Rage

“For I have killed a man for wounding me; And a boy for striking me;”

Characterized by hatred and murder

This poor boy just committed some minor infraction – but was murdered by Lamech

3. Excessive Vengeance

“If Cain is avenged sevenfold, Then Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”

MacArthur: In this first civilization, there's no reason to assume that there was any form of government. It was still patriarchal, and a man ruled over his own domain and developed his own sense of protection. And he is simply saying, "Look, anybody comes near and touches me, I'll kill him." This is the first great macho speech.

Parunak: This passage is probably the source of our Lord’s rebuke to Peter in Matt 18:22. The unbeliever seeks a plenitude of vengeance; the believer is capable of an equal plenitude of forgiveness.

Hughes: God's vengeance upon anyone killing Cain was sevenfold, meaning a perfect measure, appropriate to the crime. But Lamech threatened that he would take vengeance seventy-seven fold – an avalanche of vengeance.

Leupold: If God will see to it that the one who harms Cain will have a seven fold measure of punishment, Lamech, not needing or even despising God's avenging justice, will provide for himself by the strength of his own arm, reinforced by his son's weapon, a far more heavy punishment than God would have allowed – seventy-seven fold. The arrogance and presumption are unbelievable. The spirit of self-sufficiency here expressing itself overleaps all bounds. This, then, coupled with its hate and revengefulness, makes it one of the most ungodly pieces ever written. Such are the achievements of human culture divorced from God.

III. (:25-26) REPLACEMENT GODLY LINE OF SETH – THE SEED OF THE WOMAN --

HOPE COMES WHEN WE CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD

A. (:25) Substitution of Seth for Abel

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

B. (:26a) Continuation of the Line of Seth = Enosh

“And to Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh.”

C. (:26b) Origin of Public Worship

“Then men began to call upon the name of the LORD.”

Introduction of Public Worship

Is. 12:4 “And in that day you will say, ‘Give thanks to the Lord, call on His name. Make known His deeds among the peoples; make them remember that His name is exalted.’”

MacArthur: What does "to call upon" mean? What does it mean, "they began to call upon"? It's a very general Hebrew term. It can mean, "to pray to"; it can mean, "to proclaim"; it can mean, "to name." And I think it means all of that. They began to worship - that's what it means - through praying, proclaiming, praising. Just what we do. . .

In the midst of secular and unbelieving culture, with all its advancements materially, there's no redeeming value to it, and it's gonna burn up. But against that culture, God has placed His people, His remnant - the true believing family of God. In the midst of advancing sin in sophisticated culture, there are those true, pure worshippers of Jehovah, the personal, covenant, savior God. And what is our responsibility? To worship Him, to preserve His name, and to proclaim His gospel, right? That's our calling.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What kind of worshiper are you – more like Cain or Abel?
- 2) When have we been angry with God?
- 3) How do we respond to the counsels and warnings of God?
- 4) Does our life demonstrate a consistent pattern of calling on the name of the Lord?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: When Adam begat Cain and Abel (4:1-2), we saw immediately the possibility of two streams of humanity:

- The seed of the woman, worshipping God
- The seed of the serpent, persecuting the seed of the woman.

In this chapter we have two echoes of this childbirth language (4:17, 25). The first shows the continued proliferation of depravity, as Cain's seed, while intelligent and creative, continue in his sin: continuation of the seed of the serpent. The second shows another instance of the seed of the woman, seeking after God.

Hughes: When Cainite civilization began to rise and worship at the shrines of abundance and art and technology – when abuse and violence and the devaluation of life became commonplace – when vengeance became exponential – when men fancied that they were captains of their souls – Sethite civilization began to proclaim the name of the Lord, the Captain of their salvation!

Brian Borgman: The Birth of the Serpent's Seed

Adam and Eve expelled from the garden; but there was hope because of the promise of 3:15; reflected in the renaming of his wife Eve; she is going to have seed; must have been serious hope as she approached delivery; but things will get worse before they get better;

Two major themes in Chap. 4

- Spread and escalation of sin; intensification
- War between the two seeds – the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent

“*Know*” in an intimate way;

Cain – “to acquire, gain, possess” – terminology is strange – called baby a “Man” – Eve sees something in his birth; “*I have gotten a Man-child .. the Lord*” – expression of Messianic expectation; believes she had just given birth to the promised seed; “et” = a direct object identifier here; Boice takes it this way; Luther: “even the Lord”
Eve's instincts about the coming Messiah were correct, but her timing was way off!

In reality she just brought forth the Anti-Christ

Cain is the main actor in chap. 4; Abel just identified as his brother; breath, vapor

Both callings were completely legitimate;

“*at the end of days*” – appointed time for worship; maybe sabbath; acting as priests going to the altar to worship the Lord as their parents had instructed them to do

Cain brought some of the fruit of the ground – not all of it ... something missing in his offering; nothing said about first-fruits

Number of bloodless offerings that are acceptable to the God

Perhaps the Lord consumed Abel’s offering with fire; no fire to accept Cain’s offering – just a bunch of flies landed on it

One worshipper comes by faith and brings his best

The other simply discharges a duty

We want God to rubber stamp our way with his approval;

Assuming God likes what I like

Not a wise thing to be mad at God

Fundamental assumption should be that problem is with me and with my sacrifice; instead he assumes problem is with God

What is happening in the soul often manifests itself in our body language on the outside

The older you get, the more you wear your face

For the right reason, do the right thing – good counsel – whether or not you feel like doing the right thing; often the power comes in the doing

Not just a little bit of lust or greed, but lust that says give me a foothold and I will destroy you; don’t mess around with sin; it is crouching at the door and it desires to rule over you

Gracious warning and counsel from God; Cain should plead for God’s help; instead pride is raging in his heart; pride will mark the line of Cain; the right choices lead to recovery from sin; the wrong choice can stir up and strengthen sin

What drives our choices is what controls our heart – not rationality!

He nurses wounded pride and bitterness towards God and malice towards his brother; Cain felt absolutely justified in all of it

Jesus: you are guilty of murder if you have anger in your heart towards your brother

Blood Which Speaks Better Than Abel’s

Vs. 8 – two options

- Went and told Abel what God had told him
- Lures Abel into the field for opportunity for calculated murder

When people are warned by God, sometimes they just become more angry

Monumental question: “*What have you done?*” – far better question than “*Why?*”

You killed your brother; his innocent blood is crying out to me from the ground

Adam's sin brought a curse to the ground; Cain's sin profaned and polluted the ground with innocent blood

The wanderer ends up in the land of wandering; rootless; homeless

Matt. 23:35 the blood of righteous Abel

There would be another seed of the woman and his blood would also cry out

The blood of sprinkling which speaks better -- Heb. 12:24

MacArthur: The testimony of Scripture about that original family, about the original man - the original human family - is that man was created in God's image; that he was astonishingly intelligent, that he was amazingly creative, that he was resourceful, that he was healthy, to the degree that they lived for as long as 900 plus years; that he was strong with a kind of physical strength, the likes of which we couldn't even comprehend; that he was skilled because his mind was so beyond ours, and because over the period of centuries of life, he would gain an immense amount of knowledge and wisdom and refinement. You have this highly sophisticated culture in the world, in which you can see here the development of cities - this is not caveman stuff.

TEXT: Genesis 5:1-32

TITLE: WALKING WITH GOD

BIG IDEA:

DEATH DOES NOT DOMINATE LIFE FOR THOSE WHO WALK WITH GOD

INTRODUCTION:

Last week I appreciated the opportunity to visit Jenny and attend Capitol Hill Baptist Church and listen to Pastor Mark Dever. I happened to receive this week via email an article by him that serves as a good introduction to our study today of Genesis 5.

Article by Mark Dever: **How Not to Think About Death Like a Secularist**

Allow me to introduce you to **Secular Sam**.

Secular Sam is very successful. He has a good job, a nice girlfriend, a beautiful apartment, a new car, and excellent health. He's humorous, intelligent, and personable. Secular Sam is also a Christian, and actually quite an active one. He has an evangelical background (though he's chosen to leave behind some of the embarrassing bits of it), is theologically conservative, and believes in the authority of Scripture.

Indeed, he's even come to see Scripture as the most satisfying explanation for all kinds of phenomena, from the origin of the world to the meaning of life. Sam, being a student of Scripture, can realistically examine humanity's sinfulness. He can even confute his secular friends with historical evidence for the resurrection. He knows that all of life is under the scrutiny of God's Word—not just religion, but also business, philosophy, ethics, economics, and law.

What is it, then, that makes Secular Sam so secular? Sam is secular because he expects to wake up in his bed tomorrow morning. He's never even heard of what his grandparents called the "*blessed hope*." Sam's hopes and concerns, even about his own spiritual life, are all contained in this *seculum* (the Latin word from which we get "secular")—that is, this age and this life. **Sam assumes tomorrow will be just like today, which has some serious implications for the way he thinks about today.**

Christians should have in the front of their thinking "*the blessed hope*"

Titus 2:13 "*looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus*"

1 Thess 4:17 "*We who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord*"

DEATH DOES NOT DOMINATE LIFE FOR THOSE WHO WALK WITH GOD

I. (:1-8) THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LINE OF SETH – SIN BRINGS DEATH – IMAGE OF GOD CONTINUES BUT MARRIED BY SIN AND DEATH

A. (:1-5) Tracing the History of Adam (#1) – Through the Line of Seth

1. (:1a) Structural marker – defining ten sections in the Book of Genesis
“*This is the book of the generations of Adam.*” Heb: *toledot*

Tracing the history of Adam through the line of Seth

Parunak: We now enter the third section of the eleven sections of Genesis, and the second to be introduced by the formula, “*The generations of X.*”

As we saw at the outset, this expression introduces the family history of the character to whom the previous section led up.

- 1:1-2:3 was prolog, describing the creation of the heavens and the earth.
- 2:4-4:26 was “the generations of the heavens and the earth,” the family history of the planet in its earliest years.
- 5:1-6:8 now describes the family history of Adam, bringing us down to the next major character, Noah, whose own family history then begins in 6:9 with the same heading.

This section in turn has three parts:

- 5:1-2, a short prologue pointing back to the previous sections (ch. 1-4)
- 5:3-32, a long genealogy ending in Noah’s sons
- 6:1-8, the intermarriage of the sons of God and the daughters of men, and God’s decree of judgment, setting the stage for the next section (the flood)

2. (:1b-3) Sustained Blessings in Birth of Seth – Despite the Effects of the Fall

“In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Man in the day when they were created.

“When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.”

A big part of the blessing is enabling their procreation which will be chronicled in the genealogies in this chapter.

Parunak: He named them, a new piece of revelation not made explicit before. Just as Adam demonstrated his rule over the animals by naming them, so God’s naming of Adam indicates his authority.

R. Kent Hughes: Image Bearers of God – unparalleled privilege and potential

- capacity to hear God’s Word
- charged to rule the earth in God’s stead
- possibility of an intimate spiritual relationship as children of God

Why did it take so long for Adam and Eve to bear another son??

3. (:4-5) Summary of Adam's Life Culminating in Death

a. (:4) Long Life and Additional Offspring

"Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had other sons and daughters."

Remember God's charge to mankind to be fruitful and to procreate and to fill the earth and seek to have dominion over it

A lot of children born and rapid population growth during this patriarchal period – marked by very significant patriarchs

b. (:5) Inevitable Ending

"So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years, and he died."

Establishes the pattern we are going to see for the subsequent generations

Significant phrase that dominates this chapter – at the end of the record of every patriarch's life – no matter how many years they lived; no matter how many offspring; no matter their accomplishments *"and he died"*

This short solemn note of finality still resonates down through the ages with us today; No matter what type of summary will be written about our life ... from a worldly perspective it will end with the brief capstone: *"and he died"*

Death is inevitable – apart from the return of Jesus Christ

Look at how Solomon speaks of this in the Book of Ecclesiastes

1:1-4 *"Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.*

*What advantage does man have in all his work which he does under the sun?
A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever."*

1:8 *"All things are wearisome"*

2:11 *"Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun."*

2:16 *"For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die!"*

3:1-2 *"There is an appointed time for everything ... a time to give birth and a time to die"*

3:19-21 fate of animal and of man is the same *"As one dies so dies the other"*
[yet introducing concept of eternity and the reality of accountability and God's judgment]

6:12 *"For who knows what is good for a man during his lifetime, during the few years of his*

futile life? He will spend them like a shadow. For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?"

12:6-8 *"Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed; the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it. 'Vanity of vanities,' says the Preacher, 'all is vanity.'"*

B. (:6-8) Tracing the History of Seth (#2) --

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

Continues the pattern established by his father Adam that we are going to see from generation to generation

Parunak: The question is, are we justified in adding these up to get a strict chronology (as did Bishop Ussher to get creation at 4004 BC)? Or might there be gaps that could yield a much more distant creation, closer to the requirements of modern anthropology?

Problem of Age of Earth – how to treat these genealogies?

Possibility of gaps ... but no reference to that here ... probably best to treat it as it is presented; Introducing gaps does not give enough time to alter the conversation over the age of the earth ... so what is the advantage of that conjecture??

Thomas Constable: The careful recording of the age of each man when he fathered the next man in the list strongly suggests that this list is complete

II. (:9-20) THE DEPRESSING REPETITION OF THE CYCLE OF LIFE AND DEATH -- DEATH IS INEVITABLE

A. (:9-11) Tracing the History of Enosh (#3) (fragile, frail)

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

B. (:12-14) Tracing the History of Kenan (#4)

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

C. (:15-17) Tracing the History of Mahalalel (#5)

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

D. (:18-20) Tracing the History of Jared (#6) (servant)

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

III. (:21-27) THE UNIQUE BLESSING FOR THOSE WHO UNIQUELY WALK WITH GOD –

GOD’S GRACE BRINGS LIFE

A. (:21-24) Tracing the History of Enoch (#7) (dedication)

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

Significant break from the repetitive pattern – no death recorded for Enoch –
Cf. Elijah who was taken up to heaven alive by God – **2 Kings 2:1-12**

Not a typical designation of an ordinary saint

he “*walked with God*” – follows after what we learned about the godly line of Seth at the end of chap. 4 where they began to *call upon the name of the Lord* – builds upon that foundation

Significance of this being the 7th in the line of 10 generations detailed here

365 years – full year of days – representing fullness of privilege

Note that both Enock and Lamech were names that cropped up in the ungodly line of the seed of the serpent recorded in **chap. 4:18**

Lamech was number 7 in the ungodly line – by way of contrast

Illustration – Earl Weaver: Speaking to an outspoken Christian on the team = Pat Kelly –
“I would rather you walk with the based loaded.”

What does “walking with God” involve?

1. **Faith** = the NT commentary on this phrase

Parunak: Moses writes that Enoch “*walked with God*,” but Hebrews follows the LXX in replacing “walked with God” with the expression, “pleased God,” not a bad paraphrase.

2. **Friendship/Fellowship** – there is an **intimacy** here; takes us back to the pre-Fall garden experience where the Lord walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening
John 15:14 “You are my friends if you do what I command you.”

3. **Faithfulness** – for Jesus – this meant completing the mission and the work the Father had given Him to do
1 Cor. 4:2 “*It is required in stewards that one be found faithful ... or trustworthy*”

Cf. **Jude 14**; Enoch was frustrated by the ungodliness all about him. Prophecied about the return of Christ and the coming judgment
Importance of serving as a **preacher of righteousness** to his generation – which was wicked and ungodly as we will see in chap. 6

The rest of the world was living like **Secular Sam** – remember in the days of Noah people expected their life of debauchery to just continue on so that they could party the next day like they had the previous day – sort of like the infield at the Preakness Stakes yesterday

Timing: God took Enoch about halfway between Adam and the flood

Brian Borgman: In this man’s life, life itself was the last word; not death; no grave stone

DEATH DOES NOT DOMINATE LIFE FOR THOSE WHO WALK WITH GOD

B. (:25-27) Tracing the History of Methuselah (#8) – Unique Old Age (the man of the spear)

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

Youngest antediluvian had the son who lived the longest

Lamech died before Methuselah died – very interesting
Died in the year of the Flood

Parunak: Individual Lives.—Why would people live so long in these early years?

Two answers.

1. After the flood, ages decrease dramatically. This suggests that the efficient cause of the long lives lies in antediluvian climate and environment; perhaps the waters stored up in the heavens, released at the flood (the so-called “vapor barrier” theory), reduced UV and cosmic radiation reaching the earth, thus retarding aging processes.

2. The telic cause is no doubt God’s merciful desire that Adam be able to communicate widely to his posterity the history of the garden, his sin, and God’s promise. He could personally have taught all of his descendants down through Lamech (see chart on the handout). The knowledge of God in these first two millennia was not handed down through countless generations, but known at first or second hand from those who actually experienced the foundational events.

[plus you have depletion of gene pool over the years – mankind not getting stronger but weaker;

Impact of the curse of sin took some time to fully pervade every aspect of man's nature]

IV. (:28-32) THE HOPE ANTICIPATED IN THE LINE OF NOAH – GOD'S PROMISE BRINGS HOPE

A. (:28-31) Tracing the History of Lamech (#9)

“And Lamech lived one hundred and eighty-two years

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

Adds a significant editorial comment in **vs. 29** -- name Noah means *rest*

Man looking for rest from his work (relief from the curse, comfort) – understanding the curse that the Lord put upon the ground and its impact on the difficulty of providing for the physical needs of our family

Expression of messianic hope

Bob Deffinbaugh: The contrast spiritually between the two lines is obvious. It can easily be illustrated by the two ‘Lamechs’ of chapters 4 and 5. Lamech (the son of Methushael, 4:18) of Cain's lineage was the initiator of polygamy (4:19). Worse than this he was a murderer who boasted of his crime (4:23) and made light of God's words to Cain (4:24).

The Lamech of chapter 5 (the son of Methuselah and the father of Noah) was a godly man. The naming of his son revealed his understanding of the fall of man and the curse of God upon the ground (cf. 5:29). It also indicated his faith that God would deliver man from the curse through the seed of Eve. I believe Lamech understood that this deliverance would specifically come through the son God had given him.

777 – attracts notice to evil Lamech's vengeful claim uttered in chap. 4

B. (:32) Tracing the History of Noah (#10)

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

Borgman: Not the ultimate seed of the woman

Will be used to bring salvation to the line of Seth – it gets down to just 8 people

Shem – name, reputation

Ham – disgraced son, father of many of the enemies; synonymous with Egypt

Japheth – to extend, to enlarge

CONCLUSION:

Is our life today no different than that of Secular Sam? Do we get up every day expecting just to live out one more day like yesterday until we are inevitably confronted with death ...

Or is our life characterized by the phrase “walking with God”

- Walking in faith
- Walking in friendship/fellowship – involving an intimacy
- Walking in faithfulness

The ungodly actually walk in fear of death – whether they acknowledge it or not ... *it is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment* (Heb. 9:27)

Heb. 2:15 “and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives”

DEATH DOES NOT DOMINATE LIFE FOR THOSE WHO WALK WITH GOD

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

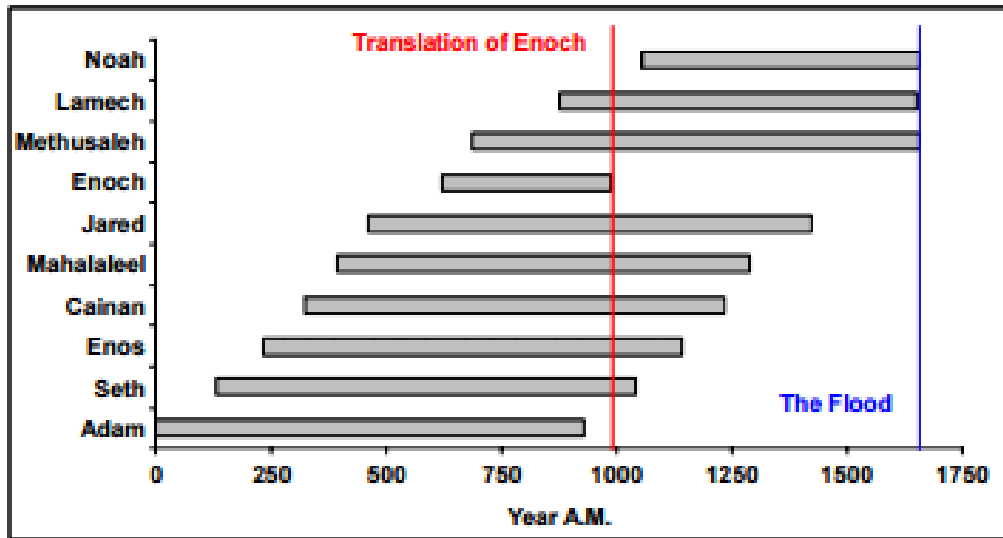
- 1) In what sense has the Fall marred or corrupted the image and likeness of God in mankind?
- 2) Why did God have Adam and Eve wait so many years before the birth of Seth?
- 3) How could Enoch’s “*walk with God*” be so much superior to that of other believers during this very long expanse of time?
- 4) What promises of God give you hope?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Leupold: Chronological Table – Adam to Noah

	Age at birth of first son	Year of birth	Years after birth of son	Total Age	Year of Death
Adam	130	1	800	930	930
Seth	105	130	807	912	1042
Enos	90	235	815	905	1140
Kenan	70	325	840	910	1235
Mahalalel	65	395	830	895	1290
Jared	162	460	800	962	1422
Enoch	65	622	300	365	987
Methuselah	187	687	782	969	1656
Lamech	182	874	595	777	1651
Noah	500	1056	450	950	2006

Parunak:



Thomas Constable: "The author's return to the theme of God's "blessing" man (cf. Genesis 5:2) is also a part of his overall scheme to cast God's purposes for man in terms that will recall a father's care for his children. Throughout the remainder of the Book of Genesis, a recurring theme is that of the father's blessing his children (Genesis 9:26-27; Genesis 27:27; Genesis 48:15; Genesis 49:1-28). In keeping with such a theme, the author shows at each crucial turning point in the narrative that God himself renewed his blessing to the next generation of sons (Genesis 1:28; Genesis 5:2; Genesis 9:1; Genesis 12:3; Genesis 24:11). Seen as a whole, the picture that emerges is that of a loving father insuring the future well-being of his children through the provision of an inherited blessing. In this way the author has laid a theological foundation for the rest of Scripture. God's original plan of blessing for all humanity, though thwarted by human folly, will nevertheless be restored through the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15), the seed of Abraham (Genesis 12:3), and the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Genesis 49:8-12; cf. Revelation 5:5-13). It is on this same foundation that the apostle Paul built his view of Jesus as the one through whom God has "blessed us" (Ephesians 1:3) and "adopted us as his sons" (Genesis 5:5) so that "we have obtained an inheritance" (Genesis 5:11, KJV) from the one we may call "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15)." [Note: Sailhamer, " Genesis ," pp70-71.]

Brian Borgman: The Reign of Death and the Hope of Life

2 Significant notes of hope in the midst of this mournful refrain "*and he died*"
How many of you skip over the reading of the genealogies in Scripture;

Genealogies in Scripture serve a number of purposes:

Not used to determine the age of the earth; often structured for artistic and theological purposes rather than chronological purposes; an open genealogy
Doesn't necessarily mean the immediate biological son; just ancestor or descendent;

Ten generations before the flood and ten generations after the flood – sets the flood as the great divide between Adam and Abraham

Noah and Abraham are the significant covenant participants; the beginning of a new race

Same structure in each of the ten except for the cases of Enoch and Noah – they embody the hope of life and salvation

Ages are remarkable – the antediluvians – lived before the flood; these are real ages; some of the ages also have symbolic significance; sin permeating more and more throughout human life and nature

Moses relied on a written source for this data; “the book of the generations”

Re-echo of creation account

Equality of men and women as image bearers; fundamental gender distinction

Transferring of the image and likeness of God through procreation

The Fall didn't destroy the image of God; it is marred and damaged but still there;

Capital punishment after the Flood instituted on the basis of this image bearing

Rhythmic pattern of chap. 1 -2 “God said and it was so”; now we have a mournful tone repeating itself;

Long life a covenant blessing from God

Execution of the curse fully carried out

3 Applications:

1) **Sin brings death** – Rom. 5:12 – come to grips with this reality – you are going to die; you won't escape it; our lives are held by a thread; you had better be ready

2) **God's grace brings life** – we don't have to live under the fear of death

3) **God's promise brings hope** --

TEXT: Genesis 6:1-8

TITLE: TICKING TIME BOMB

BIG IDEA:

PERVERSE DEMONIC ACTIVITY INTENSIFIES AS SOCIETY DEGENERATES TO THE POINT WHERE GOD MUST POUR OUT HIS WRATH IN JUDGMENT

INTRODUCTION:

If you like action movies like I do, no doubt you have seen many times the scenario where the bomb squad is called in to try to defuse a ticking time bomb. The red light counting down the remaining minutes and seconds flashes on the device as the experts try to work their magic under intense pressure. The beads of sweat pouring down from the forehead make it difficult to see. The expression on everyone's face is one of panic and horror. The effects of the imminent explosion would cause unbelievable devastation. Here in Genesis Chapter 6 as we approach the devastation of the universal Flood of Noah's day, we see that there are only **120 years left** to tick down. That might sound like a lot of time. But in this case there will be no efforts at diffusion and no escaping the catastrophic impact of God's judgment. The time clock has been set and this bomb is going to go off. That much is certain no matter how you answer the interpretative challenges of this much-debated passage.

I have come through a journey these past couple of weeks of wrestling with the two major options regarding the identification of the "*sons of God*" in vs. 1. Caught up in the **context** of what I have been preaching the past several weeks in chapters 4-5 of Genesis ... I was starting to gravitate towards the view that the opposing lines of Seth and Cain would dictate a warning against the corruptive influence of mixed spiritual marriages. Certainly, there is much truth in that principle. The Bible warns time and again that believers are not to be joined with unbelievers in the intimacy of marriage. In addition to the argument from the immediate context (chap. 4 detailing the line of Cain and chap. 5 the line of Seth), there were several other points to be made in favor of this popular position:

- It avoids the difficulties of wrestling with angelic involvement in human propagation – a real DNA quagmire (cf. **Matt. 22:30** – angels don't marry) – difficult for us to understand – caused Ben Scripture to adopt this position
- The judgment that God brings is directed towards mankind rather than towards fallen angels (although the NT passages may shed light on that aspect -- [2 Pet. 2:4-6 – Jude vs 6 ff](#))
- The context emphasizes the Spirit of God striving against fallen humanity – defined as flesh – rather than fighting the principalities and powers of the hidden realm of demonic spiritual warfare
- But why would the offspring of such mixed marriages be described in such unusual terms??

But upon further reflection, I find stronger arguments in favor of the position that fallen angels here are either directly involved or possessing human male bodies and involved in some very unusual activity of perverse propagation.

- This view follows a biblically accepted definition of “*sons of God*” as recorded in several passages in the book of Job – where angels are sons in the sense that they are directly created by God; Jesus is the unique Son of God – not created; and it is also true that spiritual believers are identified as sons by virtue of adoption and by virtue of the new birth; However, it would seem odd to define fallen angels as “sons of God” so it seems preferable to me to pinpoint the time of their fall as co-existent with this lustful activity in accordance with the passages in Jude and 2 Peter – even though this may have some theological implications regarding the doctrine of angels

Now there was a day when the *sons of God* came to present themselves before the Lord, Satan also came among them (**Job 1:6**).

Again there was a day when the *sons of God* came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came among them to present himself before the Lord (**Job 2:1**).

When the morning stars sang together, and all *the sons of God* shouted for joy? (**Job 38:7**, cf. Psalm 89:6; Daniel 3:25).

Timeframe for Job: maybe even in days of Abraham or earlier

- Secondly, and most importantly – the identification of the “*daughters of men*” seems to me to be the clearest point in the passage – from vs. 1 we can see that mankind in general is in view; so it would be a stretch to try to limit the definition of the same term in the very next verse to just the ungodly line of Cain
- Thirdly, there is no assumption in the narrative that there is any type of uniformity of godliness or wickedness in the two different lines; only that the seed of the woman is going to come eventually from the line of Seth rather than Cain

[All early sources refer to the "sons of heaven" as angels. From the third century BCE onwards, references are found in the Enochic literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls the (Genesis Apocryphon, the Damascus Document, 4Q180), Jubilees, the Testament of Reuben, 2 Baruch, Josephus, and the book of Jude (compare with 2 Peter 2). For example: 1 Enoch 7:2 "And when the angels, (3) the sons of heaven, beheld them, they became enamoured of them, saying to each other, Come, let us select for ourselves wives from the progeny of men, and let us beget children." Some Christian apologists, such as Tertullian and especially Lactantius, shared this opinion.

[Wikipedia](#)]

In both views, there is no question that Satan is launching an aggressive attack against the ultimate victory of the seed of the woman ... so it would not be strange in this context to see him unleash the forces of his dedicated henchmen – the demons under his control.

Aside: Some see a distinction between fallen angels and demons – with demons being the disembodied spirits of the dead Nephilim – seeking a body to possess – so they would not use these terms interchangeably; they would say angels manifest themselves with a body as opposed to seeking to possess somebody else’s body – I’m still using the terms somewhat interchangeably

[The Nephilim explanation for the origin of the demons is partly the result of a misunderstanding of who exactly are the “*spirits in prison*” in **1 Peter 3:19** (see also Jude 6). Many misunderstand

the “spirits in prison” to be all of the fallen angels who rebelled against God. If all of the fallen angels are imprisoned, then there must be an alternate explanation for the existence of demons; thus, the need for the Nephilim explanation. However, clearly, not all of the fallen angels are imprisoned. Satan, the leader of the angelic rebellion against God, is not imprisoned. Why would God allow the rebel leader to remain free but then confine the angels who followed Satan in the rebellion? No, it makes more sense to understand the “spirits in prison” as the fallen angels who participated in an additional rebellion, viz., the sons-of-God/daughters-of-men incident. The fallen angels who mated with human females are the ones who are imprisoned. **There is no solid biblical reason to reject the idea that the demons are the same beings as the fallen angels.** <https://www.gotquestions.org/Nephilim-demons.html>]

Obviously, we are just skimming the surface of the complexities of these various arguments. I would say that I respect both positions and am not dogmatic here – you may very well choose to disagree with me. But that is going to determine the direction I take in our sermon this morning.

PERVERSE DEMONIC ACTIVITY INTENSIFIES AS SOCIETY DEGENERATES TO THE POINT WHERE GOD MUST POUR OUT HIS WRATH IN JUDGMENT

I. (:1-4) DEMONIZATION OF MARRIAGE AND ITS IMPACT – UNUSUAL PERVERSE PROPAGATION THAT CORRUPTS SOCIETY

A. (:1-2) Demonic Activity

1. (:1) Population Explosion Provided Opportunity

*“Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land,”
“and daughters were born to them,”*

Man generically (adam) is multiplying over the face of the earth (adamah); play on words;

Purity harder to control and maintain as the sphere of population rapidly grows

Remember overall context of battle between the seed of the woman and the seed of Satan from Gen. 3:15 – how is God going to ultimately be victorious? How is Satan going to try to frustrate God’s plan for history?

Again the daughters of men here used in generic sense -- not limited to either the line of Seth or of Cain – this is describing normal procreation – “after its kind” = important biblical command – established in Gen. 1 – all things are supposed to produce after their kind – not some strange mixture of strange flesh

2. (:2) Perverse Pursuit of Lust

a. Motivation

“that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful;”

“sons of God” are distinct from the “men” mentioned in vs. 1

the writer of Genesis states that the sons of God saw that the daughters of humankind were “beautiful” (Heb. tob). This connects the daughters of humankind in 6:2 with chapter 4. There, in the genealogy of Cain, the sons of Lamech are named and something is said about each one’s impact on society; for example, Tubal-cain was the forger of all implements of bronze and iron.

Tubal-cain's sister, Naamah, is named, but nothing is said about her. This should make the reader wonder why she was mentioned at all, especially since women were viewed as lower-class citizens. Interestingly, her name means "beautiful." This is not the same word used in 6:2, but we have already seen that passages do not need to use the same terms to be parallel.

The word tob, "beautiful" or "good," in 6:2 sets up another connection with a statement in 3:6: "The woman saw that the tree was good [tob]." The couple in the garden fell into judgment because they took the prerogative that belongs only to God — deciding what is good. Genesis 6:2, therefore, is **presented as a reenactment of the Fall**. [saw, good, took] The godly line, who were supposed to walk with God, see the daughters of humankind from the ungodly line and decide for themselves that they are good.

Thomas Howe –

Christian Research Journal

<http://www.equip.org/article/who-were-the-sons-of-god-in-genesis-6/>

b. Methodology

"and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose."

Could be violence involved if women or their parents were not willing;
But apparently society was so corrupt that the women willingly gave themselves to these angelic beings who just from an outward appearance evaluation would have much to commend themselves in terms of strength and stature – God's judgment is going to hold mankind responsible for these unspiritual decisions

Satan here is being super aggressive – his goal is to establish some type of super-race that can compete with and ultimately defeat the seed of the woman

B. (:3) Death Sentence

1. God at the End of His Rope

"Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh;'"

Borgman: Words only have meaning as they fit into a context; no inherent meaning
Specific nuance of striving is in question; but what is not in question is that God is going to withdraw in some sense – 2 Options:

- *Contend* -- Struggling to bring man to conviction and repentance
- *Remain* -- Or spirit will no longer remain and what is left is death

Both concepts are true

Vast distinction between Holy Spirit and humans defined as mere flesh – even the offspring of this unusual half breed does not rise above the level of designation as flesh

The Holy Spirit is exalted far above such creatures and should be worshiped and respected and obeyed as such

2. Extent of Man's Rope Defined

"nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years."

Some take this as a limitation of man's approximate age – up to this time the patriarchs lived extremely long lives ... however, even after the Flood we see some long lives

Better to take this time designation as the setting of the ticking time bomb we described earlier

Quite a long period of warning – during this time, God would send his prophetic voice of warning of judgment in the person of Noah = preacher of righteousness – but no response of repentance

God's patience and forbearance do not extend without limits

C. (:4) Degeneration of Society

1. Presence of Nephilim

*“The Nephilim were on the earth in those days,
and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men,”*

one of the most difficult aspects of this passage – seems best to equate them with the offspring defined below as mighty men and men of renown ... yet it seems like they are present on the earth before this evil propagation takes place and at subsequent times in history – so this is a strategy that Satan re-uses

– yet they also seem to be distinct from the *sons of God* here

Genesis 6 and **Numbers 13:33** are the only passages that mention the *Nephilim*

Fallen ones; giants – to fell a tree – are they the fellers or the ones fallen??

Satanic attempt to take over the earth by this new class – the product was human (at least half breeds) = men of renown

2. Propagation of Extraordinary Offspring

“and they [sons of God] bore children to them [daughters of men].”

Significance of propagating “*after its kind*” – can't mix the kinds; concept of “strange flesh”

Judgment came to all animals as well

[Maybe dinosaurs were some type of cross breed that God destroyed at the flood as well]

3. Prominence of These Freaks of Nature

“Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”

Parunak: Who were they? Three terms are used to describe them.

- “*Giants*,” lit. nefilim, “fallen ones.” Cf. GKC %84a.1 p. 231, like ‘asir, mashiach, “a passive meaning to denote duration in a state” (for defective hireq, see nasi’, nesi’im, Ex 34:31). The name may denote their half-heavenly origin; people saw them as divine beings fallen to earth.

- “*Mighty men of old*,” gibborim. A standard term for a military hero. These half-breeds were mighty fighters, with superhuman strength. “Of old,” the legendary ones; cf. Ezek 26:19-20, esp. its association with destruction by a flood.

• “*men of renown*,” lit. “men of name.” It is God’s prerogative to make a name for himself (2 Sam 7:23), to bring glory to himself. People who seek fame often run afoul of the Lord’s commands. Note:

o **Gen 11:4**, this was the intention of those who built the tower of Babel.

o **Num 16:2**, those who rose against Moses in the rebellion of Korah were “*men of name*.”

o **1 Chr 5:23-26**, so were the children of Manasseh, “*famous men*,” who transgressed against the God of their fathers.

o **Ps 49:11-13** is God’s general verdict on such.

II. (:5-8) DESTRUCTION OF WICKED HUMANITY BY A GRIEVING GOD – WITH THE EXCEPTIONAL PROVISION OF GRACE TOWARDS NOAH

A. (:5-6) Man’s Wickedness Grieves the Heart of God

1. (:5) Evaluation of Man’s Wickedness

a. Actions

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth,”

What does God see when He looks at our world today?

b. Intentions

“and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

Parunak: The universality of the corruption is expressed in two ways: “*only evil*,” so that there is nothing good, and “*continually*,” so that there is no period when the man is not controlled by it.

• Man’s sin is intensive. It pervades his individual thought, his purposes, plans, desires.

• Cf. **Jer 17:9**, “*the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*”

• Cf. **Mark 7:21-23**, “*from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness*”.

2. (:6) Emotional Response of God

a. Sorrowful

“And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth,”

Presents some interesting theological challenges --

But what about the Scriptures that say that God is not a man that He should repent

Open Theism: In short, open theism says that since God and humans are free, God’s knowledge is dynamic and God’s providence flexible. While several versions of traditional theism picture

God's knowledge of the future as a singular, fixed trajectory, open theism sees it as a plurality of branching possibilities, with some possibilities becoming settled as time moves forward. Thus, the future as well as God's knowledge of it is open (hence "open" theism). God is omniscient" about "settled" reality, but the future that God "leaves open" can be known only as open "possibility" without specific foreknowledge.

Parunak: When God is said to “*repent*,” the term has an emotional, not a volitional, sense. It describes the pain that God feels over something that has happened.

1 Sam. 15:11; clarified in vs. 29

b. Grieving

“and He was grieved in His heart.”

B. (:7) Man’s Wickedness Demands Divine Judgment

1. Extent of the Judgment

“And the LORD said, ‘I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky;’”

2. Emotion of the Judgment

“for I am sorry that I have made them.”

C. (:8) God’s Grace Prevails Over Man’s Wickedness

“But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.”

To escape the wrath of God you must be the recipient of the grace of God – found by faith in Christ

CONCLUSION:

Henry Morris – 1976 -- studied Scripture and identified 15 characteristics that will prevail as we near moment of Christ’s return as in days of Noah:

- 1- Preoccupation with physical appetites – commercials about exercise equipment
- 2- Rapid advance in technology
- 3 - Grossly materialistic attitude and interest – millionaires looking for more and more
- 4 - Uniformitarian philosophy which will become worldwide moving towards one world govt.
- 5 - Inordinate devotion to pleasure and comfort – “Temptation is fun; giving in is better”
- 6 - No concern for God in conduct or belief
- 7 - Disregard for sacredness of the marriage relationship – we can’t even figure out who should be married to whom
- 8 – Rejection of Word of God

- 9 – Population Explosion
- 10 – Widespread violence
- – mother killing her children; children killing parents
- 11 – Corruption throughout society
- 12 – Preoccupation with illicit sexual activity
- 13 – Widespread words and thoughts of blasphemy
- 14 – Organized satanic activity
- 15 – Lots of blood and lots of sex in our movies

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can we resist the natural temptation to judge after the flesh in accordance with appearance?
- 2) Why aren't fallen angels continually producing Nephilim?
- 3) What are the limits of God's patience and forbearance with our present society and its wickedness and depravity?
- 4) In what ways can we identify the characteristics of today with those of Noah's days?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: "The generations of Noah" extends from 6:9 to the end of ch 9; 10:1 introduces the generations of the sons of Noah. The section is chiastically structured, around 8:1, "God remembered Noah." Basic sections:

Noah's Sons in their Moral Environment	6:9-11	9:18-29
Divine Observations and Monologue to Noah	6:12-21	8:21-9:17
Noah's Obedience	6:22	8:18-20
Divine Monologue to Noah	7:1-4	8:15-17
Noah and the Animals	7:5-16	8:6-14
Actions by the Waters	7:17-24	8:1b-5
God Remembered Noah	8:1a	

Constable: There are three major views about the identity of the sons of God.

1. They were fallen angels who married women. [Note: The Book of Enoch (a second century B.C. pseudepigrapha); Philo; Josephus; Justin Martyr; Tertullian; Cyprian; Ambrose; Pember; Clarence Larkin The Spirit World; Henry Morris, The Genesis Record; C. Fred Dickason, Angels: Elect and Evil; M. R. DeHaan, 508 Answers to Bible Questions; Boice, 1:245-48; R. S. Hendel, **"When the Sons of God Cavorted with the Daughters of Men,"** Bible Review3:2 (Summer1987):8-13 , 37; Merrill, p23; Wenham, pp140 , 146; et al.] Arguments in favor of this view follow with responses.

- a. The term **"sons of God" as it occurs here in Hebrew refers only to angels in the Old Testament** ([Job 1:6](#); [Job 2:1](#); [Job 38:7](#); et al.). Response: Angels do not reproduce ([Matthew 22:30](#)).
- b. [2 Peter 2:4-5](#) and [Jude 1:6-7](#) appear to identify angels with this incident. Response: There are no other references to angels in the context here in Genesis. These New Testament passages probably refer to the fall of Satan.
- c. If God could impregnate Mary, spirit beings may be able to do the same thing to human women. Response: Spirit beings cannot do everything that God can do.
2. They were godly Sethites who married ungodly women. I prefer this view. Arguments in favor of this view follow with responses.
- a. The Old Testament often refers to the godly as God's sons (e.g, [Exodus 4:22](#)). Response: This would have to be an exception to the technical use of **"sons of God" as a reference to angels in the Old Testament**.
- b. Moses had already established the concept of a godly line in Genesis ([Genesis 4:26](#)).
- c. Sonship based on election is common in the Old Testament.
- d. Warnings against marriages between believers and unbelievers are common in the Pentateuch.
3. They were dynastic rulers who married women. [Note: Merediith G. Klein, **"Divine Kingship and Genesis 6:1-4,"** Westminster Theological Journal 24 (1962):187-204; John Skinner, Genesis; Kitchen, "The Old . . .," p4; et al. See also Watson E. Mills, "Sons of God: The Roman View," Biblical Illustrator (Fall1983):37-39.] Fallen angels (demons) may have indwelt or at least controlled them. [Note: Ross, " Genesis ," p36; Waltke, Genesis , pp116-17.] Arguments in favor of this view and responses follow.
- a. Ancient Near Eastern literature often called kings sons of gods.
- b. The Old Testament refers to administrators (e.g, judges) as gods. Response: Scripture never regards them as descendants of deities, as pagan ancient Near Eastern literature does.
- c. This story is similar to Babylonian antediluvian stories.

Whitcomb: Genesis Overview

Demons possessed human males to dominate sinful human females; man functioning almost like an animal;

120 years – visual aid of how to be saved in view of an impending global catastrophe

Flat bottom barge – designed just to float in the water

Shem is the youngest of the three even though he is mentioned first because he is the most important;

Every kind reproduce after its kind – tenfold declaration in Gen. 1; humans never become angels or gods; angels are angels forever – never become human or divine; angels can look like men in Gen 18 – but they are not genetically part of the human race

Satan wanted Eve to think that she did not have to be blocked into just being human but she could elevate herself to be like a god

Sons of God = directly created by God – all the angels are sons of God; Adam was son of God; then why is Jesus called Son of God – was He created? John 3:16 spells out that Jesus is different; unique, special Son;

You can't have demons marrying human women; had to possess human men;

Genetic giants – enormous in size and depravity; after the Flood and after the Tower of Babel, men dispersed all over the world – recessive genes of giantism began to reappear – Num. 13 –

we have seen the Nephilim

Goliath was 9.5 feet tall

Something very bad is going on here

If you are demon possessed (doesn't happen involuntarily – you ask for it) then all of your actions and intentions can be characterized as evil

Anthropomorphism – God was sorry he had made man – not surprised how man turned out;

Vast heresy today: God doesn't even know the future – depends on what decisions man will make

Is God really in control of the world?

Joseph in **Gen. 50** “You meant it for evil but God meant it for good”

Voddie Baucham: Noah and the Flood (Chaps. 6-8)

God's awful and terrible wrath poured out on sin; He floods the entire earth; every air-breathing thing not on the ark dies; this is about judgment; Yes, there is salvation in the midst of judgment; but don't miss the judgment

When the sin is out there – we want God to execute justice;

When the sin is in here, we say “That's not fair;” we demand mercy; we are not really that bad

Brian Borgman: The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men

Preliminary Observations:

1) notoriously difficult passage

2) the literature on this passage is legion; So much material available on this text

Try to find the best representatives of each position

3) Each of the 3 positions is viable and plausible presentation; Waltke says each can be defended from the Hebrew grammar; each position also has weaknesses

This passage is humbling because of its difficulties and our own sinful limitations

MacArthur is way too dogmatic on this

Big Questions:

1) Who are the Sons of God in vs. 2 – that's the crisis point of the interpretation

2) Who are the daughters of men

3) What does vs. 3 mean and how does it fit in??

What is it that God's Spirit will no longer do?

What is the significance of the 120 years?

4) Who are the Nephilim – are they the same as the mighty men mentioned in vs. 4

Satan is trying to destroy the seed of the woman to destroy the lineage of the Messiah

3 Views:

1) Cosmologically Mixed Race View (traditional view) – the demonic angelic view

Sons of God are supernatural beings (Job 1:6, etc.)

Daughters of men are simply human beings

Offspring are giants = Nephilim = mighty men of renown

Leads to increased violence on earth – notice that it is humanity judged and not the angels

2 Pet 2:4-5 – this is the sin Peter is talking about

Jude 7 -- says something familiar – angels that did not keep their angelic domain; the angels engaged in gross immorality

Apocryphal Book of First Enoch supports this

There are some variations of this view:

- Don't directly cohabit but possess human beings who produce the giants

Objections:

- Strange to have the genealogies of Cain and Seth and then introduce angels
- Matt. 22:30 – angels don't marry; but angels do take on human form and participate in human things like eating
- The judgment of the Flood directed at humans and not angels – that's why we have the other NT texts that focus on judgment on angels??

2) Sociologically Mixed Race View – Divine King View (not as straightforward)

Sons of God = despotic kings, nobles, aristocrats who were polygamous – seizing women as they pleased; creating large harems; seeking to make a name for themselves

Their progeny perpetuate their pride, tyranny and violence

Create whole generation of Lamechites

Title sons of God used in extra biblical references in this fashion

Ps. 82:6 – sarcastic reference of God to human judges

Meredith Kline

Primary weakness:

- To assume that readers would mean this seems a little much
- If you read Ps. 82:6 – calls them gods; not sons of gods

Waltke combines view 1 and 2 – tyrants were demon possessed

3) Religiously Mixed Race View – intermarriage of godly line of Seth with line of Cain

Objection: then how in vs. 4 does the product of 2 human beings end up producing some sort of DNA that produces giants

The Nephilim mentioned in vs. 4 are not said to be the offspring of this union; but the mighty men of renown were the offspring

Strength of this view:

- Maintains the flow of the context – lineage of Cain and Seth without imposing demons or dynastic kings into the mix
- Sons of God would not be an unusual way to depict godly line

Real problem is identifying daughters of men – but first mention in vs. 1 has to be generic humanity; but next reference has to narrow it to line of Cain

Judgment that comes is on humanity, not on demons

Flows with idea that seed of woman is being threatened – on verge of spiritual and moral extinction

God intervenes via judgment of the Flood and Noah keeps the godly lineage going

Some reformers held this view

Defended by John Murray and Palmer Robertson and many others

Vs. 1 – Population Explosion

Wickedness of man was multiplying on the earth;

Parallel to Eve: she saw the fruit was good; she reached out her hand and took it – same 3

operative words here

To designate fallen angels as sons of God would be very strange;

We have 2 genealogies – contrasting lineage of God (Seth’s line) and lineage of man

- Just generic man??
- Sinful line of Cain – narrowing the contrast – bringing daughters of men into alignment of line of Cain

Sin = spiritually mixed marriages; being unequally yoked

Satan is busy undermining the seed of the woman

Vs. 3 – “*my spirit shall not strive*” – reference to Holy Spirit

“*because he is flesh*” – a clue that we are not talking about fallen angels here

Man is frail, mortal, fallen – Fall is permeating thru humanity to such a degree that God says that

He has had it up to here

Days set at 120 years – what is this judgment?

- Shortening the life span??
- Spirit will not continue to contend – man given 120 years from here to the Flood = opportunity to repent

Vs. 4 – *Nephilim* – they are all dead; but what about use in Num. 14:33 means “*fallen ones*” – all the inhabitants described as giants there – just a metaphor – they are like the big giants we used to hear about; they all died in the flood

“*the mighty men of old, men of reknown*” – Cain has son Enoch and names city after him; men of name or reputation; like at Tower of Babel – trying to make a name for themselves – represent increased corruption due to intermarriage of godly line with ungodly line; contribute to violence on earth; their offspring does not honor the Lord but contributes to increased corruption that leads to God’s judgment

Application:

- Godly line under attack by Satan who seeks to destroy the seed of the woman; his plan is to devour this seed
- In mixed marriages the godly line does not bring up the ungodly line but vice versa; depravity gravity; Deut. 7 – they will turn your sons away from following me; people of God must only marry within the faith; do not be bound together with unbelievers
- Sometimes spouse might convert – but don’t make the exception the rule
- God had a purpose for Samson = to kill Philistines – can’t follow the example of Samson; the end does not justify the means
- Save yourself from the heartache – marry only in the Lord

Ben Scripture: Who were the “*sons of God*” mentioned in **Genesis 6:2-4**?

The Bible tells us that in the days of Enosh, “men began to call upon the name of the LORD (Gen 4:26).” This interpretation explains that it was these men who were being referred to as the “sons (children) of God” in Genesis 6, in the same sense that John describes those who are born of God (John 1:12-13). Paul also explains the true identity of the sons/children of God in Romans 8:14 and 9:4-8, even applying that description to the Israelites of the Old Testament times (cf. Moses’ description, Deut 32:5-6). So, in Genesis 6, if the “sons of God” are men, what is happening is God’s people, the believers we might say, are intermarrying with unbelievers. The tragic result was the dilution of the influence of righteousness in society until, in the days of Noah, God said to Noah, “you alone I have seen righteous before Me in this generation (Gen 7:1).” This interpretation has the advantage of not having to explain how demons, spirit-beings

with no material substance (e.g. no DNA or cellular components), could procreate with human beings. It also is consistent with and forms the foundation for a principle taught throughout God's Word, the extreme importance of marrying only within the family of God (Exo 34:11-16, 2nd Cor 6:14-18). The Bible relates many tragic lessons from the lives of those who did not heed God's prohibition of "spiritual intermarriage," e.g. Esau, Samson, Solomon. If the "sons of God" were indeed men, Genesis 6 teaches us the sobering lesson that mankind didn't require the "help" of demons to plunge into such debauchery and violence that God said of Man, "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually (Gen 6:5)."

I have come to think that the best interpretation of the "*sons of God*" in **Genesis 6** is that they were human beings, descendants of Enosh. What concerned me most about the "fallen angel" interpretation, I must admit, comes from my background in biology, and more specifically genetics. The idea of angels which are purely spiritual beings (they have no corporeal substance) being able to produce offspring with human beings (who have material bodies requiring material egg and sperm for reproduction) seemed untenable to me. Demon possession is one thing, demons creating new life forms is quite different. So even with the notion that somehow such offspring were indeed "different," i.e. they were giants, I do not think such procreation is possible in God's creation, especially given the uniqueness and importance of the bearer of the divine image, Man.

David Thompson:

2 Pet. 2:4-6 – Jude vs 6 ff – statement about something terrible that angels did

God reaches a point where He says "I have had enough; going to pour out my wrath on the evil and wickedness of man"

Prophecy of Jesus: another pouring out of wrath at end times; culture will be like it was in days of Noah

There are limits to how long God will put up with sin

6 Judgment Details:

1) vs. 1-2 a lot of Activity of Demons

"*sons of God*" – unusual activity – often used to refer to angelic hosts (cf. Job); NT confirms that there was a point in time when angels got involved in immorality and were judged;

These were fallen angels who indwelt men and women

Just before the wrath of God comes, demonic activity will increase; they will look like normal people

a. activity took place when the population was large and women were plentiful; spiritual decay and social depravity; when you grow keep track of purity; lots of oppty for demon possession

b. sight of beautiful women prompted the demons to involve themselves in sexual immorality; power of lust; look at fall of King David and Solomon

c. took wives of whomever they chose – no women who were standing up for God; went after strange flesh; they had their pick

increase in Satanism and occultism associated with increase of beautiful women
pornography that dominates our culture is work of demons

2) vs. 3 – the Warning of the Lord

Used men like Noah as preachers of righteousness to provide a clear warning;

Our culture probably doesn't have 120 years left;

Time of grace is about over;

3) vs. 4 – Development of Society – Nephilim

Prestigious and powerful people; some giants;

Demonic offspring; unusual group of people living on earth

Physical and social stature; people making it big in the world

Would be completely destroyed in flood

4) vs. 5-6 – Evaluation of God

He was not impressed

a) saw the wickedness – one time He called the world “good” – no more; mega level of evil; unprecedented levels

b) saw the hearts – man’s intentions in his heart; their thought processes = continually evil; no consideration of repentance; sex-crazed selfishness

c) groans because of wickedness – a sorrowful groaning so that He will bring His wrath;

d) grieves because of wickedness – God is very emotional about this

5) vs.7 – Judgment of the Lord

Completely level it; lay it to waste; my grace is no longer offered; time for wrath

6) vs. 8 – Grace of God

Whole world corrupt except for Noah – didn’t matter whether you were in line of Cain or Seth;

Only one man still interested in walking with God, but needed God’s grace to do it;

TEXT: Genesis 6:9-22

TITLE: ESCAPING THE WRATH OF GOD

BIG IDEA:

ONLY GOD CAN MAKE PROVISION FOR YOU TO ESCAPE HIS COMING WRATH

INTRODUCTION:

The backdrop for today's passage is the understanding that all mankind have sinned and are under the punishment of the wrath of God. If you only picture God as some type of loving father figure who openly embraces all of mankind without exception and without regard for their character or conduct, you will not be able to identify with this passage. Here in Genesis 6 we see God about to devastate His creation; to lay waste to all of mankind and all air breathing creatures; to overwhelm the entire world with a catastrophic flood that is inescapable. And He is justified in doing so because of man's corruption and violence. The only exception is that God in His sovereign grace has chosen to spare Noah and his family from His coming wrath.

Is this a picture of God that is consistent with your view of God or have you created your own version of God after your own imagination? **Bernie Sanders** – this week interrogating budget office nominee **Russell Vought** (from Wheaton college) – who wrote: *“Muslims do not simply have a deficient theology. They do not know God because they have rejected Jesus Christ his Son, and they stand condemned.”* Do you think that people who are not Christians will be condemned – all Muslims; all Jews – if you say Yes you are against religious pluralism and not fit for public office even though the Constitution says *“no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.”* This is a **big deal** / This would disqualify, according to Sanders, any true believer from ever holding office. [**Pence**] *Not only that ... what does every religion say about those who are not adherents to its faith?*

The key question is **how can anyone escape God's wrath?** Today's world bears all of the characteristics of the depravity common in the days of Noah. We reviewed that last week. We see corruption all around us. We see violence all around us. We understand that all have sinned and are deserving of God's judgment in hell for all of eternity.

But all is not lost. The flood was both **divine judgment** brought against the wickedness of mankind and **divine salvation** by which the human race was delivered to live on in the world. Satan was doing everything in his power to have his seed destroy the seed of the woman; but God would be faithful to His promise to provide the Messiah who would come as the seed of the woman to redeem fallen mankind.

We will look today at the universal flood in Noah's day both from the perspective of the outpouring of God's wrath and destruction and His gracious provision for salvation and deliverance.

ONLY GOD CAN MAKE PROVISION FOR YOU TO ESCAPE HIS COMING WRATH:
RIGHTEOUSNESS
REFUGE
RELATIONSHIP

(:9a) PROLOGUE

“These are the records of the generations of Noah.”

Third instance of *toledot* – beginning another major section

Flows out of vs. 8 “But Noah found favor [grace] in the eyes of the Lord.”

First instance of word *grace* in the Scriptures

You need imputed righteousness to escape the wrath of God

I. (:9b-11) RIGHTEOUSNESS -- ONLY GOD CAN PROVIDE RIGHTEOUSNESS (SEEN IN GODLY CHARACTER) IN THE MIDST OF A WICKED WORLD

A. (:9b-10) Godly Character Can Shine in Darkness

“This little light of mine ... I’m going to let it shine ...”

1. (:9b) Godly Character of Noah Described

a. Righteous

“Noah was a righteous man,”

Gift of God’s sovereign grace

“There is none righteous, no not one”

Difficult to stand alone for God;

To take a stand against ungodliness

To be a preacher of righteousness

To live by faith – **Heb. 11:7**

b. Respected

“blameless in his time;”

Cf. the qualifications for a spiritual elder – how is one viewed by his overall community?

Not talking about moral perfection

Genesis 17:1 *“Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless.”*

Psalm 18:30 *“As for God, His way is blameless; The word of the LORD is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him.”*

Proverbs 28:18 *“He who walks blamelessly will be delivered, But he who is crooked will fall all at once.”*

Word used of the type of animal to be used for sacrifice = one without blemish

Calvin: The clause, *“in his generations,”* is emphatical. For he has already often said, and will soon repeat it, that nothing was more corrupt than that age. Therefore, it was a remarkable instance of constancy, that Noah being surrounded on every side with the filth of iniquity, should hence have contracted no contagion. We know how great is the force of custom, so that nothing

is more difficult than to live homily among the wicked, and to avoid being led away by their evil examples.

c. Restored to Intimate Fellowship with God

“Noah walked with God.” After pattern of Adam and Enoch

It is a privilege to walk with God – because you have God and His favor walking with you

Listen to these verses that were true of Noah:

Matt. 5:16 *“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”*

John 8:12 *“I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”*

Acts 26:18 *“to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”*

Phil. 2:15 *“prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world”*

2. (:10) Godly Character of Noah Rewarded with Gift of Children

“And Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth.”

Important to record the lineage of Noah – these will be the children through whom God will repopulate the world after the Flood

B. (:11) Wicked World Characterized by Corruption and Violence

1. Corruption

“Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God,”

A far cry from God’s evaluation when He created earth and declared it all to be “good”

God’s evaluation is what counts

The world can judge itself and deem its conduct to be progressive and evolving ...

Only other OT usage: (sexual context)

Ezekiel 23:11 *“Now her sister Oholibah saw this, yet she was more corrupt in her lust than she, and her harlotries were more than the harlotries of her sister.”*

2. Violence

“and the earth was filled with violence.”

A far cry from the reign of peace and righteousness which will be ushered in by the rule of the Messiah

Hughes: The Nephilim, violent warriors, were the “men of renown” (v. 4). It was a bloody culture in the grasp of demonic aliens.

Proverbs 3:31 “Do not envy a man of violence, And do not choose any of his ways.”

Proverbs 10:11 “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, But the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.”

Proverbs 13:2 “From the fruit of a man's mouth he enjoys good, But the desire of the treacherous is violence.”

Proverbs 16:29 “A man of violence entices his neighbor, And leads him in a way that is not good.”

Isaiah 53:9 “His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.”

II. (:12-17) REFUGE -- ONLY GOD CAN PROVIDE SAFE REFUGE FROM HIS WRATH – THE ARK PICTURING JESUS

A. (:12-13) Refuge Needed – Destruction Promised

1. (:12-13a) Reason for God's Wrath

“And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth.”

“Then God said to Noah, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them;’”

2. (:13b) Promise of Impending Destruction

“and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.”

Barnes: There is retribution here, for the words “*corrupt*” and “*destroy*” are the same in the original.

This lesson of impending destruction is what we need to take away from the story of Noah's Ark – not just the message of deliverance ... what the world is denying is that there is a sovereign God out there who will execute such retribution ... who will deliver on the promise of condemnation and destruction; who will consign men and women to an eternity in hell; that is the battleground

Here God makes plain his intention and in chap. 7 we will see him carry out that promise

B. (:14-16) Refuge Provided – the Ark = Picture of Being in Jesus Christ

“Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood; you shall make the ark with rooms, and shall cover it inside and out with pitch. 15 "And this is how you shall make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. 16 "You shall make a window for the ark, and finish it to a cubit from the top; and set the door of

the ark in the side of it; you shall make it with lower, second, and third decks.”

1 Pet. 3:18-22

Barnes: the erection of this ark was a daily warning to a wicked race, a deepening lesson of reliance on God to Noah and his household, and a most salutary occupation for the progenitors of the future race of mankind.

Henry Alford – quoting Kalisch: The word *gopher* occurs in this passage only; its root seems to signify to *cover*: it is evidently a tree which yields a resinous, pitch-like substance, as the lime, fir, and cedar . . . it signifies here most likely the *cypress*, which was in some parts of Asia exclusively used as the material of ships; in Athens for coffins; and in Egypt for the mummy-cases, for which purpose it was peculiarly adapted, on account of its great durability and hardness.

Constable: [same as MacArthur’s note] The ark was about **450 feet long** (1 ½ American football fields), **75 feet wide** (7 standard parking spaces), and **45 feet high** (a typical four-story building). It had three decks and over 100,000 square feet of deck space. There were over 1 million cubic feet of space in it. This is the capacity of approximately 860 railroad boxcars. It had a capacity of almost 14 ,000 gross tons. [Note: See "Noah"s Flood: Washing Away Millions of Years" DVD featuring Dr. Terry Mortenson.]

The ark probably looked more like a rectangular box than a ship. After all, its purpose was to stay afloat, not travel from one destination to another. This design used space very efficiently. The ark would have been very stable in the water. Modern ocean-going tankers and aircraft carriers have a similar scale of dimensions.

C. (:17) Refuge Needed – Destruction Promised

“And behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish.”

Adam Clarke: *mabbul* ; a word used only to designate the general deluge, being never applied to signify any other kind of inundation; and does not the Holy Spirit intend to show by this that no other flood was ever like this, and that it should continue to be the sole one of the kind?

III. (:18-21) RELATIONSHIP-- ONLY GOD CAN PROVIDE THE COVENANT RELATIONSHIP OF PROTECTION AND PROVISION

A. (:18) Covenant Relationship Established with Noah and His Family

“But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall enter the ark-- you and your sons and your wife, and your sons' wives with you.”

Details come in **chap. 9**

Adam Clarke: Almost all nations, in forming alliances, etc., made their covenants or contracts in

the same way. A sacrifice was provided, its throat was cut, and its blood poured out before God; then the whole carcass was divided through the spinal marrow from the head to the rump; so as to make exactly two equal parts; these were placed opposite to each other, and the contracting parties passed between them, or entering at opposite ends met in the center, and there took the covenant oath.

B. (:19-20) Protection and Deliverance

“And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds after their kind, and of the animals after their kind, of every creeping thing of the ground after its kind, two of every kind shall come to you to keep them alive.”

C. (:21) Provision of Food

“And as for you, take for yourself some of all food which is edible, and gather it to yourself; and it shall be for food for you and for them.”

Speaking of herbs and fruits

(:22) EPILOGUE – TOTAL OBEDIENCE

“Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.”

This summary evaluation (refrain of obedience) repeated a number of times: **7:5, 9, 16**

Hughes: The righteous person rests everything on the bare word of God and obeys it.

Constable: What a splendid figure this man makes, a picture of solitary goodness! He was the one saint of that day. It is possible, therefore, to be good even though we have to stand alone. It is possible to be right with God even amidst surrounding iniquity. God is the same today as He was to Noah, and if only we are willing to fulfill the conditions we too shall walk with God and please Him.

CONCLUSION:

Where will you find **Righteousness, Refuge** and a **Covenant Relationship** with a Holy God so that you can escape the wrath that is to come?

Only in Jesus Christ

Only 1 door to the Ark through which the Noah and his family and the animals entered

Not by works; not by religion; not by sincerity ...

Jesus said *“I am the Door of the sheep. All who came before Me are thieves and robbers”* – **John 10:7-8**

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How does God call us to be a preacher of righteousness in our generation?
- 2) What can we learn from Noah about standing alone for God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation?
- 3) How can you have assurance that you are “in the ark” and will escape the coming wrath of God?
- 4) What type of covenant relationship has God established with His elect today?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: “*The generations of Noah*” extends from 6:9 to the end of ch 9; 10:1 introduces the generations of the sons of Noah. The section is chiasmically structured, around 8:1, “God remembered Noah.” Basic sections:

Noah’s Sons in their Moral Environment	6:9-11	9:18-29
Divine Observations and Monologue to Noah	6:12-21	8:21-9:17
Noah’s Obedience	6:22	8:18-20
Divine Monologue to Noah	7:1-4	8:15-17
Noah and the Animals	7:5-16	8:6-14
Actions by the Waters	7:17-24	8:1b-5
God Remembered Noah	8:1a	

Steven Cole: To stand alone in an evil day we must walk with God

- 1. Standing alone is necessary because we live in an evil day.
- 2. Standing alone is possible because Noah did it.
- 3. Standing alone is achieved by walking with God.

Constable: The Flood6:9-8:22

The chiasmic (palistropic, crossing) structure of this section shows that Moses intended to emphasize God's grace to Noah, which occupies the central part of the story.

"One mark of the coherence of the flood narrative is to be found in its literary structure. The tale is cast in the form of an extended palistrophe, that is a structure that turns back on itself. In a palistrophe the first item matches the final item, the second item matches the penultimate item, and so on. The second half of the story is thus a mirror image of the first. This kind of literary structure has been discovered in other parts of Genesis , but nowhere else is it developed on such a large scale. This may be partly due to the fact that a flood narrative is peculiarly suited to this literary form....

"Particularly striking are the references to days (lines H, I, L, O). (Only the references to days form part of the palistrophe; the40 days *and nights* [vii4 , 12] and the dates do not.) The periods of time form a

symmetrical pattern, 7 , 7 , 40 , 150 , 150 , 40 , 7 , 7. The turning point of the narrative is found in viii:1 "God remembered Noah."

"What then is the function of the palistrophe? Firstly, it gives literary expression to the character of the flood event. The rise and fall of the waters is mirrored in the rise and fall of the key words in its description. Secondly, it draws attention to the real turning point in the saga: viii1 , "And God remembered Noah." From that moment the waters start to decline and the earth to dry out. It was God's intervention that was decisive in saving Noah, and the literary structure highlights this fact." [Note: Gordon J. Wenham, "The Coherence of the Flood Narrative," *Vetus Testamentum* 28:3 (1978):337 , 339-40. See also idem, *Genesis 1-15* , pp155-58. There is a helpful chart of the chronology of the Flood in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, p39.]

The following diagram illustrates this palistrophe (chiasm) simply.

"Introduction: Noah's righteousness and Noah's sons ([Genesis 6:9-10](#)).

A God resolves to destroy the corrupt race ([Genesis 6:11-13](#)).

B Noah builds an ark according to God's instructions ([Genesis 6:14-22](#)).

C The Lord commands the remnant to enter the ark ([Genesis 7:1-9](#)).

D The flood begins ([Genesis 7:10-16](#)).

E The flood prevails 150 days and the water covers the mountains ([Genesis 7:17-24](#)).

F God remembers Noah ([Genesis 8:1 a](#)).

E" The flood recedes 150 days, and the mountains are visible ([Genesis 8:1-5](#)).

D" The earth dries ([Genesis 8:6-14](#)).

C" God commands the remnant to leave the ark ([Genesis 8:15-19](#)).

B" Noah builds an altar ([Genesis 8:20](#)).

A" The Lord resolves not to destroy humankind ([Genesis 8:21-22](#))." [Note: Ross, *Creation and . . .* , p191. See also the charts in Mathews, p354; and Waltke, *Genesis* , p125.]

David Thompson: Marching to the Beat of a Different Spiritual Drummer

Noah alone walked with God;

Vs. 9 = third *toledot* section – out of ten – what became of Noah and his descendants

God allowed Noah to escape His wrath; rest of world drowning in sin

4 critical subjects

1) (:9-10) What Noah was like

a. Faithful – *righteous and blameless* before God and people in the aftermath of receiving God's righteousness; not flawless; purposed to walk with God in his time while rest of world involved in demonic evil; maintained righteousness and integrity

It is possible to live in a godless, wicked world and still walk close with God and have a godly testimony

You do not have to act like and look like the world.

b. Fellowship with God – "*walked with God*" –

the thing that really makes Noah famous is not that he built an ark but that he built godly character

Some people don't care if they have close fellowship with God;

c. Fruitful – had sons

- gives us historical data regarding human lineage – Where did we come from?
- gives historical data regarding Messianic lineage
- demonstrates that Noah lived his life in godly fashion so that his entire family benefited
- proves that it is possible for a family to be blessed by God in a world cursed by God

2) (:11-12) What the World was Like – Corrupt and Violent

World filled with talented people; a lot of inventions and accomplishments;

Population explosion

Filled with beautiful people

Filled with all forms of wickedness

From man's perspective: a nice place to live; a lot of action; things going on; exciting, progressive

From God's perspective: ruined, evil, wicked

3) (:13-21) What God Revealed to Noah

“*Then God said to Noah*” – revealing His truth only to the one who is godly;

Must be walking in a close relationship to God to understand the clear revelation of God;

5 revelations:

a) (:13) What God was going to do to the world – about to destroy all humanity; God will carry out this action of judgment; divine retribution is just as much part of the character of God as divine grace; this world today reaching unprecedented level of evil

b) (:14-17) What God wanted Noah to do = building the ark

God had specific work for Noah to do;

Reasons for construction of ark:

- Provide security for Noah and his family
- Place of security for the animals
- Picture of one who is faithful to God's Word to the world
- Illustration of world's mockery of judgment
- Illustration of Spirit baptism according to 1 Peter – puts you into Jesus Christ and saves you from the wrath of God

How long was cubit? 18” or 17.5”?? 450' long; 75' wide; 45' high

Some say dimensions too enormous; some say not large enough to hold all the animals

Ark made for floating, not sailing

Only one door to the ark; how many doors can get you into heaven??

Not door of religion, good works, giving money, sincerity ...

Jesus alone is the door to escape the wrath of God

c) (:17) What God is going to do to the world --

d) (:18) What God would do for Noah and his family – first reference to covenant legal document to bind Himself to fulfill what He promised to do;

e) (:19-21) What else God wanted Noah to do

“they shall come to you” – God will send these animals to Noah

4) (:22) What Noah Did

Don't overlook this verse – Noah doing the will of God

Obeded God completely

Gil Rugh: Wickedness, the Flood and the Covenant

Overview of Genesis; human race could have numbered in the billions by this point

(9:1-6) Cause of the Flood

Even in judgment there will be grace

Identification of “sons of God” – reasons for the 2 main views – fallen angels or Sethites

[he prefers the Sethite view]

Striving of Holy Spirit – holding back the sin of man by way of restraint

(9:7-22) Preparation for the Flood

522 box cars = carrying capacity of the ark = barge

Heb. 11:7 Noah did all this by faith; probably had not been rain on earth to this point

TEXT: Genesis 7:1-24

TITLE: *DON'T MISS THE BOAT -- IGNORE GOD'S JUDGMENT AT YOUR OWN PERIL*

BIG IDEA:

GOD'S PROMISE OF JUDGMENT IS REAL, CATASTROPHIC AND INESCAPABLE APART FROM DIVINE DELIVERANCE

INTRODUCTION:

It is easy to find quotations from people who think Noah's Flood is a joke:

The Sensuous Curmudgeon: Conserving the Enlightenment values of **reason, liberty, science,** and **free enterprise.** [Top Ten Reasons Noah's Flood is Mythology](#)

Number 10: Where's the Ark?

Number 9: Why has Noah been forgotten?

Number 7: Conditions aboard the Ark were unsurvivable.

And the **Number One** reason the Flood is mythology is: **It didn't work!**

We're told that the purpose of the ghastly planet-killing exercise is that mankind was wicked. That's the reason *everything* was cruelly destroyed — except for Noah, his righteous family, and their chosen menagerie. Okay, fine, but there's one little detail — *the whole business was a colossal futility!* There is *still* wickedness in the world, which means the planetary slaughter was not only cruel beyond imagining, it was also stupid. But even a creationist would agree that such behavior is incompatible with the nature of God, so the only rational conclusion is that the Flood is a **childish myth.**

<https://sensuouscurmudgeon.wordpress.com/2012/11/13/top-ten-reasons-noahs-flood-is-mythology/> -- **Ridicule of the Word of God**

Common Sense Atheism: As if the scientific evidence against Noah's Flood wasn't clear enough, it's also worth noting that the Genesis flood story was merely *adapted* from an earlier Mesopotamian flood myth, the Epic of Gilgamesh.

<http://commonsenseatheism.com/?p=8647>

At issue:

- REAL - The **historicity** of the Flood – or is it just a nice story or myth
- CATASTROPHIC - The **worldwide scope** of the Flood – or is it just a local flood
- INESCAPABLE - Is there any **way of escape** apart from divine deliverance?

All 3 questions answered here emphatically

Steven Cole: no other judgment in history was as widespread and severe as that of the flood. As such, the flood stands as the past example, bar none, of the fact of God's judgment on the whole earth. Just as He judged the whole earth with the flood, so He will judge the whole earth in the end times, and none will escape

GOD'S PROMISE OF JUDGMENT IS REAL, UNIVERSAL AND INESCAPABLE APART FROM DIVINE DELIVERANCE

These Truths are Supported by 4 Proofs:

I. (:1-5) THE FLOOD INSTRUCTIONS – WHAT DID GOD PREDICT?

A. (:1) Preservation of the Righteous -- Only the Righteous are Preserved from God's Wrath
"Then the LORD said to Noah,"

1. Divine Call for Salvation

"Enter the ark, you and all your household;"

Ark is built; now Noah commanded to Enter the ark

What is the relationship between the Efficacious calling of God and human responsibility?

S. Lewis Johnson:

I do want to believe that man has free agency. That is, the decisions that he makes he feels are his own decisions. He does not feel any divine compulsion to make this decision. He is not dragged screaming into the kingdom of God, but from other passages in the word of God, it is evident that it is God who works upon our wills to will toward him. Dr. Barnhouse used to like to say we do not make any decision before God with our wills until the Lord has jiggled our willer. Now we do make that decision, it is our decision. We should never say that because we believe that God is sovereign in his salvation that men do not make a decision, they do. But the decision is one that is prompted by God and it does not arise sovereignly in the heart of man.

2. Divine Criteria for Salvation

"for you alone I have seen to be righteous before Me in this time."

Parunak: God demands righteousness of us. Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:13). Yet the best righteousness we can generate on our own is no more than filthy rags in God's sight (Isa 64:6). Only "the righteousness which is of God by faith" can satisfy his requirements. As David observed in another context, "All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chr 29:14).

S. Lewis Johnson: the righteousness that Noah possessed is a forensic, a legal, a standing before God by which he is acceptable through the sovereign grace of God . . . Noah then is a righteous man and he is invited in to the Ark, because he has been justified by grace through faith in the promises of God.

B. (:2-3) Preservation of Animals and Birds

1. (:2) Animals

"You shall take with you of every clean animal by sevens, a male and his female; and of the animals that are not clean two, a male and his female;"

Seven pairs

Parunak: The distinctive feature of this part of the command is the **distinction between clean and unclean**, which has not previously been made explicit. It has two effects in later books:

- Only clean animals may be eaten, but man has not yet been authorized to eat meat. Gen 1:29; 2:9; 3:19 all anticipate a vegetarian diet, and only after the flood is he allowed to eat meat, 9:3.

- Only clean animals may be sacrificed. We know from 4:4 that the race already knows something about sacrifice, so it must be in this context that God has taught them the distinction between clean and unclean.

So from Noah's perspective going into the ark, the motivation for the distinction must lie in sacrifice. He is not being saved just for his own comfort. He is a worshipper of God, and is being preserved **along with the resources necessary to worship God**. For himself and his family alone, a much smaller boat would have sufficed, one with room for their provision, since seeds apparently survived the deluge. But, like the later worshipper taking care to have "full hands," Noah must exert himself to be able to worship.

Adam Clarke: So we find the distinction between clean and unclean animals existed long before the Mosaic law. This distinction seems to have been originally designed to mark those animals which were proper for sacrifice and food, from those that were not. See **Leviticus 11**.

2. (:3) Birds

"also of the birds of the sky, by sevens, male and female, to keep offspring alive on the face of all the earth."

C. (:4) Prophecy of Destruction

1. Timeframe – Ticking Time Bomb about to go off

"For after seven more days,"

The Coming Judgment is **Certain; very real**

Steven Cole: The flood came suddenly, but not without warning. God had been warning that evil world for almost 1,000 years. Enoch preached against the ungodliness of his day. He named his son **Methuselah**, which means, *"when he is dead, it [judgment] will come."* As a testimony of God's grace and patience, Methuselah lived 969 years, longer than any other human being. Finally he died in the year of the flood. [7 days of mourning for his death] But God's warnings were ignored.

Noah's ark was finally finished after 120 years. People watched as the animals migrated toward the ark, two by two. Can't you hear the people hooting, "Hey, everyone, Noah's finally getting ready to sail!" Remember, there wasn't a drop of rain yet. The ark sat there on dry ground. The day of the flood dawned just as every other day had. Then God closed the door of the ark, the rain began, and the earth quaked as the deeps were opened. Judgment came suddenly, but not without warning.

2. Duration

"I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights;"

The Coming Judgment is **Catastrophic (Universal)** in its scope – rain on the entire earth, not just a small portion

3. Extent of Destruction

“and I will blot out from the face of the land every living thing that I have made.”

The Coming Judgment is **Inescapable** apart from divine deliverance

D. (:5) Refrain of Obedience

“And Noah did according to all that the LORD had commanded him.”

II. (:6-12) THE FLOOD EVENTS – WHAT HAPPENED?

A. (:6) Timeframe for God’s Judgment

“Now Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of water came upon the earth.”

The Coming Judgment is real – time stamped in history
Catastrophic

B. (:7-9) Response to God’s Sovereign Call to Salvation

1. (:7) Noah and His Family

“Then Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him entered the ark because of the water of the flood.”

2. (:8-9) Animals and Birds

“Of clean animals and animals that are not clean and birds and everything that creeps on the ground, there went into the ark to Noah by twos, male and female,”

3. (:9b) Refrain of Obedience

“as God had commanded Noah.”

C. (:10-12) Execution of Divine Judgment

1. (:10-11) Timeframe

“And it came about after the seven days, that the water of the flood came upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on the same day”

2. (:11) Extent

“all the fountains of the great deep burst open, and the floodgates of the sky were opened.”

Parunak: Two sources for the water:

- “fountains of the great deep”: subterranean waters flowed up
- “windows of heaven”: perhaps from a vapor canopy that had been around the earth.

Jack Arnold: Canopy Theory. The proponents of this theory say that before the Flood there was a water canopy that surrounded the earth (Gen. 1:7). They think the earth at one time was very much like the planet Saturn today, surrounded by rings, forming a canopy over the earth. Many scientists believe that the rings of Saturn are made up of ice particles, which would, of course, be water, suspended in vast, thick rings around the planet. If something like that were true of the earth of that day, then perhaps the Flood represents a collapse of that canopy of vapor, water, or ice. NOTE: This accounts for the sudden death of not just a few but large numbers of great mammoths and other animals suddenly imbedded in ice. These animals are being discovered in the Arctic regions. Evidently at one time the area was tropical, but it was suddenly plunged into sub-freezing temperatures of such intensity that animals immediately perished, frozen in a quick deep-freeze. They are discovered now with buttercups still in their mouths, unchewed, so sudden was their death!

3. (:12) Duration

“And the rain fell upon the earth for forty days and forty nights.”

III. (:13-16) THE FLOOD ESCAPEES – WHO ENTERED THE ARK?

A. (:13) Noah’s Extended Family

“On the very same day Noah and Shem and Ham and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them, entered the ark,”

B. (:14-16a) Animals and Birds

1. (:14) Identified by Kind

*“they and every beast after its kind,
and all the cattle after their kind,
and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth after its kind,
and every bird after its kind, all sorts of birds.”*

2. (15) Identified by Quantity

*“So they went into the ark to Noah,
by twos of all flesh in which was the breath of life.”*

3. (:16a) Identified by Gender

“And those that entered, male and female of all flesh”

C. (:16b) Significance of Entering the Ark

1. In Accordance with God’s Sovereign Call

“entered as God had commanded him;”

2. Before it was Too Late

“and the LORD closed it behind him.”

Door of salvation does not remain open forever

The Lord is the one who shut the door

Steven Cole: Even though the door was open until the last possible moment, there is a sense in which those outside the ark had sealed their own doom years before the flood. There are very few deathbed conversions. A person fixes his mind in unbelief so that he can continue in his sinful ways. He deliberately ignores warning after warning. Perhaps he thinks that when he has one foot in the grave and the other on a banana peel, he will repent. But by then it's too late. God has closed the door of salvation.

IV. (:17-24) THE FLOOD SEVERITY – HOW BAD WAS IT?

A. (:17-20) Waters Cover the Highest Mountains on All the Earth

1. (:17-18) Covering all the Earth – Ark Floats Securely

“Then the flood came upon the earth for forty days; and the water increased and lifted up the ark, so that it rose above the earth. And the water prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark floated on the surface of the water.”

Parunak: The same event that brings death to the world, lifts up the ark and delivers Noah and his family. We need to learn to see God's providential blessing even in things that the world considers disasters. Cf. the murder of Christ, which brings judgment to the unbeliever but salvation to us, Acts 2:23. More generally, Rom. 8:28.

2. (:19-20) Covering the Highest Mountains – Ark Floats Securely

“And the water prevailed more and more upon the earth, so that all the high mountains everywhere under the heavens were covered. The water prevailed fifteen cubits higher, and the mountains were covered.”

Remember, a significant part of the ark would be under the water; had to allow for enough clearance for the ark to float over the highest mountains

Jack Arnold: The Arguments Against a Localized Flood

1. **Depth of the Flood.** The Floodwaters went 15 cubits above the tops of the mountains (7:20). This depth was evidently the depth to which the ark sank in the water, half its height, so that it could now float freely over the highest mountaintops. NOTE: Mount Ararat, where the ark landed, is over 17,000 feet high, and it is in the Mesopotamia basin. If the waters covered that mountain alone, it could not have been a local flood.

2. **Duration of the Flood.** The great amounts of water over a long period of time would produce no local flood. The slow rate of decline for the water level is cited as showing that it had to be more than a local deluge.

3. **Need for an Ark.** If it was only a local flood, Noah and his family could have moved over to a dry area by the warning of God. He could have migrated rather than built an ark

4. **Expressions of Universality (6:7,17; 7:4; 8:9,21; 9:11,15).** These expressions certainly indicate that the Flood was universal.

5. **Peter's Statement.** In **2 Peter 3:3-7**, Peter speaks of the “*earth that then was*”, which definitely indicates that the flood was a worldwide catastrophe.

6. **Testimony of Christ (Luke 17:27).** He testifies to the fact of the Flood and says it “*destroyed them all.*” This is a statement of universality for all men on the earth had to be touched by the Flood, and surely men had migrated out of the Mesopotamian basin by this time.

7. **Promise of God (Gen. 9:11).** God promised that He would never destroy the world again by flood, and this would have little meaning if it were only a localized flood. There are many who have died in local floods since the days of Noah.

8. **Ancient Records.** A universal flood is mentioned in the records of almost all ancient peoples. The Sumerians, Babylonians and Egyptians all have recorded history of the Flood but most of them are distorted and are obviously not factual. But it shows that ancient men had a concept of a universal flood, for all post-Flood people descended from Noah and his sons. (cf. **Morris and Whitcomb**, Genesis Flood, pp. 38-39).

* * * * *

B. (:21-23) Extent of Destruction

1. Every Living Thing

“And all flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; 22 of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. 23 Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth;”

2. Only Noah and His Family Spared

“and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.”

C. (:24) Duration and Scope

“And the water prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days.”

Steven Cole: Then there is the time which it took for the flood waters to abate. The water prevailed upon the earth for 150 days (7:24). This means that it took 110 days after the rain stopped for the water to recede enough for the ark to touch down on Mount Ararat (8:3, 4). It took another ten weeks for the water level to go down enough for the tops of other mountains to become visible (8:5). All told, it was just over a year before it was safe for Noah and those on the ark to disembark (8:14-15). No local flood would require that much time to subside.

CONCLUSION:

What do we learn about Accountability before God from this study of Noah's Flood?

For the non-believer:

- Judgment is coming and it is very real
- Judgment will be catastrophic in its scope
- Judgment will be inescapable – Don't miss the boat!

For the believer:

We will all stand before the Judgment seat of Christ – there still is accountability; but at issue will not be our eternal destiny but the extent of our rewards

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) In our day and time are we too soft spoken about God's coming day of wrath?
- 2) How do you weigh the various scientific and biblical arguments for the universality of the Flood?
- 3) When will it be too late to respond to God's way of salvation?
- 4) How would you answer critics who might argue that not every human in the day of Noah lived in close proximity to the building of the ark and had the same opportunity to respond to his preaching?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: The flood was historical. While there are some difficult problems to consider, I think we must take the biblical account at face value.

The text clearly presents this as an eyewitness, historical account, not as a parable or fairy tale. For example, the precise date (7:11), as **Derek Kidner** states, "has the mark of a plain fact well remembered; and this is borne out by the further careful notes of time in the story" (Genesis [IVP], p. 90). While the miraculous is obviously present (especially in the way God gathered the animals to Noah), there is nothing mythical about it.

Also, the New Testament clearly interprets the flood as historical. Both the apostle Peter and the Lord Jesus refer to it as an example of the way people in the end times will scoff at God's judgment (2 Pet. 2:5; 3:3-10; Matt. 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-27). Either Jesus was mistaken; or He was deceptively using something He knew not to be true as if it were true; or He knew what He was talking about when He referred to Noah and the flood as historically true. Outside of the Bible, there is the widespread evidence of flood stories in many cultures. While there are variations in the stories, as would be expected over thousands of years, the wide distribution of

these stories from every continent of the world points to a common source (see [Tim LaHaye](#) and [John Morris](#), *The Ark on Ararat* [Thomas Nelson], pp. 233-239).

Voddie Baucham: The Flood

Uniqueness of this event – of this magnitude – never before and never since have we seen anything of this magnitude

We don't think of this even appropriately;

Deadliest event in the history of mankind; ugly

The Ark was no more beautiful than the Cross; Suffering and shame that took place was not pretty to look upon;

Piece of wood that would be for the deliverance of God's elect;

You must understand what sin is supposed to cost; only then do you comprehend redemption and deliverance;

3 Movements:

1) (:1-5) The Righteousness and its Rewards

What were his rewards?? God, not stuff

- his wealth was consumed in the flood – others were wealthier

- only had 3 children compared to larger families of his day – others had more kids

- his reward was that he got to get on the ark! Others were not getting on the ark.

2) (:6-10) Sin and its Persistence

There were people who watched and heard Noah for decades and nobody responded to his message; no repentance; no change of heart; could see animals parading towards the ark – still didn't respond; sinners don't save themselves; they just serve themselves; you can't scare sin out of people; it is persistent; you cannot manipulate anyone into the ark; Noah did not drag anyone unto the ark; [forcing young children into a decision and to being baptism doesn't solve their problem]

3) (:11-24) God and His Wrath

They never forgot this day;

Our God is a God of wrath; How could a loving God do something like this?

How can a righteous God not?

Nobody deserves the ark rather than the flood;

They heard the wails and screams of people dying outside; didn't think: "That's what you get for not living like me" – Instead, "Why me?"

TEXT: Genesis 8:1-22

TITLE: WILL YOU REMEMBER GOD?

BIG IDEA:

IN THE MIDST OF DIVINE JUDGMENT GOD REMEMBERS HIS COVENANT PEOPLE BY ACTIVELY CARING FOR ALL THEIR NEEDS

INTRODUCTION:

Look at how important this event of Noah's Flood is in the Genesis account – Moses devotes a number of chapters to this one point in time.

Jeffery Smith: What were they thinking?

- Perhaps sense of vindication
- Sense of privilege and peace and comfort since God had saved them
- Sense of awe and trepidation; ruins of a dead and buried world – everyone they had ever known was dead except them
- Very humbling – Why Me? Noah found grace
- Uneasiness regarding the future
- Difficult to be patient and wait for God's timing
- Sense of loneliness; perhaps being forgotten by God – no communication for so long

(:1a) CLIMAX – GOD REMEMBERING NOAH AND ALL THE OCCUPANTS OF THE ARK

“But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark;”

Are you ever at a point in your life where you think that God has forgotten you; He has forgotten your trials; your struggles; your difficulties??

God always remembers His commitments to His covenant people

Parunak: “*God remembered Noah... .*” Not a casual, passive response, as though God were liable to a “senior moment.”

- It is **deliberate**. To see this, consider how the verb is used of people:
 - o They can be commanded to remember (and mostly, God is the object): Eccl 12:1; Isa 46:8 (bring to mind); Deut 32:7.

o They can be condemned for not remembering. Ezek 16:22, 43

- It is **personal**. What God remembers is mostly people or events associated with people (e.g., their sin, their misfortune). (And what people mostly remember or forget is God.)

- It is **active**. Always associated with action.
 - o Here, he remembers and withdraws the waters.

o 19:29, he remembers Abraham and thus delivers Lot from the cities of the plain before the judgment.

o 30:22, he remembers Rachel and gives her a child.

o When he remembers sin, it is to punish it, Jer 14:10.

We tend to think of forgetting as accidental, outside of our control. And it may be, in cases of dementia. But with healthy people, if you really care about something and focus your attention on it, you don't forget it. **Isa 49:15**, "*Can a woman forget her sucking child?*" "I forgot" is less an excuse than a confession that "I didn't care." Conversely, if something is really important to you, you remember it. **Thus Moses uses the word to remind us how precious Noah and his cargo are to God. The Lord has had his eye on them the whole time.**

Dr. James Boice: It is God's nature to remember. He is faithful. To be sure, this is the first time in the Bible where we are told that God remembered something. But this was not the last time. **Genesis 19:29** tells us that "*God remembered Abraham*" and rescued his nephew Lot. "*God remembered Rachel*," Isaac's wife, and she conceived (**Genesis 30:22**). **Psalm 9:12** tells us that God "*remembers...the afflicted*." Many times God is said to remember His covenant or His promises. The psalmist writes that He "*remembered us in our low estate*" (**Psalm 136:23**).

3 KEY WAYS THAT GOD REMEMBERED NOAH

I. (:1b-5) PROVIDING REST -- CAUSING THE WATERS TO RECEDE SO THE ARK CAME TO REST

A. (:1b) Divine Intervention Causes Waters to Subside

"and God caused a wind to pass over the earth, and the water subsided."

Brings order and new life out of chaos and destruction

This had been a prolonged period of extreme turbulence; the powers of nature unleashed in catastrophic demonstration of the wrath of God

Parunak: God drives the waters back with a wind. The Hebrew word is the same as "*spirit*," as in 1:2, and one of the words used at the pinnacle of 7:21-23 (22, "*breath of the spirit of life*") to emphasize the coming of death.

o We are reminded that the world has returned to its primitive state of sterile death, and now as then the lifegiving Spirit of God offers the promise of better things to come.

o Compare the role of the wind/spirit in driving back the waters at the Red Sea (Exod 14:21, where it is clearly the wind)

Jeffery Smith: The means God used – sent a *wind*: common thread throughout Scripture

- **Gen. 1:2** – echo of creation; Spirit brought order out of chaos; same word; bringing a

- new world into existence; a new creation
- Event of deliverance from Egyptian bondage at the Red Sea – **Ex. 14:21** – a strong east wind
- Dry bones in **Ezekiel 37:9**
- New birth – **John 3:8**
- Day of Pentecost – **Acts 2:2** – signal that God was about to do something

God acts in the context of human helplessness; when we can do nothing to save ourselves; God causes the wind to come and blow – all of grace

B. (2-3) Fountains and Floodgates Stopped So That Waters Recede

“Also the fountains of the deep and the floodgates of the sky were closed, and the rain from the sky was restrained; and the water receded steadily from the earth, and at the end of one hundred and fifty days the water decreased.”

Parunak: Then we are told that the waters withdraw, using five different words:

- o “aswaged,” Sakak, used of wrath in Est 2:1; 7:10; compare this with the anthropomorphism in “prevailed” in 7:17-24.
- o “stopped,” sakar
- o “restrained” kala’
- o “returned” \$ub
- o “abated, decreased” xaser

C. (:4) Ark Lands

“And in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat.”

Significance of the ark coming to its resting place

Significance of Jesus resting after completing His work of redemption

Significance of God wanting His people to enter in to an eternal rest

D. (:5) Mountain Tops Become Visible

“And the water decreased steadily until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains became visible.”

Look at how specific God is in recording the timing in days and months . . .

Prophetic passages of judgment in the last days, the day of the Lord, in book of Rev. will be literal and just as detailed and specific

Transition to the theme of HOPE

II. (:6-12) PROVIDING HOPE -- GRANTING WAITING NOAH A GRACIOUS SIGN THAT THE LAND WAS DRYING OUT AND BECOMING INHABITABLE AGAIN

(:6) Window of Hope

“Then it came about at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made;”

Parunak: The 40 days recalls the 40 days of the rising waters in 7:17, which initiated the 150 days before the ark grounded. So we have a little chiasm emerging in the dates:

- 40 days of rising water after the door is sealed
- 150 – 50 = 110 days of sailing until the ark grounds
- 40 days of declining water before Noah opens the window.

A. (:7) Test #1 -- The Mission of the Raven

“and he sent out a raven, and it flew here and there until the water was dried up from the earth.”

B. (:8-9) Test #2

1. (:8) The Mission of the Dove

“Then he sent out a dove from him, to see if the water was abated from the face of the land;”

2. (:9a) The Return of the Dove

“but the dove found no resting place for the sole of her foot, so she returned to him into the ark; for the water was on the surface of all the earth.”

3. (:9b) The Recovery of the Dove

“Then he put out his hand and took her, and brought her into the ark to himself.”

C. (:10-11) Test #3

1. (:10) The Mission of the Dove

“So he waited yet another seven days; and again he sent out the dove from the ark.”

2. (:11) The Success of the Dove

“And the dove came to him toward evening; and behold, in her beak was a freshly picked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the water was abated from the earth.”

D. (:12) Test #4 – The Mission of the Dove

“Then he waited yet another seven days, and sent out the dove; but she did not return to him again.”

III. (:13-19) PROVIDING NEW BEGINNINGS -- COMMANDING NOAH AND THE OCCUPANTS OF THE ARK TO DISEMBARK AND BEGIN LIFE ANEW ON AN EARTH PURGED OF HUMAN WICKEDNESS

A. (:13-14) Dry Ground

1. (:13a) Statement

“Now it came about in the six hundred and first year, in the first month, on the first of the month, the water was dried up from the earth.”

2. (:13b) Verification

“Then Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold, the surface of the ground was dried up.”

3. (:14) Statement

“And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.”

Parunak: The drying of the land is depicted in two stages:

- First “the face of the ground is dry,” without standing water, but still swampy and muddy.
- 57 days later, “the earth was dry,” firm enough to support traffic.

B. (:15-17) Command to Disembark and Replenish the Renewed Earth

1. (:15) Word of God

“Then God spoke to Noah, saying,”

2. (:16) People

“Go out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and your sons' wives with you.”

3. (:17s) Animals

“Bring out with you every living thing of all flesh that is with you, birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth,”

4. (:17b) Goal

“that they may breed abundantly on the earth, and be fruitful and multiply on the earth.”

C. (:18-19) Process of Disembarking

1. (:18) People

“So Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him.”

2. (:19) Animals

“Every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves on the earth, went out by their families from the ark.”

(:20-22) EPILOGUE – NOAH’S RESPONSE / GOD’S RESPONSE = REMEMBERING GOD IN WORSHIP / REMEMBERING COVENANT COMMITMENTS

A. (:20) Noah Offering Up Worship

“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.”

* * * * *

Parunak: Building an Altar.—This is the first reference in the Bible to “*building an altar*,” an activity that preoccupies godly men in every age of the OT, down through Jeshua the son of Jozadak the high priest (Ezra 3:2) upon the return of the Babylonian exiles to Jerusalem. We can imagine that Cain and Abel in Gen 4 had altars, but this is the first explicit mention of constructing one.

In Genesis, building an altar marks the travels of Abraham (12:7 in Shechem, 8 in Bethel; 13:18 in Hebron; 22:9 on Mt. Moreh to offer Isaac), Isaac (26:25 in Beersheba), Jacob (35:7 in Bethel). In every case, it is the first thing the builder constructs when he arrives at a place. In fact, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived in tents, so it was the only sort of permanent structure they constructed. So for Noah, newly landed on an earth destitute of civilization, the first structure he feels a need to construct is an altar for worship. He doesn’t start with a house, or a barn, or a bridge over a nearby stream. Of all the many things to which he might have devoted his effort, he starts with an altar.

Application: What is your first priority in moving to a new location? It ought to be identifying the believers and getting to know them, so that you can join them in worship. Whatever the reason for your move, you should make your spiritual home your priority.

Extent of the Offerings.—Note the **extravagance** of Noah’s offering: he offered “*of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl*.” One might expect he would offer a sheep one day, a dove the next, and a goat the third, for example, stretching out his supplies. But he offers up representatives of every kind that he had brought aboard, severely depleting his resources.

Application: It has become unfashionable to inconvenience ourselves in worshipping God. Churches seek to schedule their services so that people don’t have to give up their weekend time. We hire professionals so that people don’t have to invest their own effort in Bible study to have something to share with their brothers and sisters. We are less and less interested in sacrificing anything in our worship. But sacrifice is of the essence of worship: see David’s spirit in 2 Sam 24:18-24, “*neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing.*”

* * * * *

B. (:21-22) God Pledging His Faithfulness to His Covenant People

1. (:21a) Pleased with the Worship of Noah

“And the LORD smelled the soothing aroma;”

2. (:21b-22) Pledges Faithfulness

“and the LORD said to Himself,

‘I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done.’

While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

CONCLUSION:

Ps. 27:14 *Wait on the Lord*

Neh. 5:19 prayer of Nehemiah

Jonah 2:7 *I remembered the Lord and my prayer went up to you*

Thief on the cross – *Lord, remember me*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How has God remembered you?
- 2) How have you remembered God?
- 3) When have you found it difficult to wait on the Lord for His timetable?
- 4) Why did the Lord pledge never again to judge the world with a global flood?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Bruce Goettsche – The Waiting Room

When Noah went into the Ark he had little idea what was going to happen. For a year he waited and wondered,

- if the rain was ever going to stop
- what would be left after the flood went away
- where they would find food and lodging
- if things would ever be the way they "used to be"
-

At times of great frustration he probably wondered if it wouldn't have been better to have died in the flood;

He may have even wondered if he was ever going to want to spend time with his family again!

Think about it. An entire year of uncertainty.

Perhaps Noah would have nodded with the sentiments of this poem,

Could You Hurry a Little?

Lord, I know there are countless times

When I must wait patiently for You.

Waiting develops endurance.

It strengthens my faith

And deepens my dependence on You.

I know You are a Sovereign God

Not an errand boy

Responding to the snap of my finger.

I know your timing is neatly wrapped

In your incomparable wisdom.

But, Lord

You have appointed prayer

To obtain answers!

Even the Psalmist cried

With confident boldness:

It is time, O Lord, for you to act."

When I am hedged in on every side

I too cry boldly.

You are my Father, and I am Your child.

So, Lord, could you hurry a little?

(Ruth Harms Caulkins, Lord Could You hurry a little)

Being faithful is not always easy. Often we are called to wait . . . sometimes in silence.

Let's face it, most of us are not very patient. I get frustrated if I have to wait for three or four cars to go by before I can pull onto main street! I am impatient if there is anyone in front of me at the checkout line at the store. We want things fast. We want our Internet connection to be faster. We put our food in the microwave so it will be ready in a couple of minutes. We carry credit cards so we don't have to wait for anything. We read condensed books to save time, we carry cellular phones so we can communicate anywhere from any place. Is it any wonder that this attitude has seeped over into our faith?

We begin to doubt if God delays in answering our prayers. We get frustrated is we don't understand the Bible the first time we read it. We strike out when our brothers and sisters in Christ are not as "far along" in their spirituality as we think they should be.

But God knows that some lessons can only be learned over time. There are some things we cannot understand. Some things must be concealed. Sometimes it is necessary that we spend time

in the waiting room. We must proclaim God's wrath against sin and warn people of his judgment. But we must never become discouraged or fear that he will visit that wrath on us. God remembered Noah, and he will remember us.

Parunak: 8:1 – Center of an overall chiasmic structure

Synopsis of the Flood Narrative

Noah's Sons in their Moral Environment	
6:9 These [are] the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man [and] perfect in his generations, [and] Noah walked with God.	9:20 And Noah... drank of the wine, and was drunker ; and he was uncovered within his tent. ...
10 And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth .	9:18 And the sons of Noah,... were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth :... 19 These [are] the three sons of Noah...
Divine Observations, Promise, and Commands to Noah	
6:11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.	8:20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar.
12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt ; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.	21 And the LORD smelled a sweet savour ; ...
13 And God said unto Noah, (promise) The end of all flesh is come before me;... and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.	9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them,
(command) 14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; ...	(command) Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. ... 3 Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; ... 4 But flesh with the life thereof, [which is] the blood thereof, shall ye not eat. ... 6 Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: ...
(promise) 17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, ... 18 But with thee will I establish my covenant ; ...	(promise) 8 And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, ... 11 And I will establish my covenant with you ; ... neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.
(command) 21 And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather [it] to thee; ...	
Noah's Obedience	
6:22 Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, ...	8:18 And Noah went forth, ...
Divine Monologue to Noah, re. the Ark	
7:1 And the LORD said unto Noah , Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. 2 Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that [are] not clean by two, the male and his female. 3 Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth	8:15 And God spake unto Noah , saying, 16 Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. 17 Bring forth with thee every living thing that [is] with thee, of all flesh, [both] of fowl, and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth.
Noah and the Animals	
7:5 And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him. 6 And Noah [was] six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth. 7 And Noah went in , and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. 8 Of dean beasts, and of beasts that [are] not clean, and of fowls, and of every thing that creepeth upon the earth, 9 There went in two and two unto Noah into the ark, the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah. 10 And it came to pass after seven days , that the waters of the flood were upon the earth. ...	8:7 And he sent forth a raven, ... 8 Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground;... 10 And he stayed yet other seven days ; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; 11 And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth [was] an olive leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. 12 And he stayed yet other seven days ; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more. 13 And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year , in the first [month], the first [day] of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry . 14 And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried .
7:16b and the LORD shut him in.	8:16b ...that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made:
Actions by the Waters	
7:17 And the flood was forty days upon the earth; and the waters increased, and bare up the ark , and it was lift up above the earth. 18 And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark went upon the face of the waters.	8:6a And it came to pass at the end of forty days , ...
19 And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that [were] under the whole heaven, were covered . 20 Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered 24 And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days .	8:1c and the waters asswaged; ... 3 And the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated. 4 And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat . 5 And the waters decreased continually until the tenth month: in the tenth [month], on the first [day] of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen .
... 22 All in whose nostrils [was] the breath [spirit] of life, of all that [was] in the dry [and], died....	8:1b and God made a wind [spirit] to pass over the earth,
God Remembered Noah	
8:1a And God remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that [was] with him in the ark:	

Broader applications of this idea of God remembering Noah:

1. when the thief on the cross asks the Lord to “remember him” (Luke 23:42), it is a request not just for a kind thought but for action.

2. It is a great blessing when God does not remember our sins, for that means that he will not take the action of punishing them; Jer 31:34.

3. This perspective places our remembrance of the Lord (1 Cor 11:24,25) in a new light. It is something we must do deliberately, with practical consequences in our lives.

Here, the significance is that this is indisputably the center of a very rich chiasmic structure. The history of the flood is as much a story of God’s mercy on Noah as it is of his wrath on sinful people.

Dr. John Whitcomb – God Remembers

7 months after they landed before they saw enough dry land for the land to become inhabitable; need vegetation to support the animals;

Bad news ... “But God”

God had not forgotten them; to take care of; provide all the needs of them

Thief on the cross: “Remember me”

We can’t understand migration and hibernation – God knows how to take care of animals;

Did not breed on the ark but in the new world

David Thompson:

Very encouraging and exciting passage – for those who escape the wrath of God

God pours out his judgment for 4 purposes:

1) to destroy the wicked

2) to separate the righteous from the wicked

3) to vindicate His people

4) to preserve the righteous

In times of wrath, God preserves and protects His people

5 narrative realities:

1) (:1-5) What God did – 2 Main Actions

a. Remembered Noah – covenant with Noah; God never forgets His covenantal agreement; preserving what you are thinking about; refocusing on His promises; restoration of life;

b. Removes the water – wind drives things up

150 days after rain began to fall, the ark came to rest; 5 X 30 days

Another 74 days waters continued to recede before mountain tops could be seen

Literal days and years in book of Rev. as well;

Russia, Iran and Turkey all connected to mountains of Ararat – 2 major peaks

Dr. Drew Conley: The God Who Remembers

A virgin world washed clean by judgment;

Great sense of relief that they had survived; but sense of loneliness as well;

You realize how small you are and how much you need God;

God proceeded to take action on Noah's behalf;
Life is about God – everything else stripped away;
Rescues our lives from despair and gives us purpose;
How does God show that He remembered Noah? Not just a mental exercise; but active care

- 1) **God's Active Providence** – both in His control of nature and care for living creatures
- 2) **God's Spoken Word** – direct revelation; instruction as to what to do
- 3) **God's Gracious Fellowship with Noah** – through sacrifice and covenant promises

Jeffery Smith: God Remembers Noah

Can be scary to think that you have been forgotten; 8 people floating in coffin-like box; had just witnessed divine judgment;

4 Major Themes:

1) Noah is Remembered

Entire explanation of everything that is about to happen in Chap. 8;
God knows all things all the time;
God speaking as if he were a man
God acting in faithfulness on the basis of a prior covenant commitment

Ex. 2:24; 32:13

Acting on behalf of those who are afflicted and cry to Him for mercy and deliverance
God will never leave us or forsake us
God doesn't speak to Noah for a long time
Noah had to keep trusting God; had to be patient; pray

2) The Flood is Abated

God acted; addressed the situation;
You can't dictate to God how He should show that He remembers you;

3) God is Worshipped

4) Common Grace is Promised

TEXT: Genesis 9:1-29

TITLE: HUMAN FAILURE BUT DIVINE FAITHFULNESS

BIG IDEA:

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD LIFTS US ABOVE THE HARSH REALITY OF HUMAN FAILURE

INTRODUCTION:

Our text this morning will teach us precious truths about both human failure and divine faithfulness.

Illustration: Computer infected with malware; needs to be cleansed; you need a complete reboot so you can function productively

Illustration: Canby Motors – “Your car can be new again”

Theme of Renewal

Piper: God is prepared to start over with a new "Adam." But this time the beginning is not in paradise. So the new "Adam" must reckon with three real threats against him and his mission to fill the earth: **a threat from animals, a threat from man, and threat from God.** So God makes three special provisions to protect the life of man in the new world where sin and corruption will again soon abound.

- God Gives New Rights over Animals
- God Makes Provision to Restrain Murder
- God Makes a Covenant with Noah

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD LIFTS US ABOVE THE HARSH REALITY OF HUMAN FAILURE

I. (:1-7) FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN THE RENEWAL OF MANKIND'S COMMISSION

Chiastic Structure: A B C B A

A1. (:1) Command: Prosper / Propagate / Populate

*“And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them,
‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.’”*

The world has just witnessed God’s catastrophic, global judgment because of the harsh reality of man’s wickedness and depravity; despite God creating a world that was perfect in the Garden of Eden; it had degenerated into such a state of corruption that God had to wipe it out with a flood;

But what about God’s **promises** of the seed of a woman who would crush the head of the serpent and deliver man from his sinfulness?

God remained **faithful** to His promises and brought the righteous family of Noah safely through

the judgment waters – the ark of salvation lifting them securely above the harsh reality of human sin and failure

Now it is time for **Renewal** – and we start with the renewal of Mankind’s commission – echoing the command given to Adam and Eve at the start of human history

What an optimistic prospect for new beginnings – Noah could look forward to:

- Prosperity
- Propagation and the multiplication of his family
- Populating the earth as they spread throughout the world and establish new communities

God remembered Noah and his family – acting on His previous commitments to His covenant people in demonstration of His faithfulness

B1. (:2-3) Provision: Killing of Animals for Food Prescribed as Gift from God

“And the fear of you and the terror of you shall be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given. Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant.”

“fear of you” – **Dominion** now based more on fear than on any type of harmonious existence – although in the Millennial Kingdom there will be another dramatic Renewal of the world order and the lion will peacefully lie down with the lamb – not so in this dispensation

Expansion of the **human menu** to now include steak on the diet

No longer restricted to a vegetarian diet ... Why would we want to reject God’s good gift to us?? Obviously gluttony is the abuse of God’s good gifts ... we must eat in moderation – But God has demonstrated His faithfulness in how He has provided food for our sustenance

C. (:4) Prohibition: Don’t Eat the Blood

“Only you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.”

We know that this prohibition is important because it lies at the heart of the chiasmic structure

Parunak: Note that this is one of the four “Jewish” commands explicitly enjoined on the Gentile believers in **Acts 15:29**. In fact, it probably lies behind two of them: explicit eating of blood, and eating of strangled things, which would not have been properly drained of blood. . . **Lev 17:11** goes further: the blood is reserved as a mechanism for atonement. Only bloody sacrifices could deal with sin, because they show the pouring out of life that God requires as punishment for sin.

Hughes: Humans are not to devour animals the way animals devour one another, while the blood is pulsing in the flesh. The reason for this is respect for life and beyond that the respect for the giver of life.

This prohibition extends until today

B2. (:5-6) Protection: Killing of Mankind Penalized – Made in Image of God

“And surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.”

Cf. how the world before the Flood was characterized by **violence** – probably a lot of human bloodshed; it is a sad commentary on our present society to see how many murders take place each year; the city of Baltimore has become known throughout the world as one that is especially prone to such violence; much of it is associated in one form or another with drug trafficking ... but that does not lessen the sting – it only intensifies the fact that the harsh reality of human depravity is always present with us

Distinction between man and the animal kingdom is consistently maintained throughout Scripture – huge distinction between legitimately shooting a deer for venison and murdering a human being made in the image of God – despite what some PETA members would have us believe – I am certainly against cruelty to animals and inhumane treatment – but that doesn't extend to killing animals for food – I also react against some of the Rescue ads that want to direct our compassion more towards animals than towards aborted infants or orphans who need our support and care – it is a matter of priority for me

Should be no debate about **Capital Punishment** as justly administered by governmental officials – God's Word has spoken; case closed; no room for discussion or debate
Many things in Scripture are clearly spelled out (like homosexuality being a sin or church leaders being male) – if you contest these, it shows a **low regard for the Word of God**

Hughes: to argue against the death penalty on humane grounds is to argue against God's Word. It exists precisely because of God's humane concerns. To ignore it is to despise life.

A2. (:7) Command: Prosper / Propagate / Populate

“And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it.”

Repetition is such an important technique in these early chapters of Genesis; here we have the closing refrain of the chiasmic structure

II. (:8-17) FAITHFULNESS OF GOD IN THE RENEWAL OF THE NOAHIC COVENANT

A. (:8-11) Provisions of the Covenant Promise Confirmed

“Then God spoke to Noah and to his sons with him, saying, ‘Now behold, I Myself do establish My covenant with you, and with your descendants after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you; of all that comes out of the ark, even every beast of the earth. And I establish My covenant with you; and all flesh shall never again be cut off by the water of the flood, neither shall there again be a flood to destroy the earth.’”

1. Initiator of the Covenant - -- God identified with emphasis – “*I Myself*”

Describes it as “*My Covenant*”

God is the one who establishes it; this is more of a renewal than an inauguration of something new; the common language for cutting of a covenant is not used here; hearkens back to **Gen. 6:18**

Def. of a Covenant = solemn commitment of oneself to undertake certain obligations

This is a unilateral covenant because all of the obligations are on one side of the relationship

God is pledging His **faithfulness** to carry out the obligations he details here

2. Parties of the Covenant – we call it the Noahic Covenant – but much more expansive than that; includes all of his family; includes all of creation

3. Content of the Covenant – God is concerned to preserve this world that He has created until the time of the coming of Christ at the end of the world in final judgment – that will be by fire instead of by flood

So when clouds come over the face of the earth, Noah and his family are not to have some type of fear of “Here we go again” as if the heavens are about to open up for a 40 day deluge

B. (:12-17) Sign of the Covenant Promise Displayed

“And God said, ‘This is the sign of the covenant which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant between Me and the earth. And it shall come about, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the cloud, then I will look upon it, to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.’ 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.’”

“*bow*” – same word used for the military bow used in warfare --

Borgman: when it is applied to God it is a symbol of His wrath; the Lord makes His bow of wrath into a 7 colored rainbow – peace now instead of wrath;

Usage of rainbow: **Ezek. 1:28** – appearance of rainbow compared to appearance of likeness of glory of YHWH; **Rev. 4:3**; reminder of His promise; that promise is undergirded by His presence which guarantees preservation of the earth;

vv. 14-16 Bow is sign of remembrance –

Blood of Jesus is ultimate sign of the New Covenant so that God the Father does not destroy us; Remembering = God acting on a previous commitment to a covenant party;

Parunak: Application: God’s use of signs reminds us not to fall into either of two errors.

• He condescends to our weakness by giving us tangible signs of intangible truths. Perhaps the most precious of these are the elements at the Lord’s Supper. We ought not to despise such symbols, but treasure them and take advantage of them.

• At the same time, the sign has **no power in itself**, but points us back to the underlying word (see Calvin on 9:15). Some people treat signs as almost magical, a mistake that leads to the Catholic concept of sacrament. In fact, the bow doesn't keep the world from flood; God's covenant does, and the bow is there only to remind us that he remembers his covenant.

Amazing that the LGBT community has taken to themselves this rainbow sign; Satan is always in the business of trying to hijack God's signs and corrupt them and obscure their true significance

When we see the rainbow ... think of the faithfulness of the covenant-keeping God

III. (:18-27) FAITHFULNESS OF GOD DESPITE THE RENEWAL OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

A. (:18-19) Roots of New World Order

1. (:18) 3 Sons of Noah

"Now the sons of Noah who came out of the ark were Shem and Ham and Japheth; and Ham was the father of Canaan."

2. (:19) Repopulation of the World

"These three were the sons of Noah; and from these the whole earth was populated."

B. (:20-23) Rebellion in Dishonoring One's Father

1. (:20-21) Indiscretion of Noah

*"Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard.
And he drank of the wine and became drunk,
and uncovered himself inside his tent."*

Flood did not solve the problem of human depravity and sinfulness
Same sinners came out of the ark as went into the ark

Sad record of how otherwise faithful servants of God can not **finish well**

"*Let me get home before dark*" = poem written by **Robert McQuilkin** (1981)

It's sundown, Lord. The shadows of my life stretch back into the dimness of the years long spent. I fear not death, for that grim foe betrays himself at last, thrusting me forever into life: Life with you, unsoiled and free. But I do fear. I fear the Dark Spectre may come too soon — or do I mean, too late? That I should end before I finish or finish, but not well. That I should stain your honor, shame your name, grieve your loving heart.
Few, they tell me, finish well... Lord, let me get home before dark.

Hughes: Noah was not ignorant [of fermentation effects of wine] . . . it takes years for a vineyard to produce ... He was no helpless victim. He passed out because his drinking had gone out of control. Noah had wrought his own degradation. The Hebrew "*lay uncovered*" is reflexive,

which emphasizes that he “*uncovered himself*.” He was so utterly inebriated that he stripped himself naked and passed out. Having uncovered himself, he therefore had covered himself with shame and disgrace (cf. **Habakkuk 2:15; Lamentations 4:21**).

Borgman: Gospel is not God coming and cleaning you up and saying, Let’s see how you do now; God’s promise is to make us a new creation and to sustain us in that newness and deliver us completely; not a do-over

2. (:22) Salacious Behavior of Ham

“And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.”

[Sermon on **Peer Pressure**]

Borgman: He dishonors his father – looks on his father’s disgrace with sense of perversity; goes out and tells his brothers; delighting in his father’s shameful and disgraceful position = the focal point;

Warranted the death penalty – **Ex. 20:12** – honoring father and mother very important; **Ex. 21:15ff; Deut. 21:18-21**; we don’t understand significance of this in our culture; Cf. God covering Adam and Eve

3. (:23) Circumspect Behavior of Shem and Japheth

“But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father's nakedness.”

C. (:24-27) Recompense / Retribution

1. (:24) Accountability

“When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him.”

Faithfulness of God in area of both cursing and blessing

2. (:25-27) Cursing and Blessing

a. Curse on Canaan

“So he said, ‘Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers.’”

Hughes: Canaan was the father of the Canaanites, the depraved nemesis of Israel. Therefore, the curse fell on Israel’s future enemies. The Canaanites were a sensually depraved people. Everything the pagan Canaanites did was an extrapolation of Ham’s lurid sensuality. From the moment Abram entered the land, the Canaanites were there spreading corruption (cf. Genesis 13, 15, 18, 19, 38). Leviticus 18 describes the degenerate practices of the Canaanites with a litany of euphemisms so as not to offend the reader, employing “*nakedness*” twenty-four times “

Drew Conley:

- the sins of a father do influence his children;
- the seed we sow will produce a harvest;
- children make their own choices; not all of Noah's sons responded the same way; not all of Ham's sons are cursed; the way of sin is the way of slavery –

we think we are exercising **freedom** when we reject the dominion of God – actually bondage

b. Blessing on Shem

“He also said, ‘Blessed be the LORD, The God of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant.’”

Parunak: Note the shift from *YHWH* in v.26 to “*God*” in v.27. It is in the line of Shem that the Lord makes himself known as the covenant-keeping God. Japheth knows him only in his character as creator.

c. Blessing on Japheth

“May God enlarge Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant.”

Parunak: As we shall see in more detail in chapter 10,

- Ham's descendants moved south to populate Africa. From them come the Egyptians and the tribes Israel found in Palestine.

- Japheth's descendants moved north to populate Europe and Asia. We are all mainly Japhethites.

- Shem's descendants (the “shemitic” or “semitic” people) remained near the center, in Mesopotamia and the Arabian peninsula. From them God chose Abraham and his descendants.

(:28-29) EPILOGUE – COMPLETION OF NOAH'S LIFE

“And Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the flood.

So all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years, and he died.”

CONCLUSION:

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD LIFTS US ABOVE THE HARSH REALITY OF HUMAN FAILURE

Not just a reboot – but a new operating system

Parunak: In light of this, consider how remarkable it is that at the Lord's Table, we are invited to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the sacrifice! We can now enter much more fully into fellowship with the Lord, partaking of his life, no longer an atonement but now the source of our life.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can you teach future generations to hang on to the true significance of the sign of the rainbow which God has established to reinforce His faithfulness?
- 2) What are some lessons God has taught you about His faithfulness?
- 3) What are the contrasts between a mere renewal and being made a new creation in Jesus Christ?
- 4) What are the temptations that might prevent us from finishing strong as we get into the later years of our lives?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: Capital offenses include:

- murder (here)
- idolatry (Deut 13:10; 17:2-5))
- disrespect for authority (e.g., parents) (Deut 21:18-21; cf. 2 Kings 21:10))
- sexual impurity (Num 5:21; Deut 22:21-24)

Modes of punishment include:

- stoning by the congregation (for idolatry, disrespect, impurity—not murder!)
- death at the hand of the avenger of blood (Num 35; Deut 19) (for murder) (note the similarity of Gen 9:6 with Matt 26:52; Rev 13:10. Defines the result but not the mechanism)
- death at the hand of the Lord (Num 5:21; cf. the expression “*cut off from among his people*” throughout the law)

Caveat: required evidence: two or three witnesses: Deut 17:6; 19:5.9

Dr. Richard Gamble: The Greatest Promise

we recognize that it was always God’s plan to enlarge the church beyond the tents or dwellings of his son Shem (Abraham’s family) to the dwellings of his son Japheth (the Gentiles). Second, although it may appear that Shem got all the good promises, in fact Japheth was included in them too. While Noah did not know the precise manner in which God would bring the prophecy to fulfillment, the Japhethites did actually conquer the Shemites. This happened in history when the Greeks and Romans took over Palestine. It also happened when Christians were engrafted into the tents of the Shemites (Israel; compare Rom. 11). Israel was the church in the Old Testament. They were blessed and saved not because Shem was a better son than Japheth, but because of God’s sovereign plan. This was not an issue of sin. It was God’s sovereign choice (compare Rom. 9).

We are all Japhethites living in the tents of Shem. Unless we have been born of Jewish parents, then this is true of us quite literally. Because of our sin we all deserve to be like Japheth, outside

the good promises of God made to Shem.

At the same time, we are also Shemites calling the Japhethites to live in our tents, to live in the church of Jesus Christ, the place of blessing. We are to call the scattered people of the world to join our voices in the proclamation: “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem!” “Sing, burst into song and shout for joy — for your maker is your husband — the Lord Almighty is His name — the Holy one of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth” (Isa. 54:1,5).

http://thirdmill.org/newfiles/ric_gamble/TH.Gamble.Gen.9.pdf

Brian Borgman: The Covenant with Noah

Opportunity for Noah to start over; but if you could make a fresh start would it actually make a difference? The world gets a fresh start; God reboots the whole thing; starts with one righteous family; very repetitive text; tenses of verbs change as text progresses

I. (:1-7) The Old and the New Laws for the New World

See the new world emerging;

New Adam in the person of Noah;

Vs. 1 and Vs. 7 are bookend commands echoing Gen 1;

New world is not completely new; sin still present

Certain changes made to the world; Man’s dominion based now on fear largely instead of harmony;

Expanded menu – now we eat steak

Death penalty instituted; emphasizes the value of human life; punishment must fit the crime;

A. Life Promoted

B. Life Protected

C. Life Promoted

II. (:8-11) God Confirms His Covenant

“*I, myself*” – emphatic

God initiating, sustaining, completing the covenant (difference in verb tenses)

Not the typical language for making a covenant which would be cut a covenant; not inaugurating something entirely new but a reinstatement and upholding of a covenant initiated at creation;

Parties of the Covenant: Noah and his descendants; all flesh on the earth; every living creature;

Really a covenant with all of creation;

God’s concern and commitment for the preservation of this world and the life in it;

Content of the Covenant: vs. 11 – God’s judgment is called God’s strange work; not the work He delights in (which is showing mercy, grace, love);

III. (:12-17) Sign of the Covenant Given – serves as God’s bond not to destroy the earth again thru a flood – bookends in this section

Signs of various covenants:

Abraham – circumcision

Israel – Passover; Sabbath

Church – bread and cup

“*My bow*” = sign of this covenant – one of the last things you would want to see rolling in = clouds; connection to God’s presence and majesty;

Vs. 17 – ends the flood narrative; inclusio;

Promise to preserve the earth until Jesus comes back;

How are we doing in promoting and protecting life?

Fresh start is not enough to solve problem of sin
The problems of the old world will become immediately the problems of the new world because of sinfulness of man; You are still you;
Adam sins by eating; Noah sins by drinking;
Bigger plan of God: to preserve the world until He can rescue and deliver and redeem it through the last Adam, Jesus Christ

Brian Borgman: Sin, Curse and Blessing

(:18-19) Prologue

Possible title for this sermon = Don't be a ham!
Think of great hopes Noah would have had for his family and for this new world;

(:20-23) Sin of Noah and Ham

Sordid story – (apart from expository, consecutive preaching we would skip this story)
Noah is a man of Adam, of the ground; takes up that agricultural calling in direct connection to Adam;
Plants a vineyard; not a new thing – people were drinking wine before the flood and getting drunk; Noah is subduing the earth; making it productive; doing what God had called him to do;
Abuse of God's gift = fruit of vine; don't excuse Noah here; decides to hang out disrobed;
Connection between shame of drunkenness and nakedness – cf. Adam sinning and knowing that he was naked;
No clear evidence that Ham did any more than see the nakedness of his father;

(:24-27) Prophetic Oracles given by Noah

How did Noah know? Came out of his drunken state; maybe someone told him; maybe God revealed it to him;
He begins to speak a curse and blessing; not pronouncing some type of magical words like a hex; but giving prophetic oracles from God;
These are the only recorded words of Noah in the bible;
Wouldn't you expect him to curse Ham ... but instead Canaan; message of doom; bible does not teach generational sins and curses; sons won't be put to death for the sins of their fathers;
Cf. **Ezek. 18** – *the soul that sins shall surely die*; not based on your father;
Later generations may repeat the sins of their fathers; the one who has been abused often times becomes an abuser;
A bad day for Noah and his family; Noah saw same traits in Canaan as in his father;

(:28-29) Epilogue

Picking back up text from chap. 5

Not mainly a passage railing against drunkenness;
Circumstances may have provided opportunity for sin; but Ham still morally culpable; can't blame the sin of his father;
Sons of Noah got on ark because they exhibited some degree of righteousness like their father;
Ham acting under the power of the serpent; think of outcome if Ham had been successful;
Sin and rebellion leads to slavery and bondage

Dr. John Whitcomb: What the Flood Did Not Solve

Human sin problem – had to be dealt with on the cross of Calvary;
Noah was an amazing man; only one to believe God; yet sad record here;

Something deficient in the way that Ham handled this crisis;
Other sons showed deep respect for their father;
Hab. 2:15 – degrading a fellow human who is made in image of God – makes a human act like an animal;
Shem was ancestor of Jesus – people of Israel;
Doesn't mean that every Canaanite was cursed;
“*fear of you*” – Rahab -- hid the Israelite spies – **Josh. 2:9ff** – testimony of Canaanite woman
Matt. 15:21 – Jesus approached a Canaanite woman – she is persistent and respectful;
acknowledges how unworthy she is to receive blessing; “*your faith is great*”

Dr. Drew Conley: Human Failure, Faithful God

We are indebted to God's longsuffering and mercy;
Record of human failure; but also displays faithfulness of God in both judgment and blessing;

I. The Reality of Human Failure

A. The Blunders of a Righteous Man

Noah knew he was a rescued sinner; first act when he stepped out of ark was to construct altar and worship God;
God blessed his farming efforts with fruitfulness;
True survivalist mode; nowhere else to turn for resources;
Took God's good gift and abused it;
Served well in his prime; now becomes indulgent in his older age;
You can derail at any point;

B. The Wicked Son – dishonoring his father

Wicked heart revels in exposing the faults of others; arrogant spirit not recognizing own need for forgiveness and grace;

II. Demonstration of Faithfulness of God

A. Judgment on a Wicked World (Corrupt People) - Ham

Canaan is only 1 of Ham's 4 sons; why does the curse fall on him? The text does not say;

B. Closeness of a Covenant God -- Shem

Blessing pronounced on YHWH, the God of Shem; the glory of God's people is God Himself; everything that makes our life joyful and purposeful has to do with God and His faithfulness to us and His relationship to us

C. Enlargement from a Gracious God -- Japheth

TEXT: Genesis 10:1-32

TITLE: TABLE OF NATIONS

BIG IDEA:

THE GOD WHO CHOSE ISRAEL IS THE SOVEREIGN GOD OVER ALL THE NATIONS

INTRODUCTION:

You might have come this morning anticipating that the most exciting thing about Genesis chapter 10 will be how I will butcher some of the difficult-to-pronounce names as we study this genealogy chapter. [Just like an umpire, you have to sell the call – pronounce them with confidence even when you don't have a clue.]

Actually, this account proves to be significant on a number of levels.

- Certainly from the **standpoint of history** it provides the only accurate account of the origin of so many of the ancient nations. There is no parallel to this document in the archives of any other ancient people. This is a unique list. Genesis is the Book of Beginnings.
- This chapter serves as important preparation for the account of the **Tower of Babel**; chaps. 10-11 must be studied as a unit. Chiastic structure with Tower of Babel between 2 accounts of the Sons of Shem; look at the **keywords** in chap. 10 that anticipate the events of the Tower of Babel: territory, earth, divided, spread, languages; scattered
- Maybe of primary importance, this chapter speaks to the **global perspective of God's program for mankind** – He is not just the God of Israel; He has always been interested in a salvation program that would encompass all people, everywhere – in fact the mission of Israel was to bring blessing to the Gentiles throughout the world

Ps. 2:8 “Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.”

Structural Elements:

- Note **2 bookends of vs. 1 and vs. 3**
- Note **common refrain** in vv. **5, 20, 31** – a growing diversity of ethnic, linguistic, geographical and political groupings

Parunak: Note summaries at vv. **5, 20, 32**, and in particular the terms “*families, tongues, lands, nations.*” This expression is echoed later in scripture:

• Pagan kings use it to claim their worldwide dominion: Nebuchadnezzar in **Dan 4:1**; Darius in **Dan 6:25**. They are the heirs of the spirit of Nimrod – Mighty warriors on the face of the earth who rebel against God and seek dominion for themselves

• But the Lord shows Daniel that this dominion rightly belongs only to the Son of Man, who must receive it; **Dan 7:13-14**, the only one who can exercise his “*might*” “before the Lord.”

• This is fulfilled in **Rev. 5:9, 7:9; 11:9**.

- **Numerical symmetry**

Hughes: Actually, however, this Table of Nations has carefully structured symmetries. For example, when we add up the nations that came from Noah's sons, we discover that they total seventy – another example of the multiples of sevens, tens, and seventies that we have seen so often in Genesis. Here it suggests **totality** – all the nations of the earth.

Look at **Gen. 46:27** – 70 sons of Jacob end up going down into Egypt – quite the parallel Waltke calls it a parallel microcosm to the macrocosm of the table of the nations; God never intended to be portrayed as only the God of Israel; He is the God of all the nations

Difference between totality and completeness:

Griffith Thomas: [Selective record] -- there is no attempt at **completeness** in the list. Several of the more modern nations which came later into close contact with Israel, as Moab, Ammon, Edom, Amalek, find no mention here, while on the other hand not all the most ancient of the nations are included.

(:1) PROLOGUE

Now these are the records of the generations of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah; and sons were born to them after the flood."

A new *toledot*, generation section begins here [**10:32** gives us another one; **11:10, 27**]

Griffith Thomas: This is an example of the characteristic, already mentioned, of dealing with collateral branches first, and only after that considering the main stream in the descendants of Shem. . . . This table of nations show their kinship with the chosen race, out of which all spiritual blessing is to become. Then the nations are dismissed from the Scripture record, and attention concentrated on the Semitic line.

THE 3 SONS OF NOAH PRODUCE 3 DISTINCT LINES OF NATIONS

I. (:2-5) SONS OF JAPHETH – OUTER EXTREMITIES -- GENTILES (14 nations)

A. (:2) Summary

"The sons of Japheth were Gomer and Magog and Madai and Javan and Tubal and Meshech and Tiras."

Hughes: lived mostly to the north and east of Canaan and spoke the Indo-European languages.. gomer dwelt north of the Caspian Sea. Tubal and Meshech settled around the southern shores of the Black Sea. Tiras lived west of the Black Sea in Thrace. Madai occupied the area south of the Caspian in what became Media. And Javan populated Ionia, the southern part of Greece. The sons of Javan spread around the northern Mediterranean as far west as Tarshish or southern Spain.

All the maritime coastlands and island areas surrounding the Mediterranean

Griffith Thomas: This early reference to "*the nations*" is very significant and shows that amid all the Jewish exclusiveness the Old Testament never loses sight of the great fact of universality and

God's purposes for all the world.

B. (:3) Sons of Gomer

“And the sons of Gomer were Ashkenaz and Riphath and Togarmah.”

C. (:4-5) Sons of Javan

1. (:4) Identification

“And the sons of Javan were Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim and Dodanim.”

2. (:5) Diversity Refrain

*“From these the coastlands of the nations were **separated** into their lands, every one according to his **language**, according to their families, into their nations.”*

Parunak: The closing summary differs from the other two by emphasizing “*the isles of the Gentiles*,” lit. “*coasts of the Gentiles*.” Most of the nations whom the Israelites thought of as coastal nations were Japhethite. Their interactions with Hamites and Shemites were more often by way of land, at least until the time of Solomon's voyages on the Red Sea.

II. (:6-20) SONS OF HAM – POWERFUL ENEMIES OF ISRAEL (30 nations)

(:6) Summary – Sons of Ham [2 bookends – vs. 20]

“And the sons of Ham were Cush and Mizraim and Put and Canaan.”

Hughes: Ham's four sons settled primarily in northeast Africa and Egypt, the eastern Mediterranean, and Southern Arabia. Cush populated the territory of the upper Nile south of Egypt.

No tracing of the line of Put; most of emphasis is on Cush via Nimrod and Canaan

A. (:7-14) Sons of Cush and Mizraim

1. (:7-12) Sons of Cush and Their Territory

a. (:7) Sons of Cush and Raamah

“And the sons of Cush were Seba and Havilah and Sabtah and Raamah and Sabteca; and the sons of Raamah were Sheba and Dedan.”

Arabian nations

b. (:8-12) Kingdom of Cush

*“Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, ‘Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD.’ And the beginning of his kingdom was **Babel** and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built **Nineveh** and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.*

Nimrod's leadership role at the Tower of Babel; name means "*We shall rebel*"

Borgman: Father of **Babylonians and Assyrians**

Connected back to 6:4

"*mighty hunter before the Lord*" is not positive – not only a tyrant, but violent and oppressive
He is a city builder – godly line builds altars

Parunak:

Question: Why is he said *to rebel*?

Answer: civil government is one of the two forces that have always been opposed to God; the other being organized religion. People are not content to live directly under God's rule, but insist on setting themselves up over one another.

Question: How was he first *gibbor*?

Answer: He was the first to exalt himself above others and organize political structures. The earlier giants had simply exalted themselves individually (6:4) and filled the earth with violence (6:11). Nimrod organizes people to legitimize this grasp for power. Compare Isa 3:2, which lists the gibbor as the first of the various people involved in leading a country successfully.

Question: Why the emphasis on his skill in the hunt?

Answer: Ancient rulers boasted of their skill in the chase to show their courage, and their ability to protect the people from wild beasts.

Griffith Thomas: **Babylon** henceforward stands for everything that is godless, and for the great opponent of the people of God.

Key Lesson: The world often exalts those who are leaders in rebelling against God and against His program of redemption; don't be impressed by what impresses the world; seek to glorify and exalt the God who is sovereign over all

2. (:13-14) Sons of Mizraim (Egypt)

*"And Mizraim became the father of Ludim and Anamim and Lehabim and Naphtuhim and Pathrusim and Casluhim (from which came the **Philistines**) and Caphthorim."*

B. (:15-19) Sons of Canaan and Their Territory

1. (:15-18a) Sons of Canaan

"And Canaan became the father of Sidon, his first-born, and Heth and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Girgashite and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite;"

Esau marries a Hethite;

Jebusite – associated with city of David and with Jerusalem = place of the Jebusites

2. (:18b-19) Their Territory

"and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad. And the

territory of the Canaanite extended from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboiim, as far as Lasha.”

Key Lesson:

Remember the oracle of Noah that the sons of Canaan would end up serving the sons of Japheth and of Shem – doesn’t happen right away ... it may appear like the godless have the supremacy ... but in the end they will not be on the throne

(:20) Summary – Sons of Ham – Diversity Refrain

*“These are the sons of Ham, according to their families, according to their **languages**, by their lands, by their nations.”*

III. (:21-31) SONS OF SHEM – ROOT OF GOD’S ELECT PEOPLE (26 nations)

(:21-22) Introduction -- Sons of Shem

“And also to Shem, the father of all the children of Eber, and the older brother of Japheth, children were born. The sons of Shem were Elam and Asshur and Arpachshad and Lud and Aram.”

The Semitic peoples

A. (:23) Sons of Aram

“And the sons of Aram were Uz and Hul and Gether and Mash.”

B. (:24-30) Sons of Arpachshad and Their Territory

1. (:24) Shelah and Eber

“And Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber.”

Hughes: The name *Eber* is related to the word *Hebrew* – so that Eber is understood to be the ancestor of the Hebrew people.

2. (:25) Sons of Eber – Peleg and Joktan

*“And two sons were born to Eber; the name of the one was **Peleg**, for in his days the earth was **divided**; and his brother's name was Joktan.”*

Name means division

3. (:26-30) Sons of Joktan

a. (:26-29) Identified

“And Joktan became the father of Almodad and Sheleph and Hazarmaveth and Jerah and Hadoram and Uzal and Diklah and Obal and Abimael and Sheba and Ophir and Havilah and Jobab; all these were the sons of Joktan.

b. (:30) Territory

“Now their settlement extended from Mesha as you go toward Sephar, the hill country of the east.”

(:31) Summary – Sons of Shem – Diversity Refrain

*“These are the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their **languages**, by their lands, according to their nations.”*

(:32) EPILOGUE

“These are the families of the sons of Noah, according to their genealogies, by their nations; and out of these the nations were separated on the earth after the flood.”

Anticipates event of the Tower of Babel

CONCLUSION:

Acts 17:26-28

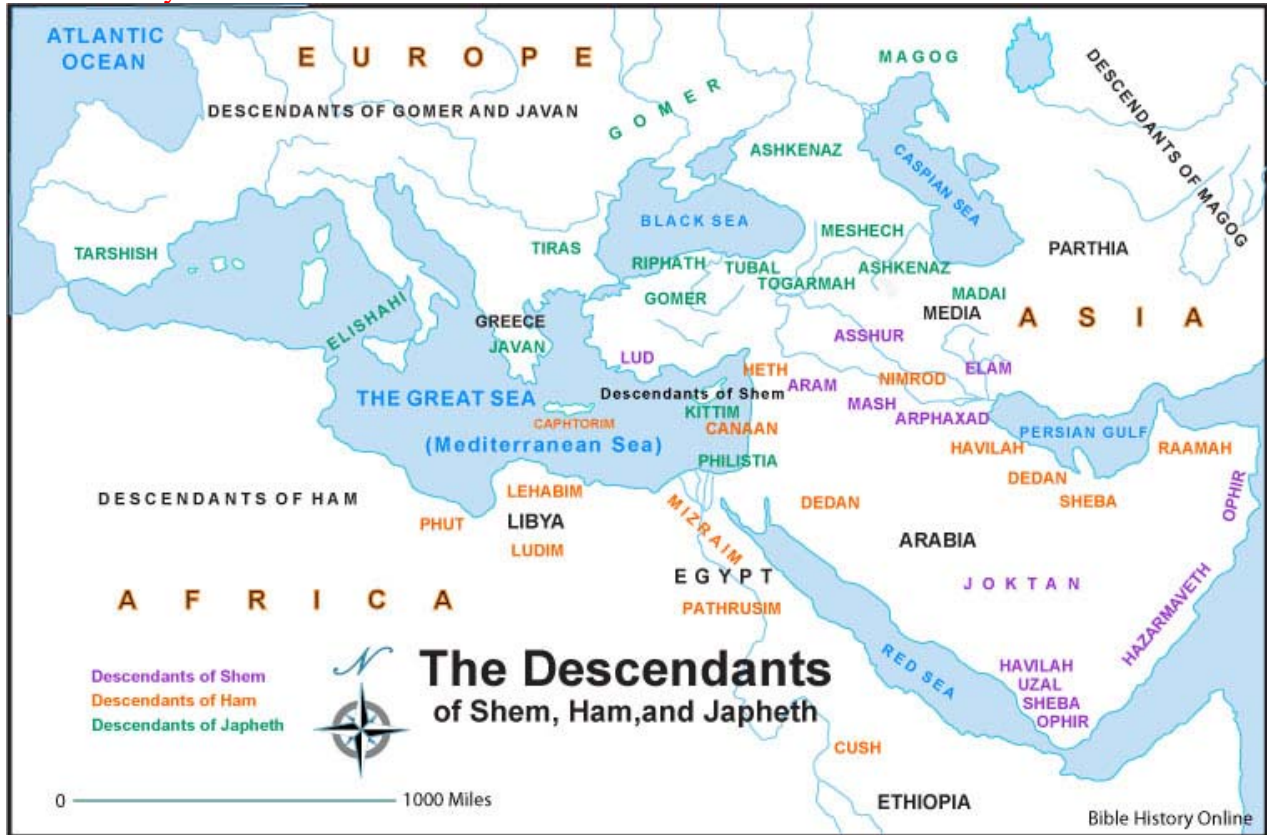
“and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, 27 that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His offspring.'”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

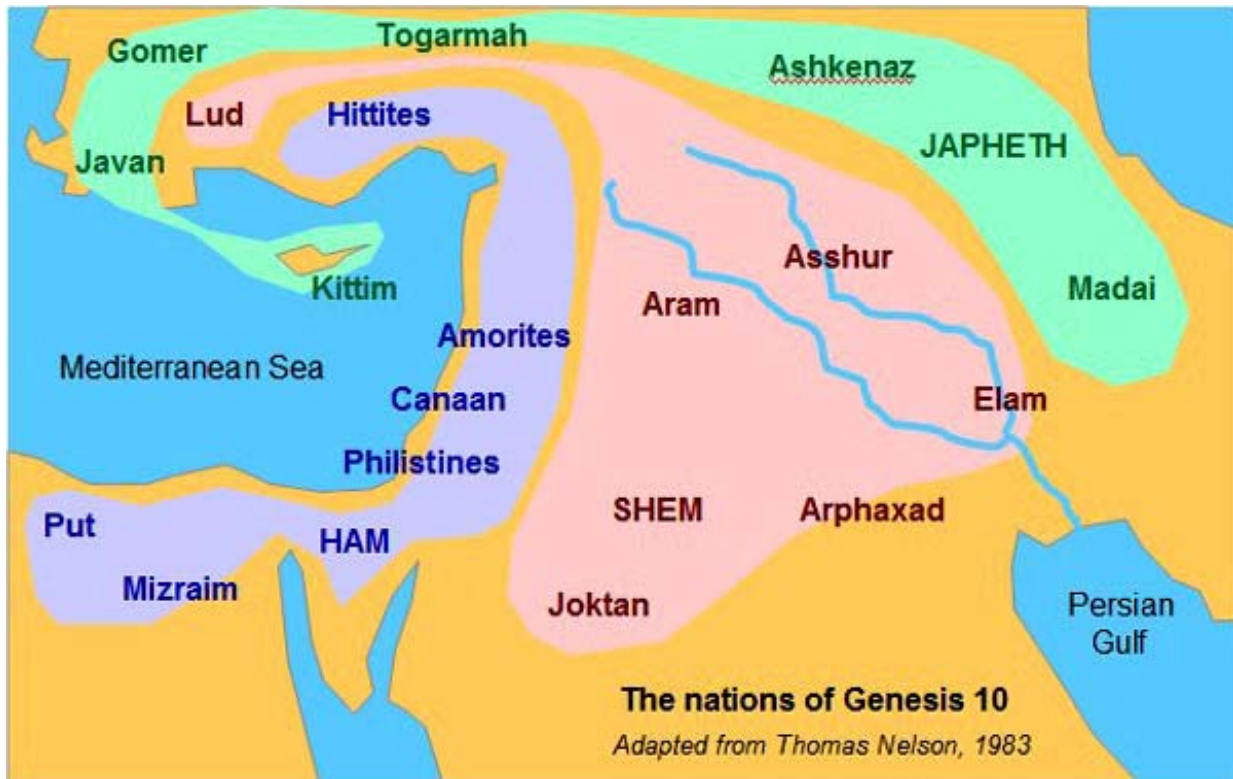
- 1) Do you think this chapter is worthy of a sermon or not?
- 2) What is the significance of the link between Nimrod and the mighty men of reknown identified in Gen 6?
- 3) How did Israel lose focus on God’s interest in the nations of the world?
- 4) What would be some of the significant spiritual lessons from a study of your family’s genealogy?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Bible History Online:



Thomas Nelson:



Dr. John Whitcomb: Background to the Tower of Babel

They did not obey God's commission to spread all over the world; they were terrified at that prospect;

Basic ideas of Chap. 10 –

Key words: **separation and languages**

Peleg = division

Chap. 11 tells us **how** God separated the nations by way of different languages

David Thompson:

Many endure the chapter rather than enjoy the chapter; historical accuracy; no parallel document anywhere in the world; historical roots of various nations and languages and tribes and places;

Common theme: all these people connected to Noah

All different nations and languages of people all had their beginning in Noah and should worship the God of Noah;

Tragedy is that most of these people don't end up having a relationship with God like Noah did;

What became of those who survived the wrath of God in the flood?

2 different formulas to introduce lineage:

“*sons of*” formula – 12 times – looks back at ancestry

“*become a father*” formula – 5 times – looks forward to the future development

3 Descendent lines presented in this chapter – map from John Davis

1) Enlarge **Japheth** by blessing him and expanding his boundaries and territory; 2 sons singled out:

Gomer is father of Europeans – most of us from this line

Javin father of Greeks

We could come from a great spiritual lineage and end up a spiritual dud

North of the Promised Land and then fans out

2) **Ham**'s descendants –

Promised Land inhabited now by other peoples; Israelites had not yet taken it over;

Promise that this line thru Canaan would end up serving sons of Japheth and Shem; God allow those who are godless to prosper for a time;

The godly will end up on top in the end;

Nimrod gets the most attention – Micah calls Babylon the land of Nimrod; he was a powerful man; skilled in tracking down and destroying men; people attracted to his leadership; he influenced men; father of Babylonianism; founded many powerful cities like Nineveh; took an opposition position against God

Don't let godless powers intimidate you; some of the most famous were the most godless;

South of the Promised Land and then fans out

3) **Shem**'s descendants –

Messiah would come through this line

Peoples of the Middle East;

5 generations after the Flood you go from righteous Noah to chaotic mess of religion after Babel;

Is. 66:19 – survivors of the Tribulation will be sent to the nations – look at the list – 4 from

Japheth; 1 from Ham; 1 from Shem; by faith anyone can share in Christ's kingdom blessings

Brian Borgman: Setting the Table for Grace

Gen. 1-11 is universal history; God's dealing with entire world;
things change in chap. 12-50 – patriarchal history

Chaps. 10-11 form a unit together; right in the middle you have the story of the Tower of Babel;
it explains how the Table of Nations came about;
Multiples of 7 and 10 dominate these chapters = sense of completeness; 70 nations

Many of these nations become traditional enemies of Israel

Introduced by toledot; 10:32 gives us another one; 11:10, 27 – 4 of the 10 toledots
Terah became father of Abraham

Genealogies made up of

- Persons
- Tribes
- Place names

This Table of Nations unique among all ancient literature

Observations:

- Echoes genealogy found in Gen. 5; gives us the two seed perspective but with some obscurity; God has the final word in the conflict
- We see both God's sovereignty and God's grace; nation Israel is not explicitly mentioned; most of emphasis here is on Gentile nations;
- 70 sons of Jacob end up in Egypt (**Gen. 46:27**); Israel is a microcosm similar to the macrocosm of the 70 nations; God is not against the nations; blessing the sons of Israel in order to bless the nations

TEXT: Genesis 11:1-9

TITLE: TOWER OF BABEL – MAN’S AGENDA VS GOD’S AGENDA

BIG IDEA:

GOD WILL FRUSTRATE MAN’S PRIDEFUL AND SELFISH ATTEMPTS TO SUBSTITUTE A HUMAN AGENDA (EVEN IMPRESSIVE ATTEMPTS AT UNITY) FOR GOD’S AGENDA

INTRODUCTION:

One must first understand that God’s Great Commission for the post-Noahic flood world had been clearly communicated.

“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” (Gen. 9:1; cf. 4:12)

Surely the world which had already been destroyed once by water should have understood that God was serious about obedience to His revealed will.

Account of Table of Nations in chap. 10 really follows sequentially the account of the Tower of Babel in chap. 11 that explains the dispersion of peoples throughout the world

What is Christ’s Great Commission to His Church for today’s program:

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**”*

Takes a lot of study to understand the details of all that Christ taught; Our Master and the Head of the Church is not reducing all of His teaching to some minimalistic set of confessional truths – Instead He takes the opposite approach – communicate to the next generation of disciples the necessity of obeying **all** that I communicated to you

How does He want the church to organize to carry out that Great Commission? Has He left us clueless? Or has He revealed by precept and practice what our methodology should be? Is God’s methodology ecumenical where Truth should be reduced to its lowest common denominator so that all believers can work together in organizational unity to accomplish common objectives?

Look at calls for unity issued by the church community in our day and time:

- Everything should be evaluated according to the Lord’s prayer in **John 17** that all believers be One even as the Father and Son are one
- It is evident that leading neo-evangelicals believe that our main goal is to **eliminate doctrinal distinctives** and to emphasize unity among those claiming to be believers.
- One of the basic ideas of today's philosophy of ecumenical evangelism is that **love is more important than doctrine**. Ecumenical evangelists say that doctrine divides, whereas love unifies.

GOD WILL FRUSTRATE MAN'S PRIDEFUL AND SELFISH ATTEMPTS TO SUBSTITUTE A HUMAN AGENDA (EVEN IMPRESSIVE ATTEMPTS AT UNITY) FOR GOD'S AGENDA

I. (:1-4) MAN'S AGENDA -- UNITY SHOULD NOT BE THE BOTTOM LINE FOR MANKIND'S MISSION – MAN'S ATTEMPT TO CONSPIRE TOGETHER TO SUBSTITUTE THEIR PRIDEFUL, SELFISH AGENDA FOR GOD'S REVEALED WILL

A. (:1) Unity in Language and Communication

“Now the whole earth used the same language and the same words.”

Look at how often in our ecumenical church culture, the argument is made that Unity must trump everything else;

Tremendous opportunity for unity in fulfilling the mission that God had charged them with

Deffinbaugh: Now there is nothing wrong with a common language. It is not evil, nor is it the cause of evil. Communication was greatly enhanced by it. It facilitated community life and was the foundation for unity. Potentially, a common language could have drawn men and women together in the worship and work of God. Practically, it was perverted to promote disobedience and unbelief. God's gift of language, like other gifts of His grace, was misused. Sinful man cannot do anything but misappropriate God's gifts of grace.

B. (:2) Unity in Decision Making – The Big Mistake in Settling Down vs. Obeying God's Commission and Expanding to New Territory = Personal Preference

“And it came about as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there.”

God has not blessed the model of majority rules when it comes to decision making; He demands obedience to the divine agenda

Nimrod's land; very fertile area; between the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers

Deffinbaugh: Leupold observes that the word “*journeyed*” in Genesis 11:2 literally meant ‘*to pull up stakes.*’ Urban life has not been presented in a favorable light thus far in Genesis. Cain built a city and named it after his son Enoch (Genesis 4:17). God had said that he should live as a vagrant and a wanderer (4:12). Nimrod, a descendent of Ham, seemed to be an empire builder also (10:9-12). In fact, it is possible that Nimrod was the leader in the movement to settle in Shinar and build this city with its tower.

Settling in the valley of Shinar was an act of disobedience. God had commanded men to spread out and fill the land, not to congregate in cities.

C. (:3) Unity in Methodology -- The Building Mentality vs. Dominion Theology

“And they said to one another, ‘Come, let us make bricks and burn them thoroughly.’ And they used brick for stone, and they used it for mortar.”

Man was very creative and inventive; came up with a pragmatic building methodology; one that worked and allowed them to build an impressive edifice\

But man should have been using his divine gift of creativity to pursue God’s program of Dominion Theology and spread throughout the world

D. (:4) Unity in Motivation vs. Submission to the Supreme Goal of Seeking the Glory of God = Rebellion

1. Their Prideful Hopes

a. Hope of Impressive Accomplishment

1) Magnificent City – for ourselves

“and they said, ‘Come, let us build for ourselves a city,”

2) Skyscraper Tower – object of worship?

“and a tower whose top will reach into heaven”

S. Lewis Johnson: Evidently what is referred to is *ziggurat*, which was a stepped pyramid. You’ve seen pictures of them in books on the ancient East. It is a kind of ladder that reaches high into the sky, each floor being a little smaller than the next, so it looks like a pyramid and then on top, there would be a **shrine** that would be dedicated to the deity. So it was a tower that had religious or spiritual connotations. They’ve said, it’s top is in the heavens, and so they conceived that this has somehow linking earth with heaven — but **on man’s terms not upon God’s terms.**

b. Hope of Impressive Recognition – Arrogance, Rebellion, Pride

“and let us make for ourselves a name”

Cf. Trump Tower

2. Their Selfish Fears

“lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

II. (:5-7) GOD’S ASSESSMENT -- UNITY DOES NOT ALWAYS IMPRESS GOD

A. (:5) God’s Awareness

“And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men

had built.” [center of chiasmic structure – heart of the passage]

Irony – Lord had to come down even to see this puny city and tower

Ps. 2:4 – the Lord who sits in the heavens is laughing at their attempts at enforcing their rebellious agenda

Nobody is more observant than God – knows everything that is taking place –

Not just the actions and the words that are spoken – but also the thoughts and underlying motivations

Nothing escapes His awareness

Stedman: No, this is not a primitive concept of God at all; it is an ironic expression. It is a humorous expression, if you please, designed to indicate to us, in a very clever way, the ridiculousness of this whole situation. Here is this tower that men erect, thinking that it will take God's breath away, it will threaten him. Men think, "Here we are, we wild Promethean creatures; we've dared to invade the heavens! You had better watch out, God!" But up in the real heavens this tower is so little that God can't see it. It is so tiny that even the strongest telescope in heaven does not reveal it. So God says, "I'll come down and investigate." It is language designed to set in contrast the ridiculousness of the suppositions of men, and the greatness of the Being of God. He "came down" to investigate this tiny tower that men had erected.

B. (:6) God's Analysis – 3 Major Problems:

1. They have Perverted the Blessing of Unity and a Common Language into Conspiratorial Allegiance

a. *“And the Lord said, ‘Behold, they are one people’”*

b. *“and they all have the same language”*

2. They have Started Down the Path of Rebellion and will Continue that Downward Spiral

“And this is what they began to do”

3. They will become Emboldened if left Unchecked

“and now nothing which they purpose to do will be impossible for them”

C. (:7) God's Action Plan = Frustrate Man's Agenda

I have to put together **Action Plans** for work all of the time --

1. Call to Action

“Come” -- contrasted with man's call to action using the same word multiple times

2. Detailed Action Plan

a. Triune Participation

“let Us go down”

b. Primary Tactic

“and there confuse their language”

3. Main Objective

“that they may not understand one another’s speech”

III. (:8-9) GOD’S AGENDA TRUMPS MAN’S AGENDA – UNITY IS NOT THE BOTTOM LINE FOR GOD’S AGENDA

A. (:8) Record of God’s Triumph

1. Forcing the People to Scatter to the Ends of the Earth

“So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth”

in the days of Peleg the earth was divided (born about 100 years after the Flood – Noah would still have been alive)

2. Frustrating their Plans to Build an Impressive City

“and they stopped building the city”

B. (:9) Legacy of God’s Triumph

1. Memorialized in the Name of the City = Babel

“Therefore its name was called Babel”

S. Lewis Johnson: The term Babel incidentally is a term that possibly comes from the word *balal* in Hebrew which means to confuse or many modern scholars feel that it comes or it is related to a word **Babili** [phonetic], which means the *gate of God*. We are, it is impossible to be absolutely certain about this and so we, if it comes from the term that means the gate of God then it is a word play that is Babel sounds like “confusion,” but the derivation is not strictly from the word *balal* which means to confuse. On the other hand, if it is from the term confuse, then the relationship is that much closer. Perhaps, the latter is right. **It is called Babel because there the Lord confused, balal, the language of the whole earth.**

Is. 13:19 *“And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms; the glory of the Chaldeans’ pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah”*

2. Memorialized in the Miracle of God’s Tactic

“because there the Lord confused the language of the whole earth”

3. Memorialized in the Success of God’s Strategy

“and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth.”

Origin of races as well –

G. Parker quoted by Constable: "Evolutionists assume that all life started from one or a few chemically evolved life forms with an extremely small gene pool. For evolutionists, enlargement of the gene pool by selection of random mutations is a slow, tedious process that burdens each type with a "genetic load" of harmful mutations and evolutionary leftovers. Creationists assume each created kind began with a large gene pool, designed to multiply and fill the earth with all its tremendous ecologic and geographic variety."

Deffinbaugh: The irony of this event is that what men most desired would have destroyed them, and what they most dreaded would prove to be a part of their deliverance.

Victor Knowles: In **Ephes. 4:13** Paul writes, *“Until we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.”* We are not there yet. Paul himself would later say, *“Not that I have already attained.”* I haven’t either. But it’s my goal, my aim, to come to the unity of the faith. Note that this unity we are to strive for is called a unity of faith. Our spiritual forefathers had a slogan: **In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; in all things, charity.** Our Achilles heel has been that we have not been able to distinguish between a matter of faith and a matter of opinion. A matter of faith must be of greater importance than a matter of opinion. Paul told the church in Corinth that what he received (by revelation) he passed on to them as matters “of first importance” – things like Christ dying for our sins according to the Scriptures, His burial, and His being raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (**1 Cor. 15:3,4**). Matters of faith are matters of fact. In these we should – we must – have unity http://poeministries.org/pages/Lectures/unity_&_evangelism.pdf

Look at the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the miracle of speaking in tongues so that the gospel message was heard and understood by people of all languages. God reverses the curse of the Tower of Babel so that there can be a united people in the body of Christ who worship and serve the true God in true unity.

CONCLUSION:

Dr. John Whitcomb: "Diversity and division is infinitely more precious than a **satanic unity**. The problem God's people are facing today: Satan wants unity in what? -- in error. God would infinitely prefer division because of truth. Do you know what Jesus said in **Matthew 10**? He said, *I have come not to bring peace, not to bring unity, but to*

bring division, to set a son against his father, a daughter against her mother, so that people within their own households will be enemies of each other.' That is what Jesus said he came to do ... God's smashing of satanic ecumenical unity was an incredible blessing [**Genesis 11: the Tower of Babel**] ... The potential for satanic depravity is infinite, as long as what continues? -- a unity in error -- organized blasphemy. Measure this friends. Grasp it. Satan will, in his brief hour, at the end of this world, be given his opportunity to demonstrate what total unity is like in the human race, when every person will have a mark on the forehead or right hand, and will walk lockstep under incredible blasphemy ... "You say, 'We want unity.' Oh, really? What kind of unity? 'We want all the churches to get together.' Oh, really? You mean in error, in confusion, in heresy? That is, dear friends, the ecumenical movement of our hour, in which all the great denominations and all the great church leaders are becoming more and more unified. In what? -- in compromise and theological error; and this is the ultimate horror" (from *Human Races*, a message delivered at Indian Hills Community Church, Lincoln, Nebraska, Fall of 1984).

Steven Cole: The Bible declares, "*There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the Lord*" (**Prov. 21:30**). Concerning world rulers, a later king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, was humbled by God until he learned that "*the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, and bestows it on whom He wishes*" (**Dan. 4:17, 25**). As the psalmist expressed God's response to proud kings who challenge His rule, "*He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them*" (**Ps. 2:4**). Concerning the plans of proud man, the Bible declares, "*Many are the plans in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord, it will stand*" (**Prov. 19:21**).

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How did we get so many languages today vs. how many did God create back at the incident of the Tower of Babel?
- 2) When is Unity a good thing and when is it detrimental?
- 3) When the text portrays the Lord as "coming down to view" what was going on – how does that mesh with the Lord's omnipresence and His omniscience?
- 4) Was the Lord worried that He would not be able to stop man from accomplishing his heart's desire if He let them complete this project?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ray Stedman: Controlling God

Immediately, the inventiveness of the Hamitic people becomes evident. Remember that these were the technicians of humanity -- technologically gifted people. Their native inventiveness becomes evident in the way they adapted to the environment in which they lived. This is always characteristic of Hamitic people wherever they have gone. They did not find rocks and stones to build with, such as they had in the land where they had previously lived, so they made bricks out of dirt and clay. Later they discovered the process of burning them, first in the sun, and then in a furnace, until they became hard and impermeable brick such as we know it today. All this is given to us in one sentence in the Bible, but we know from history that it occupied a period of time. Man did not discover all this at one time but learned how to make bricks and later how to burn them. They also lacked lime for cement so could not make mortar, as we know it, but some inventive Yankee among them discovered a tar pit which was filled with natural asphalt (these are common throughout the Middle East). They discovered that the tar was sticky and they used this natural bitumen, this asphalt, for mortar. They had then a substitute for stones and cement. They made bricks and used asphalt for mortar and thus demonstrated how adaptable they were to the situation they found. . .

Man, in his inventiveness, thinks he can master the earth. But the very solutions he works out become the bigger problems which he can no longer encompass. The whole vast scheme of things eludes him; he is not able to put them all together. Thus, for man's sake (this is the heart of it), for man's sake -- not because God is afraid of man -- but for man's sake, to protect him from himself, God says, "Let us go down and confuse their language." Let us stop man, in his mad folly, from destroying himself off the face of the earth, because he is not God enough to handle it." So God came down and suddenly, as the workers gathered for work one morning, they found they could not communicate with each other anymore. What a scene this must have been! The foreman would give orders, but the men would shake their heads; they didn't understand. The foreman would yell, but they wouldn't get it. They would try to explain but he couldn't understand them. You can imagine what fist-shaking, table-pounding and yelling went on here. It was utter confusion.

Victor Yap: Man Proposes, God Disposes

The Tower of Babel is about man's determination to live sufficiently, firmly, and arrogantly without God. We think we are smart in ourselves, strong even without God, and safe with each other. With the advance of industry, active collaboration, and concerted effort, nothing can stop us from reaching to the top.

However, God reminds us His counsel will stand. Relying on Him assures our well-being, and excluding Him from our lives only brings failure.

I. THE INTELLIGENCE OF MEN IS FOOLISHNESS TO GOD (GEN. 11:1-4)

II. THE INSUBORDINATION TO GOD IS PRETENSIOUS OF MEN (GEN. 11:4)

The tower of Babel was man's ecumenical stairway to heaven, their giant step in technology, and the first engineering marvel of the world. Here, they revealed their

unquenchable longings, flexed their muscles, and craved for godlike glory

III. INCIVILITY TO OTHERS IS DANGEROUS TO ONE ANOTHER (GEN. 11:5-9)

<http://sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=46375&Sermon%20Man%20Proposes,%20God%20Disposes%20by%20Victor%20%20Yap>

John Calvin: We see the design and the aim of the undertaking. For whatsoever might happen, they wish to have an immortal name on earth; and thus they build, as if in opposition to the will of God. And doubtless ambition not only does injury to men, but exalts itself even against God. To erect a citadel was not in itself so great a crime; but to raise an eternal monument to themselves, which might endure throughout all ages, was a proof of headstrong pride, joined with contempt of God. . .

Behold what they gained by their foolish ambition to acquire a name! They hoped that an everlasting memorial of their origin would be engraven on the tower; God not only frustrates their vain expectation, but brands them with eternal disgrace, to render them execrable to all posterity, on account of the great mischief indicted on the human race, through their fault. They gain, indeed, a name, but not each as they would have chosen: thus does God opprobriously cast down the pride of those who usurp to themselves honors to which they have no title.

Steven Cole: Man Versus God – God Wins!

Big Idea: When proud men set themselves against the Sovereign God, God always wins.

God's action in scattering the people was both a punishment and a preventative, to keep man's pride from going too far. Man's plans for unity and strength ultimately would have resulted in great evil, because it was done in human wisdom apart from the Lord. It would have resulted in what God will one day permit, the one world government and one world religion under the total domination of the antichrist. And so God met the unity on earth with disunity from heaven. . .

If you ask, How do I grow in humility? the biblical answer is: Get a clearer picture of the greatness of God in His holiness; and, get a more accurate view of the depth of your own sinfulness. **C. S. Lewis** wrote (*Mere Christianity* [Macmillan], p. 111),

“In God you come up against something which is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself. Unless you know God as that--and, therefore, know yourself as nothing in comparison--you do not know God at all. As long as you are proud you cannot know God. A proud man is always looking down on things and people: and, of course, as long as you are looking down, you cannot see something that is above you.”

In 1715 Louis XIV of France died. He had called himself “Louis the Great,” and was

famous for his brash statement, "I am the State!" His court was the most lavish in Europe and his funeral the most spectacular. His body lay in a golden coffin. To dramatize his greatness, orders had been given that the cathedral would be dimly lit, with a special candle set above the coffin. Thousands waited in hushed silence. Then Bishop Massilon began to speak. Slowly reaching down, he snuffed out the candle, saying, "Only God is great."

<http://www.fcfonline.org/content/1/sermons/052696M.pdf>

S. Lewis Johnson: Man's Spirit and God's Sovereignty

Nowhere did we see the spirit of the world more clearly than in the account of the tower Babylon. There we see the spirit of man grandiose in its imagination, rebellious in its pretensions and yet reflective underneath of a basic insecurity. . .

Evidently what is referred to is ziggurat, which was a stepped pyramid. You've seen pictures of them in books on the ancient East. It is a kind of ladder that reaches high into the sky, each floor being a little smaller than the next, so it looks like a pyramid and then on top, there would be a shrine that would be dedicated to the deity. So it was a tower that had religious or spiritual connotations. They've said, its top is in the heavens, and so they conceived that this has somehow linking earth with heaven -- but on man's terms not upon God's terms. . .

What you see in Babylonianism, and you will see it all through the Bible – Babylonian opposed Jerusalem and finally Babylonian opposed to the New Jerusalem, God's great city of the future -- you will see the mystery of iniquity at work, but you will also see the mystery of godliness progressing founded in the blood of Calvary shed by Lord Jesus Christ for the redemption of sins expended by the rushing mighty wind of the Holy Spirit who united these people from different languages in one language they understood on the day of Pentecost, see that's all earnest.

http://www.sljinstitute.net/sermons/old_testament/pentateuch/pages/genesis21.html

Thomas Leake: When the World Unites Against God – 3 Scenes

Introduction:

Cf. the book The Mark of the Beast – describing one world govt and economic system (cf. **Rev. 13**); World was once united back at the Tower of Babel; this was a real historical event; not a fairy tale; God abundantly provides but man disbelieves and seeks joy and satisfaction outside of God's will

I. (:1-4) The Rebellion of Man

God's will had specifically been revealed to Noah and his sons; but they did not believe it would be beneficial to obey God;

4 Factors that contributed to their united rebellion:

A. One Language

Communication was free and easy

B. One Location

Mt. Arafat – they left and journeyed eastward; pulled up stakes and moved on into the

plain = Iraq; later became the kingdom of Babylon – lush, fertile

C. One Leader (:3) = Nimrod

Noah and Shem still living if no gaps in the genealogy – so probably there were gaps – difficult to imagine them going along with rebellion; no dissenting voice heard

D. One Lofty Ambition

Symbol of centralized power and personal greatness; tower built high and impressive; possibly involved with dedication to worship of heavenly bodies?; but the monument is said to be not dedicated to the stars but to themselves, for their prestige and to keep them from being scattered;

Attitude: we will pull together and make a name for ourselves

II. (:5-7) The Response of God – 3 Responses

A. (:5) The Lord's Descent

The Lord came down to see; Ironic – God comes down to view their puny efforts; not Deism here – God is very involved; very patient – let them finish a good portion of the construction; maybe the city was complete but the tower was still incomplete

B. (:6) The Lord's Displeasure

Rebuked man for using all of his abilities and creativity for selfish ends; God had a plan for the nations of the world; chose to work through one small nation; the division of the nations was God's idea

C. (:7) The Lord's Decisive Action

Trinity involved in the confusion of the languages; mocking the supposed sovereignty of man;

Why did God have to do this? Needed a permanent solution so they would not regather; this was God's mercy in action – saving man from himself and from irreversible totalitarianism

III. (:8-9) The Resultant Reversal

They stopped building the city and were scattered abroad; all of the above 4 factors were now reversed;

One Lousy Legacy is what they had left

Psalm 2 = prophecy about the future – world uniting against the Messiah;

The only unity that will endure is Jesus ruling over the world;

We should have a healthy Fear of opposing the will of God

David Thompson –

People defying the will of God; during days of Peleg earth was divided;

The Lord will sovereignly work out His program despite man's efforts to oppose it;

The people were supposed to go to places appointed by God and communicated to

them; but they chose to stay together; God will not allow anyone or anything to stop His sovereign program;

The people suffered a tragic judgment because of their rebellion

6 narrative observations:

- 1. The unity of the people** (vs. 1) – all speaking one language – what was this language?? But instead of using their speech to obey and glorify God; they elevated and tried to glorify themselves; doing the exact opposite of what God wanted them to do;
- 2. The location of the people** (vs. 2) – land of Shinar – Nimrod’s land
- 3. The accomplishment of the people** (vs. 3) – bricks had a white, chalky look; they know what they are doing; using mortar – asphalt; an impressive group of people; these people were not boasting in the Lord
- 4. The rebellion of the people** (vs. 4) –
 - a. wanted to build a city and tower – an edifice known for its height in the city of Babylon; ziggurat; check their motives
 - b. wanted the tower to reach to the heavens – build our own way to heaven; prompted by pride and self-sufficiency;
 - c. wanted to build a name for themselves – a monument that would speak of their greatness; that is the great ambition of most people; 12:2 – God can make Abram’s name great as he trusts and obeys God
 - d. they wanted to stay together – sounds admirable on the surface; motive is evil; they don’t want to do what God wants them to do
- 5. The evaluation of God** (vv. 5-6) – real irony; “*the Lord came down*” – more like the accomplishment of dwarfs; this city and tower was nothing; God had to come down even to see it; amazing demonstration of grace that God did not wipe them out right there;
- 6. The judgment of God** (vv.7-9) – attempt at a one-world government; there will be a time coming in the future when the antichrist will rule the earth; more than 3000 languages and dialects in the world today;

Constable: chiastic structure

- A** All the earth had one language ([Genesis 11:1](#))
B there ([Genesis 11:2](#))
C one to another ([Genesis 11:3](#))
D Come, let’s make bricks ([Genesis 11:3](#))
E Let’s make for ourselves ([Genesis 11:4](#))
F a city and a tower
G And the Lord came down to see ([Genesis 11:5](#); cf. [Genesis 8:1](#))
F” the city and the tower ([Genesis 11:5](#))
E” that the humans built ([Genesis 11:5](#))
D” Come, let’s confuse ([Genesis 11:7](#))
C” everyone the language of his neighbor ([Genesis 11:7](#))
B” from there ([Genesis 11:8](#))
A” (confused) the language of the whole earth ([Genesis 11:9](#))

TEXT: Genesis 11:10-32

TITLE: GOD BRINGS GRACE OUT OF DISGRACE

BIG IDEA:

IN FAITHFULNESS TO HIS PROMISES, GOD SETS THE STAGE FOR HIS GRACIOUS DEALINGS WITH ABRAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS

INTRODUCTION: [quoted largely from R. Kent Hughes]

Finishing up the first main section of Genesis = **chaps. 1-11** – Primitive (Primeval) History;

Second main section = **Chaps. 12-50** Patriarchal History

Structural marker = toledot – repeated 10 times

We have covered a lot of ground so far in our study of Genesis

In spite of man’s pervasive sin, we see God’s triumphant grace throughout

This genealogy section forms a **parallel with the line of Seth in chapter 5** – which detailed 10 generations from Adam’s son **Seth to Noah**. Here we also see 10 generations from Noah’s son **Shem to Abram**. In both cases the world had degenerated largely into pagan idolatry. Despite impressive human accomplishments in a variety of spheres – economic, civil construction, technology, the arts, etc. – the evidence of man’s depravity was inescapable. Again, in both cases God remained faithful to His promise to preserve a line through which He could send the seed of the woman, the Messiah, to accomplish redemption. In both cases God chose to work through one key figure – first Noah and now Abram – a man of faith and righteousness.

Hughes: the most notable difference is the absence of the refrain “and he died,” which occurs eight times in chapter 5. Genesis 5 stressed that death prevailed in the race, whereas Genesis 11 “stresses a movement away from death toward the promise, and it stresses life and expansion” (**Ross**). The other obvious difference between the genealogies is the shrinking life span of the patriarchs after the flood . . .

Also you have to compare this genealogy in Chap. 11 with the earlier bookend version in the **Table of Nations in Chap. 10**. There is an interesting diversion by way of emphasis when you get to the mid-point involving Peleg (whose name means *division* – “*for in his days the earth was divided*” 10:25). Chapter 10 goes on to detail the line that derives from Joktan the brother of Peleg. While Chapter 11 does not mention Joktan at all; instead Peleg’s descendants are referenced all the way up to Terah and Abram.

Hughes: Why? The answer is that Joktan’s line leads up to the fiasco at Babel, while Peleg’s line results in the great man Abram, the hope of God’s people (cf. **11:17-26**). As Kenneth Mathews says, “This highlights the difference in the two inner branches of the Shemite family – one leading to *disgrace* and the other to *grace*.” . . .

Lastly, the genealogy ends with Terah fathering three sons – Abram, Nahor, and Haran – so that the genealogy ends just like the ten generations from Adam to Noah ended when Noah fathered three sons – Shem, Ham, and Japheth (cf. 5:32). Though Abram, like Shem, was named first in the list over his brothers, he, like Shem, was not the firstborn. He was named first because of his prominence. . .

So we see that hope abounds with the conclusion of this genealogy. Moses has shown that God's promise to Eve of a seed who will crush the head of the snake (cf. 3:15) could not be thwarted by the confusion and scattering of the nations. Even though the seed was scattered from Babel, God had preserved ten great men from Noah to Abram. And furthermore, the line of Peleg brought grace in place of Joktan's line of disgrace. How gracious God was going to be to the nations!

IN FAITHFULNESS TO HIS PROMISES, GOD SETS THE STAGE FOR HIS GRACIOUS DEALINGS WITH ABRAM AND HIS DESCENDANTS

I. (:10-26) BOOK OF SHEM – FAITHFULNESS OF GOD TO KEEP HIS PROMISES

A. (:10-11) Shem

1. Toledot Introductory Formula

“These are the records of the generations of Shem.”

2. Main Focus

“Shem was one hundred years old, and became the father of Arpachshad two years after the flood;”

3. Summary

“and Shem lived five hundred years after he became the father of Arpachshad, and he had other sons and daughters.”

B. (:12-13) Arpachshad (third of Shem's 4 sons)

1. Main Focus

“And Arpachshad lived thirty-five years, and became the father of Shelah;”

Matter of God's free sovereign choice – not just birth order where the first born would receive the emphasis

2. Summary

“and Arpachshad lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Shelah, and he had other sons and daughters.”

C. (:14-15) Shelah

1. Main Focus

“And Shelah lived thirty years, and became the father of Eber;”

2. Summary

“and Shelah lived four hundred and three years after he became the father of Eber, and he had other sons and daughters.”

D. (:16-17) Eber

1. Main Focus

“And Eber lived thirty-four years, and became the father of Peleg;”

2. Summary

“and Eber lived four hundred and thirty years after he became the father of Peleg, and he had other sons and daughters.”

E. (:18-19) Peleg

1. Main Focus

“And Peleg lived thirty years, and became the father of Reu;”

2. Summary

“and Peleg lived two hundred and nine years after he became the father of Reu, and he had other sons and daughters.”

F. (:20-21) Reu

1. Main Focus

“And Reu lived thirty-two years, and became the father of Serug;”

2. Summary

“and Reu lived two hundred and seven years after he became the father of Serug, and he had other sons and daughters.”

G. (:22-23) Serug

1. Main Focus

“And Serug lived thirty years, and became the father of Nahor;”

2. Summary

“and Serug lived two hundred years after he became the father of Nahor, and he had other sons and daughters.”

H. (:24-25) Nahor

1. Main Focus

“And Nahor lived twenty-nine years, and became the father of Terah;”

2. Summary

“and Nahor lived one hundred and nineteen years after he became the father of Terah, and he had other sons and daughters.”

I. (:26) Terah

“And Terah lived seventy years, and became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran.”

Abram = *exalted father*

II. (:27-32) BOOK OF TERAH – 5 KEY SPIRITUAL LESSONS

A. (:27a) Toledot Introductory Formula

“Now these are the records of the generations of Terah.”

[Lesson 1: The Sovereign God Accomplishes His Redemptive Purposes by the Methodology of Gracious Divine Election Rather Than Meritorious Human Effort](#)

J. Ligon Duncan: this chapter reminds us again that our approach into the presence of the Heavenly Father **cannot be by our own effort**. We see man's wicked efforts at glorification in Genesis 11, verses 1 through 9 in the story of Babel. We see man's feeble efforts at following after God in the story of Terah, making it to Haran, but no further. Listen to what **Derek Kidner** says: "This chapter brings the primeval history to a doubly appropriate close with man's self-effort issuing in confusion at Babel and in compromise here. On his own, man will get no further than this." It's the election of grace that brings Abram into Canaan. It's the election of grace which causes the line of Abram to become the line of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Joseph. And for those to persevere in the faith, it's not something in them. They are called out of idolatry, and they become the line of the faithful. What's the difference between Abram and his father? **The grace of God.**

B. (:27b-30) Overview of Terah

1. Terah Fathered 3 Children

"Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran;"

J. Ligon Duncan: This genealogy provides us a link between God's man in the old world, in the days before the patriarchs, and God's chosen man in the age at the very initiation of the age of the patriarch Abram.

2. Summary of Haran

a. Haran Fathered Lot

"and Haran became the father of Lot."

b. Haran Died in Ur of the Chaldeans

"And Haran died in the presence of his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans."

Lot becomes an orphan – explains why he ended up going with his uncle Abram

3. Wives of Abram and Nahor

*"And Abram and Nahor took wives for themselves. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai; and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milcah and Iscah. **And Sarai was barren; she had no child.**"*

Sarai = Abram's half sister; name means princess – very beautiful

Repeats twice for emphasis that she was barren = metaphor for hopelessness

Milcah very productive and fruitful – **Gen. 22:20**

Lesson 2: God specializes in doing the impossible

"God specializes in things thought impossible; He does the things others cannot do."

C. (:31) Main Focus

1. Departure From Ur – Decisive Action

"And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans"

Borgman: When you study the names in this section you see how committed Terah and his family were to the worship of the moon god cult centered in Ur; strongly patriarchal culture; they have lived in one center of worship of **Sein** and move to another center

Terah = moon

Sarai = name for the consort of the moon god Sein

Milcah (Lot's sister) = name for daughter of Sein in the moon god religion

Nation of Israel born right out of pagan idolatry

Josh. 24:2 *“Long ago, your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods”*

J. Ligon Duncan: serving the living God means forsaking idolatry. And idolatry is not an ancient problem, it is a perennial problem, it is ever present. And idols come in every form and fashion. You don't have to fall before a statue of gold to be an idolater. All of us are tempted to capitulate to the thought patterns of our own day, and to begin to think like the world. As we do so we have capitulated to idolatry. But the Lord calls all of us out of idolatry to serve the living and the true God. But the Lord calls all of us out of idolatry to serve the living and the true God. I have no doubt that one of the reasons that Abram was called away from the land of his birth and away from his family relations was precisely so that God could cut the Gordian knot of idolatry that Abraham was tangled in, and so break him free from the oppression of the thought pattern of that wicked life. Many of you have had to wrestle with things that required that sort of a drastic break. You have had to wrestle with friendships and relationships that had to be excised in order to follow after God. There perhaps had to be vocational changes in order to follow after God. Tremendous life changes in order to seek after that city which has foundations. It is not surprising that that pattern obtained even in the calling of Abram, the father of the faithful.

Lesson 3: God calls His chosen people to respond to His call in Faith and Flee a life of idolatry

It sounds from just a superficial reading of these verses alone that God's call came to Terah and he responded. But we know from the full context of Scripture that God's call came to Abram while he was in Ur ... and he immediately responded by faith in obedience – just as Noah had responded earlier to God's mission for him.

Gen. 15:7 *“I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.”*

Neh. 9:7 *“You are the Lord, the God who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and gave him the name Abraham”*

Acts 7:2-4

Hughes: The way we get to square this with the age data in **Genesis 11, 12** is to understand that Abram was not the firstborn of Terah's three sons when Terah began having children at age seventy. So it is best to understand that Terah was 130 when Abram was born and that he lived seventy-five more years until the age of 205 (cf. **11:32**). Therefore Abram was, as **12:4** says, *“seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.”*

Hebrews 11:8 *“By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.”*

2. Destination of Canaan – Definite Goal

“in order to enter the land of Canaan;”

Lesson 4: God prepares good gifts for His chosen people

Land flowing with milk and honey

Despite the fact that currently there were impressive enemies living in the land

Can't have a Grasshopper mentality – must move forward with expectation of triumph – expecting to receive the blessing that God has promised

3. Distraction in Haran – Debilitating Diversion

“and they went as far as Haran, and settled there.”

Had to travel north before they would go south to the promised land

Haran noted for its mammoth temple to the moon god Sein

Lesson 5: God has called His people to be pilgrims with a purpose rather than settlers side-tracked in a state of stagnation

Borgman: One of the biggest challenges in life is to keep the promises of God in the forefront when life seems ordinary and mundane and boring; not every day is a Red-Sea-parting-day; still God is working out His purposes through unwitting participants

D. (:32) Summary

“And the days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.”

Now God is going to focus on Abram and his family – despite their hopeless state

What kind of candidate was Abram to fulfil God's promise??

CONCLUSION:

Constable: With **Genesis 11:26** the scene has finally been set for the patriarchal history to unfold. The opening chapters of Genesis have provided us the fundamental insights for interpreting these chapters properly. **Genesis 1** revealed the character of God and the nature of the world man finds himself in. **Genesis 2, 3** portrayed the relationship between man and woman, and the effects man's disobedience has had on woman and divine-human relations. **Chap 5** sketched the long years that passed before the crisis of the great flood (**chaps 6-9**), which almost destroyed all humanity for its sinfulness. The table of the nations (**chap10**) started the process of Israel's geographical and political self-definition with respect to the other nations in the world, but **Genesis 11:1-9** reminded us that the nations were in confusion and that mankind's proudest achievements were but folly in God's sight and under his judgment.

Playing **your individual role** in God's redemptive plan for the ages should be a journey of great adventure and opportunity.

Steven Cole: The important thing is, wherever you're at, to yield yourself to the Lord. A journalist was elected to the world-famous Adventurers' Club. He didn't know the amount of the dues, so he sent in a signed blank check. The Adventurers promptly elected him Adventurer of the Year! God wants you to sign your life over as a blank check to Him. Yes, it's an adventure! But you can trust Him not to take advantage of you. If you will yield your life to Him and walk with Him every day, He will use you in His movement in history to bring about His great plan of salvation for the nations. There is no more significant way to spend your life!

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why do people have such a difficult time accepting the doctrine of the sovereign election of God?
- 2) How has idolatry manifested itself in your life – before conversion and even after conversion?
- 3) What promises of God have you had difficulty embracing and owning?
- 4) What is there about your lifestyle that makes it difficult for you to live as a pilgrim in a foreign land headed for your heavenly destination?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak:

- Based on the ages in this genealogy, Shem and Eber outlived Abraham, and were alive into the adulthood of Isaac and Jacob. The knowledge of the flood and the tower of Babel was not far distant to these people, but was accessible to them from their contemporaries. Like Adam in the age before the flood, they were a witness to God's demands and his judgment on those who violate his law.

- The ages at death drop off rapidly after the flood, perhaps due to the loss of the protection from cosmic radiation provided by the waters from heaven (7:11).

J. Ligon Duncan: And we saw a picture of the climax of pre-Abrahamic, non-Shemite culture. What does the culture look like that's not from the line of Shem, prior to Abraham in its climatic point before the days of Abraham? And there's your picture of it right there in Genesis 11, verses 1 through 9. You see man in rebellion against God, and we see man's attempt at self-glorification end in self-defeat, and we see God's sovereignty over the nations. And His providence is very clear. His judgment against man's wickedness, His restraint of man's evil designs are very evident throughout the passage. **Derek Kidner** sums up that whole scene when he says, "The primeval history reaches its fruitless climax as man, conscious of new abilities, prepares to glorify and fortify himself by collective effort. The elements of the story are timelessly characteristic of the spirit of the world. The project is typically grandiose. Men describe it excitedly to one another, as if it were the ultimate achievement, very much as modern man glories in his space project." Touche'. "At the same time they betrayed their insecurity as they crowd together to preserve their identity and control their fortunes."

Davis: Within Genesis 11, there is a marked contrast; on the one hand human rebellion leading to the divine judgment of dispersion. That's what we see in Genesis 11, verses 1 through 9. Then when we get to the second half of Genesis 11, On the other hand, we see divine grace leading to the call of Abraham, a call which provided hope for the nations and salvation for the lost.

Jack Arnold: Abram lived in Ur of the Chaldees in the Euphrates River Valley. The city was a center of commerce and very progressive for its day. It is best known for the worship of the moon-god Nanna, or Nannar, which went on there. Terah, Abraham's father, was an idolater, living in Ur (Josh. 24:2). It stands to reason that Abram was also an idolater (Isa. 51:1-2). There is no evidence that Terah ever turned from his idolatry to serve the true and living God. Abram married Sarai, which means "contention." Apparently Sarai, before her conversion, was full of envy, jealousy and pride. Abram was given a call by God to leave his idolatry and family and to follow the true God (cf. Acts 7:1-5). Abraham, with his father, Terah, began to move towards the land. He took with him Sarai and Lot. NOTE. Abram in this first call knew he was to leave family, but he took them with him. Apparently Terah was still an idolater and this caused Abraham to get as far as Haran. As long as Abram was in Ur, God could not use him, and, even when he was in Haran he was bogged down because he was not separated from the idolatry of Terah. Apparently Abram lived in Haran quite a long time, and did not pursue God's will until Terah died. NOTE. Abram apparently put his father before the Lord and God could not use him. God will not use a believer until he is committed unreservedly to Him. NOTE. God was gracious to Abram in taking away his father, for now the will of God could be done.

Steven Cole: Abraham is the central figure of Genesis. In fact, apart from Jesus Christ, it could be argued that he is the most important figure in the Bible. While 11 chapters in Genesis cover the period from creation to Abraham (at least 2,000 years), 14 chapters are devoted to the life of Abraham. He is the father of all believers. In several places the New Testament uses Abraham as the prime example to explain the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith apart from works. God often refers to Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Abraham stands as the father of the Jewish nation, directly in the ancestry of Jesus Christ. He even holds an important place in heaven, which Jesus referred to as "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22). Our text gives us the lineage from Shem to this important biblical figure, Abraham.

Brian Borgman – Return to Genesis

Genesis is the Book of Beginnings; of the nation of Israel through the patriarchs;

Also about last things – pointing us to the end of history

The one who wrote history is the Alpha and the Omega

Book divided into 2 major sections

Structural division around the toledot

Quick review

Genealogy of Shem through Joktan leads to Tower of Babel (chap. 10)

Even among the Shemites there was the seed of the serpent

After Tower incident we have the second genealogy of Shem – through Peleg to Abram (chap. 11)

David Thompson:

Significance of Abraham in the Scriptures; most verses in Heb. 11 for men of faith; used in Romans by Paul; nothing about Abraham that would show us why God chose him

World at this time was a mess;

Call of Abraham gives hope to the world

No matter what your past or failures or family background or personal sin you can be mightily used and blessed by God

Where sin abounds, grace abounds more

I. Lineage of Abram (:10-26) – tracing this line through Shem

Looking forward to Abram and to the Messiah

Main diffs. Between the genealogy in chap. 5 and 11

- Compilation of number of days
- Ends with “*and he died*”
- Longer life spans vs shorter

Shift from line of Adam that stressed death to emphasis on life and blessing

A. Most of those in the lineage line in chap. 11 we know nothing about

Yet these people were very important to the program of God

You can be significant for God

B. All in this line had other sons and daughters – not even named

God focuses on the ones significant to His family and program

Selected by divine sovereign election

II. The Life of Abram (:27-32)

A. (:27) His Family

B. (:28) His Homeland – city of UR – capital city controlled by Chaldeans; idolatrous

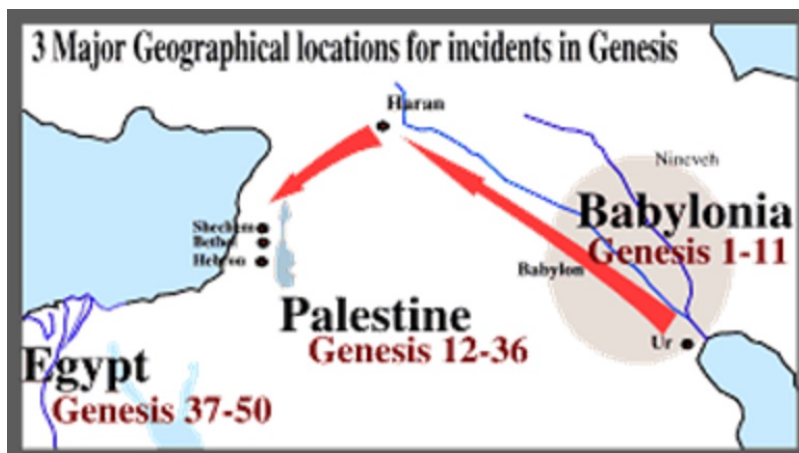
Just north of Persian Gulf

Coming from the wrong side of the tracks; last guy you would expect to turn out to be a giant of the faith

C. (:29-30) His Wife – Sarai – barren

Beautiful; but does not seem to be blessed by God

D. (:31-32) His Relocation



TEXT: Genesis 12:1-9

TITLE: DIVINE CALL . . . DEPENDENT JOURNEY

BIG IDEA:
THE DIVINE CALL BLESSES A DEPENDENT JOURNEY

INTRODUCTION:

Key transition as we move from chap. 11 to chap. 12. God has been dealing with all the nations – cf. the Table of Nations in chap. 10; but now God will focus on one person = Abram whom he will rename Abraham – from whom will come the nation of Israel and the Messiah. Israel is God’s focus until you get to the emergence of the church on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. We are currently living in the Church Age, but from Romans 9-11 and other prophetic scriptures, we don’t believe that God is finished with His program for the nation of Israel. The Gentiles have been grafted in Paul writes but that does not mean the end for Israel: (11:24-27)

If [you Gentiles] were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree [= physical nation of Israel], how much more will these who are the natural branches [= physical nation of Israel] be grafted into their own olive tree?

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation – that a partial hardening has happened to Israel [some Jews are saved during the Church Age] until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in [dealing here with distinctions between Gentiles and Jews]; and so all Israel [physical nation at some point in prophetic future] will be saved; just as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion; He will remove ungodliness from Jacob [has not happened yet]. This is My covenant with them [speaking of the New Covenant of Jer. 31] when I take away their sins.”

Introduced here to the **Covenant** God made with Abraham; more details in chap. 15 and 17.

But Abraham also significant as a personal model for each of us in our spiritual journey – that we would live a dependent journey – a life of faith.

Abraham a model for us as a Man of Faith:

Hebrews 11:1, 6 *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe (1): that He is and (2): that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*

Hebrews 11:8 *By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going.*

Romans 4:9b *For we say, “Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.”
Because Abraham believed God he was declared righteous.*

Romans 4:11b *That he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised, that righteousness might be reckoned to them.*

Romans 4:16 *For this reason it is by faith, that it might be in accordance with grace, in order that the promise may be certain to all the descendants, 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.

Galatians 3:9 *So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.*

Matthew 8:10-11 *Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled, and said to those who were following, “Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. (Jesus was referring to a Gentile who believed God.) And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven;”*

Borgman: Faith does not calculate on the basis of what it can see but on the basis of the character of God; Are you walking by faith or by sight?

THE DIVINE CALL BLESSES A DEPENDENT JOURNEY

I. (:1-3) THE DIVINE CALL -- THE DIVINE CALL PROMISES BLESSING TO ABRAHAM WITH GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS

A. (:1) Divine Call -- Every Journey has a Departure Point and a Destination Point

1. Journey Departure -- From

“Now the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father's house,’”

Call to Move Out

This call comes out of the blue to a moon worshiper
Reiteration of call when family was in Ur
Not based on any merits on Abraham's part
Prepared for at end of chap. 11

Call to Separation

Parunak: “*Get thee out*” -- He is commanded to stand apart, to “come out and be separate,” **2 Cor 6:17; Isa 52:11; Heb 13:10-14**. God's saints are the separated ones. To follow him is to be different, distinct.

Steven Cole: So I interpret the Lord's command to Abram to leave his relatives to mean that he must obey the Lord in spite of what his relatives may do. If they could be persuaded to accompany him, that was fine. But if they would not go, Abram must go without them. It is similar to the Lord's teaching that when it comes down to a choice between family and Christ, we must follow Christ (Luke 14:26). In Abram's case, Lot was persuaded to accompany him. The rest stayed behind. But the important thing is, Abram heard and obeyed the Lord. “*By faith Abraham ... obeyed*” (**Heb. 11:8**).

2. Journey Destination -- To

“To the land which I will show you;”

15:18 spells out the dimensions – Israel has never held this
Abraham not told many details about his future; has to trust in the character of God

Call was unconditional; but enjoyment of the blessings was tied to his faithful obedience; but his obedience was prompted and initiated and enabled by the grace of God

How many believers are missing out on God's blessing because they fail to walk by faith and trust the Lord? There is the ultimate blessing of eternal union with the Lord; but there are many blessings God wants us to enjoy in this present life

B. (:2) Promised Blessing

1. Great Nation

"And I will make you a great nation,"

A political unit as opposed to just a family unit

17:6 – kings will come thru your lineage

Hughes: Abram's offspring would be a goy among the goyim – a powerful political entity with a land and language and government.

2. Recipient of Divine Favor

"And I will bless you,"

Very general phrase; God is in the business of blessing

Delights to give good gifts to His children

We should desire the favor of God above all else

Pleasing God is our motivation to refrain from sin and pursue holiness

3. Great Legacy

"And make your name great;"

Isn't this what the builders of the Tower of Babel sought?? Cannot come by self effort or by way of the flesh, but only by the sovereign grace of God

Steven Cole: That has certainly been fulfilled, in that Jews, Christians, and Moslems all look to Abraham as the father of their faith. His name is known worldwide to millions of people 4,000 years after he lived.

Parunak: We see here the OT equivalent of our Lord's command, "*Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you,*" **Matt 6:33**; and **Mark 10:28,29**.

4. Reproducer (Channel) of Divine Favor to Others

"And so you shall be a blessing;"

We are not called to hoard God's blessings

We are to be a channel of blessing to others;

This little light of mine; I'm going to let it shine

C. (:3) Global Implications

1. Extended Blessing

"And I will bless those who bless you"

We can see how this has worked itself out throughout history

2. Extended Cursing

“And the one who curses you I will curse.”

Great divide here between covenant and dispensational theology – is God through dealing with the physical nation of Israel; has the church replaced Israel in His plans; or does His program still included blessing the nation of Israel? **Impacts your foreign policy!**

3. Global Blessing

“And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Parunak: *“Families of the earth”* is more accurately, “families of the ground,” an unusual phrase, no doubt selected to recall the curse on the ground in 3:17. In Abram, the original curse will be replaced with blessing. “Be blessed” answers the multiple judgments that God has poured out, at Eden, to Cain, in the flood, and at Babel. In spite of this history, blessing is available.

The ultimate blessing comes through **the Messiah**, the seed of Abram – the promised seed of the woman back in Gen. 3

4 aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant:

- A land
- A nation
- A personal blessing
- A global blessing

II. (:4-9) THE DEPENDENT JOURNEY – WE WALK BY FAITH, EMBRACING GOD’S PROMISES WITH OUR FOCUS ON WORSHIP

7 Characteristics of True Faith:

A. (:4-5) True Faith Moves Out in Obedience to the Lord’s Calling

1. (:4) Obey Quickly

“So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.”

Conversion of a pagan, idol worshiper

Faith lays hold of the promise of God and acts in obedience

Doing what God says simply because He commands it

Why did Lot go? Was this a good thing or a bad thing?

Advanced age should never be an excuse to avoid walking by faith – look at Abraham Thomas – starting ministry in Mumbai

Creates additional obstacles

2. (:5) Obey Completely

“And Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions

which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan.”

Hughes: the 800-mile route would have taken them near some of the great urban centers of the day. Abram likely traveled over to Carchemish and down to Aleppo and through Damascus to Canaan. . . text likely refers to making proselytes

So obedient in faith was Abram that he was called the “*friend of God*” (2 Chron. 20:7; Isa. 41:8; James 2:23).

Cf. how Jesus Christ defined a “*friend*” in John 15:14 “*You are my friends if you do what I command you.*”

B. (:6-7a) True Faith Embraces God’s Promises Despite Enemy Opposition

1. (:6) Boldness

“And Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh.

Now the Canaanite was then in the land.”

Geographical center of the land

Hughes: Moreh means “*teacher, oracle giver*” – The great tree of Moreh was the place where the Canaanites assembled to hear the oracles that soothsayers received from the rustling of the leaves. So there, in the very heart of the land promised to Abram, idolatry was alive and well.

2. (:7a) Encouragement

*“And the LORD appeared to Abram and said,
‘To your descendants I will give this land.’”*

Great Theophany – short statement – but its impact stayed with Abram his entire life

C. (:7b) True Faith Worships (in Response to Divine Revelation)

“So he built an altar there to the LORD who had appeared to him.”

Also built an altar in Bethel (12:8), Hebron (13:18) and Mount Moriah (22:9)

D. (:8a) True Faith Manifests a Pilgrim Mentality

“Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east;”

Like planting the flag

Later the border between the northern and southern kingdoms

Steven Cole: A pilgrim is a person on a journey. He is not a settled resident. He’s just passing

through, on his way to a better place. God did not promise to give the land to Abram, but to his descendants. As John Calvin points out (Calvin's Commentaries [Baker], 1:353), this means that the land was not his ultimate aim, but rather, heaven. Abram was looking for that city whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:10). He had to trust that God would make good on His word even though Abram would not live to see it.

E. (:8b) True Faith Worships (in Testimony to God's Faithfulness)

"and there he built an altar to the LORD"

F. (:8c) True Faith Calls Upon the Lord in Worship and Witness

"and called upon the name of the LORD."

Borgman: *Called upon the name of the Lord* – Luther in his translation: "and Abram preached the name of the Lord" – his character

Cf. Noah as a preacher of righteousness to the pagans around him

Depending on God to fulfill His promises

Parunak: this phrase combines **worship** and **witness**. He is open about his faith, bearing witness to the Canaanites around him.

Steven Cole: As far as we know, the Canaanites for the most part, ignored Abram and continued in their wicked ways. In His great mercy, God spared those wicked people for 700 more years until Joshua's day. But Abram the worshiper had borne witness to them. God will use those who live as pilgrims and worshipers in the midst of a pagan land to bear witness for Him. Some will be saved; some will mock or ignore the message. But God will use the witness of His pilgrims at the day of judgment to vindicate His justice.

G. (:9) True Faith Continues to Follow the Lord's Direction

"And Abram journeyed on, continuing toward the Negev."

Hughes: The brief itinerary of Abram has taken him from the northern to the southern border of the land. He not only saw what had been promised to his offspring – he had walked through it and lived and worshiped in it. Symbolically he has taken possession of it.

Parunak: Why does he travel if the Lord has already indicated that he has arrived? The answer is found in the instruction in 13:17. Walking through the land is a way of claiming it, of taking possession of it, of asserting one's right to be there. By moving through it he is acting as though it were his; contrast the opposition that Moses and Israel received from Edom (Num 20:14-21), Moab (Judg 11:17), and the Amorites (Num 21:21-23).

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why does God's gracious call and promised blessing also include a life that involves hardship?
- 2) What are the distinguishing features of genuine faith?
- 3) What promises of God motivate you to a life of discipleship?
- 4) How can I tell that the world and its culture of materialism and security and comforts has its grip on me?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: Yes, thank God, His calling us involves His blessing us (although that blessing sometimes includes difficult trials). But that's only half the story. If we bottle up God's blessings for ourselves, we're missing the reason He calls us: He has called us and blessed us so that we will become His channel for blessing all the nations. As God's chosen people, we have a great privilege--God's blessing; and, a great responsibility--to be a blessing to all the families of the earth.

Brian Borgman -- God Calls Abram

Cursed / Flooded / Scattered = outline of Gen. 1-11

The promise pronounced in Gen. 3 seems to be fading quickly out of sight;

Huge shift / Historical shift from Gen. 11 to Gen. 12 – God, in order to bless the world, is going to shift His focus from the nations to one man

Davis: God so loved the world that He called Abram

Chaps. 12 – 25

- Explains Abrahamic Covenant
- Portrays ups and downs of Abraham's life of faith

Abraham is unique figure in covenant history; but also representative of all believers

Adam brings a curse upon his seed; Abraham brings a blessing

Only OT person ever called God's friend

Mentioned 70 times in NT

End of Chap. 11 sets the stage for Call of Abram

Call comes out of the blue; nothing indicates Abram was seeking after God; moon worshiper

Vs. 1 Let Goods and Kindred Go

Why Abram?

- Part of line of Shem – but there were many others

Call of radical separation – repetition of preposition "*from*"; new start for Abram

Analogous to call Jesus puts upon His disciples – leave everything behind to follow Him;

Security that you had was connected to your larger klan

Land and Seed are 2 pillars of the promise

vv.2-3 Promise of God

you need offspring to have a great nation

Huge obstacle: Sarah is barren; situations of human helplessness create opportunities for God to show His awesomeness

Name is revelation of character – make him into a great person

Waltke: God blesses Abram to be his blessing bearer

Covenant theology: don't apply this to modern nation of unbelieving Israel; instead apply to seed of Christ – all genuine believers; Christ said there would be blessing to anyone who gave even a cup of water to one of his little children

vv.4 Why did Lot go with him?

- Perhaps Lot got converted too
- Perhaps Abram had adopted Lot since his father had died
- Perhaps Abram is packing up his stuff and Lot insists on accompanying him

Radical nature of Abram's obedience; his is up there in years – 75 years old; has aches and pains
Obstacles he will encounter right away – packed up some of his goods; a financial risk to set out like this; proselytes not slaves – Abram had already been sharing his new faith in the Lord

Vs. 6 – Abram may have expected that the land the Lord was giving him would be vacant; instead bad people inhabit the land; people cursed of the Lord; the life of faith is never a straight, smooth path

Vs. 7 – God first speaks; now appears to reconfirm His promise; you are in the right place; you are doing the right thing;

Cf. God's reassurance to Apostle Paul in Corinth – "*I have many people in this city*"

\this appearance makes a huge impact on Abram; first time he built an altar; stake a claim that this land belongs to the Lord

David Thompson:

God takes full credit for Abram's call – Is. Prophecy

Heb. 11 – became a tremendous example of righteous faith

I. (:1-3) Call of Abram –

A. Unconditional Call

Abram had a poor background; nothing about him worth calling; Gen. 15:7 – originally called in Ur; big city and big business; had human sacrifices

God initiates any genuine faith

B. Call to Total Separation

God promises greater compensation and blessing

Many believers are not willing to leave everything and follow the Lord; so they will miss out on many blessings

C. Call Promised Wonderful Blessings – 7 aspects to God's promise

1. A Land – Israel has never held the full geographic scope of the land

Dimensions in **15:18**

2. A Great Nation –

3. Give him many blessings – God will do this for Abram

4. Make of him a great name – Abraham is a great patriarch – kings will come thru his line; **17:6**
5. Make him a blessing to others –
6. Give him a special protection from God – if anybody messes with Israel, God will deal with them – look at history of world empires
7. Honor him universally or globally – the responsibility and expectations of following me will be far surpassed by the blessings I shower on you

II. (:4-9) Response of Abram

- A. Fully Obeyed God's Word – no easy task to cross Euphrates River
- B. Took his family with him – true spiritual leader of his family;
Was it right to take Lot along?? Lot would be a disaster
- C. Obeyed God as an older man – He was 75; Sarah is 65 years old;
Advanced age was not an excuse
- D. Obedience resulted in Opposition (vs. 5) – Canaanite was in the land
Land not flowing with milk and honey; but with Canaanites
Grove of oak trees featuring one particular large tree; place they would meet to receive instruction; getting a job done for God is not easy; Satan opposes
- E. Abraham's Faithfulness received Reconfirmation – vs. 7
People who are willing to put God first will always end up seeing more of God's word and will
- F. Abraham's faith Worshiped God –
He is a herdsman; in the cattle business; ; didn't build cities; but built altars that make a great statement for the name of the Lord; travels 20 miles away and builds another altar; I am here to do a work for God
- G. Abram's Faith Kept Following God – vs. 9 – had to make multiple moves before he finally reached final point of blessing; not the most pleasant of spots; hot and dry;

4 Applications:

- 1) True Faith Believes the word of God
- 2) True Faith Obeys the word of God
- 3) True Faith Follows the Will of God
- 4) True Faith Worships God

TEXT: Genesis 12:10 – 13:4

TITLE: *DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY ALWAYS TRUMPS HUMAN EXPEDIENCY*

BIG IDEA:

GOD'S SOVEREIGN PURPOSES CANNOT BE DERAILED BY MAN'S SINFUL BLUNDERS

INTRODUCTION:

Prov. 14:12 *“There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”*

Definition of Expediency – driven by what seems convenient and practical and will accomplish the end you desire rather than being driven by principle and conviction and a sense of what is right irregardless of how things might turn out in the end; the end justifies the means

I can think of many examples from my business experience where the owners chose to operate out of a mindset of expediency. Usually there is no clear distinction between that choice and one that is morally correct; but sometimes there is a clear distinction.

[Illustration from work]

Today's story is a different type of example – a godly man compromises his faith and chooses the path of expediency ... but still God's sovereignty saves the day

DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY ALWAYS TRUMPS HUMAN EXPEDIENCY

GOD'S SOVEREIGN PURPOSES CANNOT BE DERAILED BY MAN'S SINFUL BLUNDERS

**I. (12:10-13) PRESSURE CAN LEAD TO EXPEDIENCY --
2 RATIONALISTIC DECISIONS = SINFUL BLUNDERS**

A. (:10) Rationalization Decision #1 – Bail When Hard Times Come

1. Pressure Problem

“Now there was a famine in the land;”

Parunak: Canaan depended on rainfall, which could be irregular; it was better suited to grazing than farming. Particularly in the Negev (the region around Beersheba, translated “the south” in 12:9; 13:3), rainfall is very sparse at the best of times.

Abram had always lived in Ur and Haran, which are both on the banks of the Euphrates River. They never lacked for water.

What land is this?

- the Promised Land
- the Land of Blessing

Inevitable that trials come – key is how we respond

Hughes: We would expect after such a protracted and stellar display of faith . . . some tangible rewards, or at least a pleasant respite. . . Faith is always tested. . . Here faithful Abram, who had left all to follow the bare word of God who had been outstanding in his 800-mile trek to the promised land and in his tour of inspection, got whacked. He was literally starved out of the land.

2. Expedient Solution = Sinful Blunder

“so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there,”

sounds reasonable

not a permanent change in residence

did not go back to the place of his idolatrous past (would have been a much longer trip)

did not seek God’s counsel

lack of faith – just because Sarah was barren, he didn’t leave his wife

Hughes: How like Abram we are! Trials come, and we automatically go into survival mode. We scheme, we prognosticate, we run through the “what ifs,” we shore up our position, we pile sandbags. And God? Oh yes. We ask him to bless our ways.

We all have a tendency to bail when hard times come:

- At our **jobs**
- In our **relationships**
- In our commitment to **spiritual ministry**

Parunak: The lie about Sarah: Abram is culpable, but perhaps not as much as one might think.

- His eagerness to preserve his own life may reflect his faith in the promises of God: “If God has made me a link in the blessings of others, it is critical that I remain alive.”
- The scheme about being his brother does not mean that he intends to give her up. If one wants a man’s wife, the man must die. But if one wants a man’s sister, there are negotiations to go through; cf. the role of Laban, brother of Rebekah, in **24:29ff**. He may have hoped to set up a situation where he could, through his shrewdness and deceptiveness, put off any suitors until the famine subsided and they could get back to Canaan. He may simply think that he will be better at bargaining than at fighting off attackers, and thus that this is the best way to protect her, as well as himself.
- Yet he is wrong to justify deception on the grounds of a “greater good.”

But then something unexpected happens: the interest of the royal house is aroused. Pharaoh is Egypt’s god. He negotiates with no one. What he wants, he takes. He wants Sarai, so he takes her, and Abram’s careful plan crumbles into dust.

3. Reasonable Rationalization

“for the famine was severe in the land.”

B. (:11-13) Rationalization Decision #2 – Protect Self at All Costs

1. (:11-12) Pressure Problem

“And it came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, ‘See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and it will come about when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, This is his wife; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.’”

MacArthur: Abram sought on his own initiative to take care of his future, thinking to assist God in fulfilling His promise.

What is at stake here? The protection of the line through which the Messiah would come

2. (:13a) Expedient Solution = Sinful Blunder

“Please say that you are my sister”

A half-truth; she was Abram’s half sister **20:12**

3. (:13b) Reasonable Rationalization

“so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you”

Disturbing Motivation – all about Abram’s welfare
What about what would happen to Sarah??

II. (12:14-15) EXPEDIENCY COMPROMISES GENUINE FAITH AND CANNOT ACCOUNT FOR EVERY CONTINGENCY

A. (:14a) Execution of Expedient Solution #1 – Seems to Work Out

“And it came about when Abram came into Egypt,”

Notice that God doesn’t put obstacles in our way and close the door when we choose to stray off the straight and narrow path .. Abram probably had clear sailing down into Egypt; no difficulties on the trip

Thought he had escaped the trial of the severe famine ...
Out of the frying pan into the fire

B. (:14b-16) Execution of Expedient Solution #2 – Unforeseen Contingency

1. (:14b-15) Treatment of Sarah

“the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful. And Pharaoh’s officials saw her and praised her to Pharaoh; and the woman was taken into Pharaoh’s house.”

Exceptional beauty

Abram had probably counted on having some time to negotiate the marriage relationship ...

But with Pharaoh there was no negotiation ... he could just take whoever he wanted immediately into his harem

2. (:16) Treatment of Abram

*“Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake;
and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and
female donkeys and camels.”*

How did Abram feel as day after day he received a new delivery of riches from the palace of Pharaoh – knowing that Sarah was captive in the harem of this pagan leader

III. (12:17-20) DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY OVERRULES HUMAN EXPEDIENCY

A. (:17) Protection of Sarah -- Divine Judgment on Pharaoh and His House

*“But the LORD struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues
because of Sarai, Abram's wife.”*

Expediency angers the Lord when it compromises true faith
Great plagues from the Lord must have been devastating; yet Sarah was untouched;
Maybe she said something to Pharaoh; somehow he was able to connect the dots

**B. (:18-20) Rebuke of Abram for His Expedient Deception /
Rescue of Abram Despite His Expedient Deception**

1. Rebuke

*“Then Pharaoh called Abram and said,
‘What is this you have done to me?
Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?
Why did you say, She is my sister, so that I took her for my wife?’”*

Humbling of Abram; embarrassed greatly
Implication is that if Abram had not been deceptive, Pharaoh would have lived up to a higher code of ethics than what Abram anticipated
Pagan savage teaching God’s chosen patriarch about moral ethics
Like Putin lecturing America on human rights and freedoms

2. Dismissal/Rescue

*“Now then, here is your wife, take her and go.’
And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him;
and they escorted him away, with his wife and all that belonged to him.”*

Not going to demand back any of his generous gifts – did not want to mess at all with the God of Abram

Had an official escort to the border – did not want to ever see Abram return to Egypt
Get out and stay out

IV. (13:1-4) RESCUE AND REPENTANCE LEAD TO A RENEWAL OF WORSHIP

A. (:1) Back to the Starting Point

“So Abram went up from Egypt to the Negev, he and his wife and all that belonged to him; and Lot with him.”

Transition – introducing Lot again – who will be a key figure in chap. 23

B. (:2) Enriched by the Grace of God

“Now Abram was very rich in livestock, in silver and in gold.”

C. (:3-4) Refocused on His Mission

1. Pitching His Tent – Pilgrim Mentality

“And he went on his journeys from the Negev as far as Bethel, to the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Ai,”

2. Worshiping at the altar – Cleansed and fit for Worship

“to the place of the altar, which he had made there formerly;”

3. Calling on the Name of the Lord – Combining Worship with Witness

“and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.”

Closes the loop on this chiasmic section with 12:8-9

CONCLUSION:

David Thompson: Conclusion: Parallel between Abram’s situation and that of Israel:

- Both moved because of a famine
- Both ended up in Egypt
- Both faced execution of males and preservation of females
- Both were delivered by plagues that had been sent by God
- Both left Egypt with an abundance of wealth
- Both ended up in the Negev

Exception: Abram stayed faithful to God (despite lapses) but Israel did not – willing to do whatever God wanted him to do

Our sinful blunders do not have to define our lives;

Let’s make life decisions based on principle and conviction after seeking the Lord’s will; not based on expediency

God can rescue and restore us in His faithfulness

He will carry out His sovereign plans

Divine Sovereignty Always Trumps Human Expediency

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When have you wrestled with a decision where expediency was the justification?
- 2) How do some church growth strategies revolve around a decision-making model of expediency?
- 3) What types of trials has God been using to bring pressure points into your life?
- 4) Where have you seen God's sovereignty trump human expediency?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: Chiasmic structure for the larger section – **12:9 – 13:4**

Worshipping the Lord at Bethel	12:8	13:3b-4
Enters, then leaves the Negev	12:9	13:3a
Going down to, then up from, Egypt	12:10	12:1,2
Commands	Abram to Sarah, 12:11-13	Pharaoh to his men, 12:20
Abram and Pharaoh	12:14-16	12:18-19
The Lord Intervenes		12:17

David Thompson: child beginning to take first steps; Abraham taking first steps as young believer; a faith that cannot be tested is one that cannot be trusted; Abram is a typical sinning human; goes into survival mode and forgets about how great God is; God is always sovereignly protecting His people even when they make sinful mistakes; gets them back on track

1) (:10-13) Fear of Abram

Fear of losing his life; Calvin: high regard for will of God regarding the promised blessing;

a) Possibility of losing his wife through a famine – Chap. 26 (famine in Isaac's life);

Chap. 40 (famine in Joseph's time); they had left fertile land of Chaldea

“sojourn” – temporal residency; a short visit – never intended to stay there

God's people face a variety of hostile obstacles when trying to walk by faith;

We need to wait on God to deliver us before just making a move on our own;

God's people should never run to the world for help; Looking for help in the wrong place;

b) Possibility of losing his wife through a beautiful wife -- his focus is not on what God promised but what they will say and do; vs. 11, 14 – stresses beauty of Sarah; a real head-turner above all other women; she is 65 years old; 10 years younger than Abram;

Abram thinks it all depends on his efforts for preservation;

God always honors and blesses truth

2) (:14-16) Action of the Egyptians

Abram's concerns were validated

4 Actions:

- a. Saw beauty of Sarah – familiar with harem of Pharaoh; culture focused on beautiful women and murder
- b. Report of princes to Pharaoh – they knew he would want Sarah in his harem
- c. Pharaoh takes Sarah into his harem
- d. Pharaoh rewards Abram

God will sovereignly overrule wrong decisions of Abram; protect Sarah and even prosper Abram

3. (:17) Action of the Lord

Josephus claimed God sent a serious illness; his priests informed him that God had sent these plagues; maybe had nightmares

Abram has totally botched everything; but God delivers and blesses

4. (:18-20) Action of Pharaoh

Chews Abram out; Abram has lost his effectiveness to witness; had tried to blend into the culture;

Brian Borgman: God Rescues the Faltering Faithful

God called Abram; spoke to him glorious promises; appeared to him; Abram is a changed man; a worshipper and preacher of the true God at 75 years old; zeal and faith are exemplary to us; what were his expectations?

- “I will make you a great nation” –
“God loves me and has a wonderful plan for my life”
- “I will bless you and make your name great” –
“My best life now”
- “I’m going to be a blessing to the nations” –
My purpose-driven life

And you add on top of that, we’re having a baby

But that is not the way God works ... *“now there was a famine in the land”*

God works in strange ways

(:10-14) Abram's Faltering Faith

1) Problem #1 -- Famine

Maybe the promise is failing; I get all this land and there is no food;

A test to see whether Abram would trust God's faithfulness;

No record of building an altar; no proclamation of the name of the Lord;

No doubt that Abram could justify his actions – “I’m going down because of the promise; If I starve to death here how will God keep his promise?”

Spiritual high points followed by unusual periods of testing;

Bible treats heroes of faith realistically

2) Problem #2 – Married to a knock-out

Sarai lives to 127 (like our 30s-40s)

These Egyptians are savages

We have to help God keep His promise;

Forgot the protection clause accompanying the promise
See how logical fear is; rooted in unbelief; fails to remember God's promise;
Maybe thinks he can buy some time and get out in time

Vs. 15 – unexpected event = taken into Pharaoh's house – he does not have to negotiate with the brother; can just take whoever he wants into his harem;
Cf. Queen Esther – taken into harem and not taken to his bed for long time
Process of being more beautified

Vs. 17 – God intervening – Committed to fulfilling His Promise – sends plagues and rescues Sarah and Abram

Very possible that Sarah said something to Pharaoh; he was able to connect the dots; she was untouched by the plagues

Vs. 18 – remarkable – lecturing Abram on biblical ethics; like Putin telling America about human rights; implication is our ethics are higher than you supposed; I would not have taken your wife; deported – Abram will never go back to Egypt; fear of God

Goes back to his starting point; after being humbled and embarrassed
God is in control of all of our messes

Applications:

- Human failure cannot stand in the way of God's Promise
- Life of faith is not void of suffering – there will be famine in the land – designed to purify and strengthen our faith; God is not looking for our help or suggestions
- Hero of this story is God, not Abram – maybe you need to return to the place where you started with God = the foot of the cross

Steven Cole: Faithless Man, Faithful God

Big Idea; When we are faithless, God remains faithful in order to restore us to faith and to fulfill His purpose.

1. God's people are often faithless, especially during trials (**12:10-16**).
2. In spite of our failures, God is always faithful (**12:17-20**).
3. God's faithfulness should lead us to repentance and restoration (13:1-4).

TEXT: Genesis 13:5-18

TITLE: WALKING BY SIGHT VS WALKING BY FAITH

BIG IDEA:

WALKING BY FAITH FREES YOU UP TO RELINQUISH YOUR RIGHTS BECAUSE OF YOUR CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S PROMISES

INTRODUCTION:

Review: Remember the journey that Abram has traveled as we get to this point in the book of Genesis. He has made some remarkable sacrifices and displayed exemplary commitment in obeying the call of God that came to him first in Ur and then in Haran. He has arrived in the promised land only to be discouraged by the hardship of famine. Instead of seeking counsel from God, he walked by sight and fled to Egypt where his decisions of expediency exposed himself and his wife to great peril. However, God graciously rescued him and has restored him to fellowship and worship so that we can see that his faith has matured. Now he is going to be faced with some more key decisions. How will he respond? Will he walk by sight or will he choose to walk by faith?

Steven Cole: There is a point along the Continental Divide high in the Rocky Mountains in Colorado at which the waters of a small stream separate. It would not seem to matter much whether a drop of water goes to the left or to the right. But the outcome of those drops of water is totally different. One drop goes to the west and eventually flows into the Colorado River and empties into the Gulf of California and the Pacific Ocean. Another drop goes east until it flows into the Mississippi River and dumps into the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. Two drops of water, two entirely different destinations, but one small turning point that determines the outcome.

Many choices in life are like that. At the time, they don't seem significant. But those choices set in motion a series of events which shape your life and the lives of your children and grandchildren after you.

- On what **basis** are you going to make your decisions?
- What **value system** is going to govern your choices.
- Are you ultimately **kingdom-oriented** (Seek first the kingdom of God) or **materialistic-oriented** (looking out for #1)?
- Are you able to treat others with **big-hearted generosity** or do you cling to **selfish worldliness**?

Are you going to live your life **walking by faith** in the promises of God or **walking by sight** – falling prey to the temptations of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life?

WALKING BY FAITH FREES YOU UP TO RELINQUISH YOUR RIGHTS BECAUSE OF YOUR CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S PROMISES

Your decisions have consequences. Let's look at the decisions made by Abram and Lot in the story before us this morning.

I. (:5-7) INTERNAL STRIFE BETWEEN ABRAM AND LOT – DIVERTS FOCUS FROM TRUE ENEMIES

A. (:5) Blessing on the Brotherhood – Success Can Strain a Relationship

“Now Lot, who went with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents.”

“with Abram” – this companionship is about to be tested

We don’t want to turn God’s blessing into a source of contention

Look at the **lottery mentality** of the world – as if winning the PowerBall this week would solve all of their problems. Where here we see both Abram and Lot blessed by the Lord with an abundance of wealth, but far from solving all of their problems, it led to the disintegration of their relationship.

Hughes: Lot had been piggy-backing on Abram’s wealth and God’s blessing

Parunak: Wealth does not always solve problems; sometimes it causes them.

o **Ecc 5:11**, *When goods increase, they are increased that eat them*

o **Prov 30:8,9**, *Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: 9 Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

o **1 Tim 6:9** *But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.*

Luke 18:24 *“How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!”*

B. (:6-7a) Division in the Brotherhood – Strife Can Strain a Relationship

1. (:6) Demand for Similar Resources

“And the land could not sustain them while dwelling together; for their possessions were so great that they were not able to remain together.”

First test: there was a famine in the land

Second test: land can’t sustain both Abram and Lot in their prosperity

Borgman: the land is somewhat disappointing so far

2. (:7a) Strife and Tension – When Everyone Insists on Their Rights

“And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram’s livestock and the herdsmen of Lot’s livestock.”

“strife” – legal term for dispute; later came to be used of a law suit - **Borgman**

Like a range war in the old Western movies – who is going to have the rights to the precious and scarce pasture land and water?

Marcus Dods: the rival shepherds, eager to secure the best pasture for their own flocks and the

best wells for their own cattle and camels, came to high words and probably to blows about their respective rights.

C. (:7b) Enemies of the Brotherhood --

“Now the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land.”

They are in a land occupied by antagonists that would not make it easy for them to find ample pasture land and water

Sometimes enemies of God’s program can get along better than God’s people; strange bedfellows

II. (:8-13) CONTRASTING CHOICES OF ABRAM AND LOT -- BIG-HEARTED GENEROSITY OVER SELFISH WORLDLINESS

A. (:8-9) Generosity of Abram – Walking by Faith

1. (:8) Goal of Co-existing in Peace as Brothers

“Then Abram said to Lot, ‘Please let there be no strife between you and me, nor between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are brothers.’”

Abram valued his relationship with Lot over his right to choose the most fertile ground for himself; did not assert his rights; willing to give up his rights and sacrifice; desired to live in peace with his brother

Functioning as peace maker

But this is a unity that can only be maintained by separation – interesting

Note how it is Abram that takes the initiative here to address the problem – before it becomes any larger and consumes all of them

Prov. 17:14 *“The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out”*

We would not know that Lot was a believer except for the record of Peter that characterizes Lot as a righteous man; seems much more like a spiritual hanger-on – somebody who likes the blessings associated with believers but does not have the same value system or decision-making grid

Parunak: Envy is the result of an attitude that focuses on our rights rather than our duties. The solution is contentment with what the Lord has given us and trust in him to provide anything else we need (**Heb 13:5,6**), a firm resolve to “crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts” (**Gal 5:13-26**; the whole passage deals with this dynamic). We should suffer ourselves to be defrauded (**1 Cor 6:7**), and endure grief, suffering wrongfully (**1 Pet 2:19**), following the example of our Savior and trusting in God.

Envy is an internal emotion, but if not handled appropriately, it manifests itself outwardly as strife, contention with those of whom we are envious. We have already seen the strife between the herdsmen of Abram and those of Lot. **James 4:1** also bears witness to this dynamic: *“From*

whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?"

2. (:9) Giving the Choice to Lot

"Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me: if to the left, then I will go to the right; or if to the right, then I will go to the left."

Classic example of relinquishing one's rights – very generous offer

Cf. the pattern of Christ in **Phil. 2** – did not hold on to his rights; emptied Himself; self-denying
Abram did not have to take matters into his own hands in order to reserve the land for himself

Lot should have quickly protested – acknowledge God's promise to Abram of the land and voluntarily taken a position of subordination instead of choosing the best for himself

Alexander Maclaren: [quoted by Hughes]

"The less of our energies are consumed in asserting ourselves, and scrambling for our rights, and cutting in before other people, so as to get the best place for ourselves, the more we shall have to spare for better things; and the more we live in the future, and leave God to order our ways, the more shall our souls be wrapped in perfect peace.

B. (:10-11) Selfishness of Lot – Walking by Sight

1. (:10) Selfish Desires

"And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw all the valley of the Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere-- this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah-- like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt as you go to Zoar."

What value system did Lot use to make his life-changing decision? Strictly oriented towards materialism and wealth and prosperity and comfort and entertainment

Marcus Dods: Society is made up of little circles, each of which has its own monopoly of some social or commercial or political advantage, and its own characteristic tone and enjoyments and customs. And if a man will not join one of these circles and accommodate himself to the mode of carrying on business and to the style of living it has identified with itself, he must forego the advantages which entrance to that circle would secure for him. . .

We do not condemn persons who suffer from smallpox, but a smallpox hospital would be about the last place we should choose for a residence. Or possibly we imagine we shall be able to carry some better influences into the society we enter. A vain imagination the motive for choosing the society has already sapped our power for good. . .

Your life is taken out of your own hands; you find yourself in bondage to the circumstances you have chosen; and you are learning in bitterness, disappointment, and shame, that indeed "*a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*" . . .

He who believes that God is pledged to provide for him cannot be greedy, anxious, covetous; can only be liberal, even magnanimous. Anyone can thus test his own faith.

2. (:11) Selfish Choice

*“So Lot chose for himself all the valley of the Jordan;
and Lot journeyed eastward.
Thus they separated from each other.”*

Deffinbaugh: The decisions reached by Abram and Lot are the same as those which confront every Christian. We must decide whether to trust in the sovereignty of God or in our own schemes and devices. We must determine whether to trust in the ‘uncertainty of riches’ or in the God Who ‘richly supplies us’ (**I Timothy 6:17**). We must decide whether to invest in the ‘passing pleasures of sin’ or the future ‘reward’ which is promised by God (**Hebrews 11:25-26**).

C. (:12-13) Foolishness of Lot – Trying to Live Too Close to the World

1. (:12a) Abram Separated from the World

“Abram settled in the land of Canaan,”

Abram probably had some temptations to resist as he naturally would reconsider whether he was wise to be so generous and so free to relinquish his rights. His shepherds may have criticized him for giving up so easily what they had fought to secure for their master. Just as one must walk by faith in the initial decision-making process; one must persevere in that faith because it will not be immediately plain to all the blessing that God will bring about.

Dods: as Abram saw, when the cities of the plain were destroyed, how kindly God had guided him; so when our history is complete, we shall have not inclination to grumble at any passage of our life which we entered by generosity and faith in God, but shall see how tenderly God has held us back from much that our soul has been ardently desiring, and which we thought would be the making of us.

2. (:12b) Lot Touching the World

*“while Lot settled in the cities of the valley,
and moved his tents as far as Sodom.”*

Steven Cole: First he **looked** toward Sodom (13:10). Then he **moved** his tents near Sodom (13:12). Next we find him **living** in Sodom (14:12). Finally he is **sitting in the gate** of Sodom (19:1)--he was a city official.

Cf. homeschooling decision

3. (:13) Wicked Nature of the World Culture

“Now the men of Sodom were wicked exceedingly and sinners against the LORD.”

Deffinbaugh: Far more than the loss of his possessions and his prosperity, Lot paid a terrible price for his short-lived pleasure. According to Peter, Lot’s soul was continually vexed by what he saw in that city (**II Peter 2:7**). Even when the saint is surrounded by sensual pleasure, he cannot enjoy sin for long. And more tragic than anything, Lot paid for his decision in his family. His wife was turned to salt because of her attachment to Sodom (**19:26**). His daughters seduced Lot and caused him to commit incest, no doubt a reflection on the moral values they had learned

in Sodom (19:30ff.).

III. (:14-18) RENEWAL OF COVENANT PROMISES TO ABRAM

“And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him,”

A. (:14-15) Vision of the Promised Land

1. (:14) What You See

“Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward;”

Contrast to vs. 10 where Lot selfishly *lifted up his eyes* and beheld for himself what he selfishly desired

Again, the contrast between walk of faith and walk of sight

Interesting that Abram could see all that Lot chose for himself ... and God goes on to reassure him that all that land is still part of God’s gift package to Abram and his descendants

2. (:15) Is What You Will Get

“for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.”

B. (:16) Promise of Countless Descendants

“And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered.”

Yet Abram and his wife were getting older each day and their prospects for children growing bleaker

The Reassurance of God’s promises does not remove the difficulty of persevering in faith

Hughes: Later in 15:5 God would promise that Abram’s offspring would be as numerous as the stars. So whether he looked down as he traversed the land by day or whether he looked up at the stars at night, he was reminded that he and his barren wife would become a great nation (cf. 12:2).

C. (:17) Faith in Ultimate Possession of the Promised Land

“Arise, walk about the land through its length and breadth; for I will give it to you.”

Faith Walk – symbolic of taking possession of the land

D. (:18) Dwelling and Worship in the Promised Land

“Then Abram moved his tent and came and dwelt by the oaks of Mamre, which are in Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.”

Abram lived in a pagan dominated culture as well – but responded quite differently ...

Cole: Abram the **pilgrim**, just passing through; and, Abram the **worshiper**, bearing witness to a pagan world.

Where do you see Lot worshiping the Lord?

CONCLUSION:

Steven Cole: Someone has said that we tend to think of commitment to Christ like laying a \$1,000 bill on the table: “Here’s my life, Lord. I’m giving it all.” But the reality is that God sends most of us to the bank and has us cash in the \$1,000 for quarters. We go through life putting out 25 cents here and 50 cents there, in **small deeds of faithfulness and obedience**. But it’s right there, in those little 25 cent choices, that our lives take their direction.

So make your choices based on God’s principles: Relationships over rights; godliness over greed; fellowship with God over the world’s approval; and, faith in God’s promises over immediate pleasure from the world. Because if you have God and His promises, you have everything. So seek Him first, and all else is yours.

Walk by Faith ... Not by Sight.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When have you taken the initiative to try to serve as a peacemaker in some relationship situation?
- 2) What poor decisions have you made as a result of walking by sight?
- 3) Where have you seen people in some type of church dispute holding on to their rights when they would have been better served to be magnanimous and big-hearted?
- 4) What are some of the promises of God that you are holding fast to?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: Since choices often result in eternally significant consequences, we must choose in line with God’s principles.

He lost his wife, barely escaped with his own life and his two daughters, and goes off the Old Testament page hiding in a cave where his daughters make him drunk and commit incest with him. The offspring of those disgraceful nights were the Moabites and the Ammonites, two of Israel’s perennial enemies. It all began with Lot’s choice to live near Sodom. . .

Lot chose by sight and ended up spiritually and financially bankrupt. He escaped Sodom with the clothes on his back and fades out living in a cave. The things he saw and got didn’t bring him the lasting happiness he expected. Abram chose by faith, not by sight, and ended up spiritually and financially blessed, seeing and possessing by faith the whole land of Canaan, although he

TEXT: Genesis 14:1-24

TITLE: DIVINE DELIVERANCE VIA A COURAGEOUS MAN OF FAITH

BIG IDEA:

WHEN GOD GIVES THE VICTORY, WE MUST GIVE GOD THE GLORY

INTRODUCTION:

Last time in chap. 13 we looked at the **Contrasting Choices** made by Abram and Lot – the contrast between big-hearted generosity on the part of Abram and selfish worldliness on the part of his nephew Lot. Our **choices have consequences** . . . and this week in chap. 14 we see some of the consequences of those choices. Abram chose to **walk by faith** and God blessed him greatly. Lot was absorbed into the worldly culture of Sodom and Gomorrah and was almost wiped out – needing to be rescued by his courageous uncle.

Jack Arnold: This chapter was one of the beachheads where the higher critic made his attack upon the integrity of the Book of Genesis. The kings mentioned here could not be found in secular history for a long while. Archeology has changed all this and the kings can be identified and this particular battle has become a fascinating subject for historians.

Deffinbaugh: title for chap. 13 - “*Abram had a Lot to Lose.*” Chapter 14 could then be, “*Abram had a Lot to Gain.*” Perhaps chapter 15 would be, “*Abram had a Lot to Learn.*”

Some of our **biggest challenges** come right after God gives us a **dramatic victory** – a victory against all odds; a victory that demonstrates God’s awesome grace and power; a victory that we could not have accomplished in the flesh. How will we respond? The temptation is to allow others to praise us and become dependent on us. But we must strive to always give God the glory He deserves.

WHEN GOD GIVES THE VICTORY, WE MUST GIVE GOD THE GLORY

I. (:1-12) COLLATERAL DAMAGE WHEN YOU IMMERSE YOURSELF INTO THE WORLD – LOT SEIZED BY ALLIANCE OF INVADING KINGS

A. (:1-4) Political Scene Disrupted by Rebellion of Vassal States

1. (:1) Eastern Coalition of Four Kings in Control = CHED’S CONTROLLING COHORTS

“*And it came about in the days of Amraphel king of Shinar,
Arioch king of Ellasar,
Chedorlaomer king of Elam, known popularly as “Ched”
and Tidal king of Goiim,*”

Parunak: Particularly powerful federations would go on campaign to terrorize other regions and demand tribute from them (just like playground bullies). This was so regular that the appropriate season was designated “*the time when kings go forth,*” **2 Sam 11:1**. We have many records of such campaigns by Mesopotamian and Egyptian kings; they routinely see-sawed back and forth across the Levant, and the land of Canaan was always caught in the middle between them. At this period, Mesopotamia is in the ascendancy, and so the attack comes from the north. [and east]

2. (:2) Five Vassal Kings = SODOM'S REBEL KINGS

*“that they made war with Bera king of Sodom,
and with Birsha king of Gomorrah,
Shinab king of Admah,
and Shemeber king of Zeboiim,
and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar).”*

Hughes: Sodom was part of a pentapolis (a group of five cities, each with a petty king) located at the southern end of the Dead Sea, which had been paying tribute for twelve years to a coalition of four kings from the east.

They probably wanted to keep the trade routes between Mesopotamia and Egypt open and under their control.

Wanted to keep their vassal states under their thumb and contributing the required taxes.

3. (:3-4) Determination to Rebel

a. (:3) Uniting in Preparation for Battle

“All these came as allies to the valley of Siddim (that is, the Salt Sea).”

Sodom's Rebel Kings

b. (:4) Revolting Against Long Standing Tyranny

“Twelve years they had served Chedorlaomer, but the thirteenth year they rebelled.”

B. (:5-7) Prevailing Victories of Ched's Controlling Cohorts

1. (:5-6) Initial Victories – Against Rephaim, Zuzim, Emim, and Horites

*“And in the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, came and defeated the Rephaim in Ashteroth-karnaim
and the Zuzim in Ham
and the Emim in Shaveh-kiriathaim,
and the Horites in their Mount Seir, as far as El-paran, which is by the wilderness.*

Parunak: The list of peoples that they subjugate is calculated to impress the reader with their strength. Most of these peoples are designated as “giants” in **Deut 2:10-12, 20-21**. (“Rephaim” is “giant” in **Deut 2:11**). We are meant to conclude that this northern coalition is really powerful.

Constable: *Rephaim:* Most likely they were one of the early tribal groups that inhabited Canaan when Abram entered the land. They appear to have been very powerful, and apparently some of their neighbors regarded them as superhuman before and or after their heyday

2. (:7) Subsequent Victories – Against Amalekites and Amorites

“Then they turned back and came to En-mishpat (that is, Kadesh), and conquered all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites, who lived in Hazazon-tamar.”

Constable: Route taken: a wide sweep to the east and south and then around to the southwest; then northeast to the western side of the Dead Sea, and lastly the troops swarm down upon their final objective, the cities in the Vale of Siddim.

C. (:8-10) Pitfalls of Sodom and Gomorrah

1. (:8-9) Staging of the Battle in Valley of Siddim

a. (:8) Sodom’s Rebel Kings

*“And the king of Sodom
and the king of Gomorrah
and the king of Admah
and the king of Zeboiim
and the king of Bela (that is, Zoar) came out; and they arrayed for battle against them in the valley of Siddim.”*

b. (:9) Chedorlaomer’s Controlling Cohorts

*“against Chedorlaomer king of Elam
and Tidal king of Goiim
and Amraphel king of Shinar
and Arioch king of Ellasar-- four kings against five.”*

2. (:10) Embarrassing Rout

*“Now the valley of Siddim was full of tar pits;
and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and they fell into them.
But those who survived fled to the hill country.”*

D. (:11-12) Plundering of Sodom and Gomorrah Including Capture of Lot

1. (:11) Plundering of Goods

“Then they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their food supply, and departed.”

Complete capture and plundering of all of their goods – nothing left of value

2. (:12) Capture of Lot

“And they also took Lot, Abram’s nephew, and his possessions and departed, for he was living in Sodom.”

Surprising editorial commentary: where do we find Lot? Not just living close to Sodom ... but now absorbed into the city and culture so that he was one with Sodom

Parunak: We can also make an interesting chronological observation. Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran (12:4), which is before Lot left him for the cities of the plain. He was 86 years old when Ishmael was born (16:16), which appears to be some time after Lot left him. The intervening period is only **11 years**. This means that the conquest of the cities of the plain by the northern kings took place before Lot went there to live. He is moving into territory that is under the thumb of powerful overlords, which ought to be a warning of trouble to come. The land that seemed so attractive to him was already claimed by the northern kings, who were siphoning off the riches of the land in the form of tribute. He thought he would be enriched by living there; in fact he was impoverished.

II. (:13-16) COURAGEOUS DELIVERANCE -- LOT RESCUED BY ABRAM – MAN OF FAITH AND LOYALTY

A. (:13) Concerning Report of Lot's Capture

1. Abram Hears the News

“Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew.”

Abram's relationship to Lot must have been known; this fugitive knew that Abram would want to hear the news of what had happened to his nephew; Abram probably demonstrated persistent concern for his wayward nephew

2. Abram Has Some Allies

“Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were allies with Abram.”

Three brothers – they were going to be part of alliance of soldiers that Abram could quickly put together; what amazing loyalty they had to Abram to be willing to step out on such a risky venture. Maybe they had come to trust in Abram's God as well.

B. (:14) Courageous Pursuit

“And when Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he led out his trained men, born in his house, three hundred and eighteen, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.”

Motivation of Abram: concern for Lot

- Could have written him off – he made his bed, let him sleep in it; I am not going to assume risk because of his foolish choices
- Could have taken a window dressing response: I'll pray for him; maybe God can help him ...

But of course God wanted to use Abram as his instrument of deliverance ... reminds us of the later story of **Gideon** .. difference is that Abram is a much more willing military commander ... But the odds and the risk are similar

Don't think of Abram as a man of war; as an elite military strategist; as a commander in battle – But he understood the dangerous times in which he lived and the possibility of invading forces trying to steal his possessions and capture his people; he was prepared; had been training an elite team of soldiers – fighting men who had been born in his house

No time to waste; situation was getting worse by the minute. The farther away the enemy took Lot, the more difficult it would be to rescue him;

Staged a forced march in pursuit of Ched's Controlling Cohorts

Jack Arnold: He moves the small force 120 miles to the north, probably at a torrid pace to overtake the conquering army as soon as possible. The encounter comes at Dan, at the northern extremity of Palestine.

C. (:15) Calculated Victory

“And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them, and pursued them as far as Hobah, which is north of Damascus.”

Divide and Conquer strategy

Making his forces seem much larger than they were

Using cloak of darkness to disguise his vulnerability and to achieve the advantage of surprise attack

D. (:16) Complete Recovery of Goods and People

“And he brought back all the goods, and also brought back his relative Lot with his possessions, and also the women, and the people.”

Abram would have been hailed as quite the hero; people would have been ready to worship him; give him anything he wanted; danger of such success: people don't see the grace and power of God that enabled the success

Takes extra effort on our part to direct the accolades away from ourselves and to make our boast in the Lord – make sure that He gets all the glory – exactly what we see Abram doing

III. (:17-24) CONSISTENT DEVOTION -- ABRAM CAREFUL TO GIVE GOD THE GLORY – INTERACTIONS WITH KING OF SODOM AND OF SALEM

A. (:17) Initiative of King of Sodom

“Then after his return from the defeat of Chedorlaomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shaveh (that is, the King's Valley).”

Sees value in establishing a relationship with Abram where he can exercise some form of control and can use Abram for his purposes down the road

Location: a brief distance south of Jerusalem

B. (:18-20) Interaction with Melchizedek – Arena of Blessing and Thanksgiving --

1. (:18-20a) Blessing Administered by Melchizedek --

Supreme King/Priest who functions as a Type of Christ

“And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand.’”

Melchizedek shows up at just the right moment out of nowhere to make sure that the focus remains on the Most High God who alone is worthy of worship and praise; who alone is responsible for such a surprising and overwhelming victory against all odds

Hughes: Significance of Melchizedek as type of Christ (distinct persons) – **Heb. 7:3** *resembling Son of God*

- Foreshadowing **Role of Christ** – combining king and priest; appointed by God
- Foreshadowing **Character of Christ** – peace (Salem) and righteousness (Melchizedek)
- Foreshadowing **Priestly Qualifications** of Christ –
 - o No genealogy – no beginning or end – all Levitical priests had to have a priestly genealogy that could be traced back to Aaron
 - o No beginning/end – Christ a priest forever (not just for term limits of 30 years)
- Foreshadowing **Superiority of Christ**

Refreshes Abram with royal banquet of bread and wine (**1 Sam. 16:20**)

Makes sure that Abram remembers to give God the glory – *“Who has delivered your enemies into your hand”*

2. (:20b) Response of Abram

“And he gave him a tenth of all.”

Response of worship and thanksgiving and sacrifice and giving
Now Abram is prepared for interaction with the King of Sodom

C. (:21-24) Interaction with King of Sodom – Arena of Temptation and Integrity

1. (:21) Demand of King of Sodom

“And the king of Sodom said to Abram, ‘Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.’”

Really it all belonged by right to Abram as the conqueror; King of Sodom did not recognize the divine hand at work in granting Abram the victory; could only look at things with the eyes of the flesh

2. (:22-24) Response by Abram

“And Abram said to the king of Sodom, ‘I have sworn to the LORD God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich.’ I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten, and the share of the men who went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their share.’”

Abram a testimony of consistent devotion to the Lord; a devotion expressed in worship and praise; a devotion expressed in loyalty and dependence – recognizing he could never trust in the arm of the flesh; wanted no part of any alliance with the world; expressing his complete dependence on the Most High God who has given him the victory and deserves all of the glory

CONCLUSION:

Illustration: Paralyzed Athlete Brings Glory to God

Dennis Byrd was a professional football player. As an up-and-coming defensive superstar for the New York Jets, he was predicted to help turn the Jets organization around. Then tragedy struck.

On November 29, 1992, the Jets were playing the Chiefs. Dennis was about to sack the quarterback when he collided with a teammate and his spinal cord was snapped. In a split-second, his football career ended. He was paralyzed from the neck down. Everything he had planned for his life came to a screeching halt.

Later, he wrote about waking up in the middle of the night at Lenox Hospital in a halo brace, not knowing where he was, not knowing why he couldn't move, not knowing what was happening. Suddenly, he went from dreaming of making it to the Pro Bowl to hoping he could someday hold his daughter in his arms again.

From a worldly perspective, Dennis was no longer able to reach his potential. But in God's eyes, Dennis Byrd is capable of much more than sacking quarterbacks. In God's eyes, Dennis Byrd is capable of giving him glory, and Dennis has done that in a tremendous way.

The world watched and listened as Dennis Byrd told the media that Christ was his source of comfort in his time of tragedy. The doctors announced to the media that Dennis may never walk again, and it would be years before they would know. Dennis told the media that with God's help, he would walk again—soon.

On opening day of the 1993 football season, less than a year after the tragic collision, millions of television viewers watched Dennis Byrd walk out to the middle of the Meadowlands Stadium while 75,000 fans stood cheering in ovation. The miracle in Dennis Byrd's life is not that he broke his neck and walked again. The miracle is that the injury that destroyed his career didn't destroy his life.

<http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2006/january/16302.html>

He was killed in a head-on vehicle collision Saturday near his home in Oklahoma – Oct. 1916

He never fully recovered from the injury, walking with some difficulty and going through continuous rehabilitation during the years since. But Byrd, a devout Christian, wrote a book in

1993 called "Rise and Walk: The Trial and Triumph of Dennis Byrd," which detailed how he relied on his faith and family to push through his injury to recover and serve as an inspiration to others who went through similar situations.

WHEN GOD GIVES THE VICTORY, WE MUST GIVE GOD THE GLORY

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why did Sodom's Rebel Kings think they would stand a chance against Ched's Controlling Cohorts?
- 2) Are we still our brother's keeper even after our brother has made foolish decisions?
- 3) Why don't we see Lot expressing any gratitude towards his uncle or towards the Lord for his deliverance? How can he still move back into the city of Sodom?
- 4) How would you contrast the approach of the King of Sodom and the King of Salem to the victory won by Abram and his alliance of soldiers?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak:

But why can he enter a covenant with the Canaanites, while later Israel is forbidden from such covenants, **Deut 7:2**?

- Progressive revelation. It is a mistake to assume that God imposes his law all at once on people. What is permitted in one age may be forbidden in another, and vice versa.
- Abram's circumstances are different from those of Israel.
 - o Throughout Genesis, Abram and his descendants are "strangers and pilgrims" in the land, not fully possessing it. They are never authorized to enter into conflict with the Canaanites; the only conflict recorded of Abram is this battle, which is with the Northern kings, not Canaanites. In fact, in the next chapter God expressly tells Abram that "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full" (15:16), so it is not yet time for him to take over their territory.
 - o In Deuteronomy, Israel is poised to enter the land and take possession of it, destroying the Canaanites in judgment for their sin (Deut 7:1,2,5).

Abram does avoid the main hindrance against which Deut 7 warns, intermarriage (7:3,4). When the time comes to find a wife for Isaac, Abram explicitly instructs his servant Eliezer, "thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac" (Gen 24:3,4).

TEXT: Genesis 15:1-21

TITLE: DON'T FEAR ... DON'T DOUBT ... DON'T QUIT

BIG IDEA:

3 CORE PROMISES COMPRISING THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT THAT DEMAND FAITH AS THE ANTIDOTE TO FEAR, DOUBT AND QUITTING

INTRODUCTION:

Remember that it was said of the Lord Jesus as He became incarnate and emptied Himself of the manifestation of His glory and limited Himself to walking around on earth in a human body: *“He was tempted in all respects like all of us and yet He never sinned.”* If that was true of our Lord, think of how it was true of **Abraham**.

- He was tempted to **fear** his many enemies; he could have given in to any number of insecurities – think of the odds he had just faced in rescuing Lot and his family from Ched’s Cohorts – the alliance of 4 powerful kings. Abraham didn’t make any friends there. Think of how fearful he was down in Egypt where he had fled to escape the famine in the land – that was a failure of faith that exposed Sarah to the indignity of being snatched into Pharaoh’s harem.
- He was tempted to **doubt** God’s promise – where was this seed that would bring so much blessing? Much less innumerable descendants? He must have had confidence issues. Think of the discussions that must have gone on between him and his barren wife. He was driven to seek fleshly alternatives to try to help God with this seemingly impossible expectation.
- He was tempted to **give up** since the possession of the promises was in the unforeseeable future. Yet **Hebrews 11:8-12** tells us that ...

Were God’s Promises to him real and tangible and solid or mere **Pipedreams??**

Abraham is known as a man of faith because that is the defining characteristic that is the antidote to all of these temptations – to fear, to doubt, to quitting.

These are the same temptations that each of us faces today.

- What are your insecurities regarding the future? Centered around finances, around health, around how your kids will do in the future ...
- What are your doubts ...
- Where are you tempted to throw in the towel and give up?

How are we doing in **Believing God?**

3 CORE PROMISES COMPRISING THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT THAT DEMAND FAITH AS THE ANTIDOTE TO FEAR, DOUBT AND QUITTING

I. (:1) PROMISE OF ABSOLUTE PROTECTION AND GREAT REWARD – DON’T FEAR – NEED FAITH NOT TO FEAR BUT ENJOY SECURITY

A. Divine Revelation – Promise of Absolute Protection

“After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying,”
“Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you;”

Parunak: We do not sufficiently appreciate the majesty of God. When he allows his glory to shine forth, even for a moment, the most holy of men must be terrified because of their sin. He and his ministers thus customarily greet those in their favor to whom they appear with these words, “*Fear not.*” What a blessing it is when God thus greets us, instead of the alternative, “*Depart from me, ye that work iniquity*” (**Matt 7:23; 25:41**).

The Lord is personally **a shield to Abram** – Why did he need a shield? As we already stated, he would have had a wide variety of enemies that would love to settle a score with him.

* * * * *

Ps. 7:10 This Psalm is a prayer of David that the Lord would rise up and deliver him from his enemies – look at a brief overview of this psalm

**INTEGRITY ENSURES PROTECTION FROM FIERCE ADVERSARIES
SINCE THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE WILL VINDICATE THE INNOCENT
AND EXECUTE THE WICKED**

**I. (:1-2) THE RIGHTEOUS TAKE REFUGE IN GOD
FROM FIERCE ADVERSARIES**

II. (:3-5) INTEGRITY ENSURES PROTECTION

A. Integrity means:

doing no injustice
not harming a friend
not taking advantage of someone

B. We need protection against those who would:

pursue my soul
overtake it
trample my life
“lay my glory in the dust”

III. (:6-11) THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE WILL VINDICATE THE INNOCENT

**IV. (:12-13) THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE HAS PREPARED
WEAPONS OF EXECUTION**

V. (:14-16) THE WICKED WILL GET WHAT THEY DESERVE

VI. (:17) PRAISE THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE

* * * * *

The Lord not only has our back ... He has our front and our side as well; we are surrounded on all sides by the protection of our God

That enables us to take risks ... to trust God’s promises; to step out of our comfort zone and live aggressively by faith; in a sense, we are untouchables

Ephes. 6:16 – remember the armor of God – we need to take up the **shield of faith**

B. Promise of Great Reward

“Your reward shall be very great.”

Remember, Abram had refused reward from the **King of Sodom**; he found his reward in the Lord

Where are you looking for your reward? Don't look to find it from the world
Don't live as a man-pleaser seeking the admiration and acclaim of others ...

We can't even comprehend or imagine the **great reward** that awaits us in the future for a life of faith; a life of serving God and loving others
Esau was willing to give up his birthright for a bowl of stew – don't make the same mistake
Live in light of Eternity – not trying to maximize the pleasure of the moment; don't be short-sighted

We have **Eternal Security** – kept in the hand of the Lord Jesus who has saved us and nobody is able to pluck us out of His hand; our insecurities should melt away as we rest in His protection and anticipate His reward. He Himself is our lot in this life so that we rejoice in the Lord Jesus and serve with great contentment and great anticipation of all we will experience as co-heirs with Christ for all eternity

What are you afraid of? Have faith in the promises of God.

II. (:2-6) PROMISE OF COUNTLESS OFFSPRING – DON'T DOUBT – NEED FAITH NOT TO DOUBT BUT TO HAVE CONFIDENCE

A. (:2-3) Substitution Theology – Expression of Confusion and Doubt

“And Abram said, ‘O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?’ And Abram said, ‘Since Thou hast given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.’”

Deffinbaugh: In the Ancient Near East there was a well-attested practice to ensure an heir, even if no son were born to the man.¹⁵⁶ The childless couple would adopt one of the servants born into the household. This ‘son’ would care for them in their old age and would inherit their possessions and property at the time of their death. At this low point in Abram's faith, it was the best for which he thought he could hope.

Parunak: Abram's question here, and the later one in v.8, show that faith is not blind to the apparent obstacles to God's promises. However, it brings those concerns back to God, acknowledges his sovereignty, and leans on him. The form of address shows the reverence with which Abram brings this question. He is not challenging God's statement, but seeking to understand it.

Amillennial perspective – where the OT promises to Israel are said to be just spiritual promises that are applied to the church because of the failure of Israel to believe – that is just another example of Replacement Theology – that is exactly what Abraham was doing here –

God says emphatically: “No, No! Don't give up on my promises just because you can't see how I will make it happen.”

B. (:4) Divine Revelation – Promise of Physical Offspring -- Statement

“Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘This man will not be your heir;

but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.”

Hughes: Three times previously God had promised Abram a multitude of descendants – initially when he called him in Ur (**12:2**), then in Canaan at Shechem where he built an altar (**12:7**), and last from the highest spot in central Palestine as Abram was surveying the promised land in every direction (**13:14-16**).

C. (:5a) Promise of Countless Offspring – Symbol

“And He took him outside and said, ‘Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’”

Parunak: The point being made is the same as **13:16**, “*as the dust of the earth.*” **22:17** introduces a third, *the sand on the seashore*. All three emphasize an innumerable progeny.

3 incredible images that convey the same message of countless offspring

- true in a **physical sense** for Abraham
- true in a **spiritual sense** for Abraham as the father of all those who believe

Again, we participate in these wonderful promises by way of application; we are the spiritual seed of Abrahah

D. (:5b) Promise of Countless Offspring -- Statement

“And He said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be.’”

Rom. 4:16-25

E. (:6) Response of Faith – Linked to Righteousness

“Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

This is the heart of today’s text

Not the initial point of his faith – he believed God when he responded to the initial call back in Ur of the Chaldees (**Heb. 11:8**); continuing to believe as God provided additional revelation

This faith was focused on the promised seed

Jesus: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad” (**John 8:56**).

MacArthur: The Apostle Paul quoted these words as an illustration of faith over and against works (**Ro 4:3, 9, 22; Gal 3:6; Jas 2:23**). Abram was justified by faith.

Cf. Lev. 7:18; Num 18:27; 2 Sam 19:19; Osalm 32:2; 106:31

People in the OT were **saved by grace thru faith** – that is how righteousness was reckoned to their account – the heart of the doctrine of justification as Paul explains it in the book of Romans

How are we doing in this important area of **Confidence**?

- We are instructed to come boldly into the presence of God; to bring our petitions before His throne
- As Jesus prepared His disciples for His departure, He commanded them: “*Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.*” **John 14**

III. (:7-21) PROMISE OF POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND – DON'T QUIT – NEED FAITH NOT TO GIVE UP BUT TO PERSEVERE

A. (:7) Divine Revelation – Promise of Possession of the Promised Land

“And He said to him, ‘I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.’”

This is a very specific land with very specific borders – not some spiritualized concept [meant to include a map showing all the modern nations this land touches – Turkey, Kuwait, Syria, etc.]

Hughes: monumental language because God would later use an almost identical formula to introduce the Mosaic covenant at Sinai – **Ex. 20:2**

B. (:8-21) Reassurance of the Promise

1. (:8) Petition for Reassurance and Additional Details

“And he said, ‘O Lord God, how may I know that I shall possess it?’”

Wants more details; more insight – what is going to take place and how long will it be before God’s promise comes to fruition; not an expression of doubt but a sincere desire for more insight

The tone seems similar to that of Mary when told she will be the mother of Messiah: *“And Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’”* (**Luke 1:34**).

2. (:9-11) Preparation of the Covenant Ceremony

“So He said to him, ‘Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.’ Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. And the birds of prey came down upon the carcasses, and Abram drove them away.”

5 specific animals that would become standard sacrifices under the Mosaic covenant – not sacrificed here but symbolizing God’s covenant people
Legal act of ratifying a covenant agreement

3. (:12) Peril of the Process Revealed – Nightmare scenario

“Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him.”

God was showing Abram in more detail the events that must transpire before his descendants would get to possess the land

4. (:13-16) Prophecy of the Future of the Nation and of Abram

a. (:13-14) Of the Nation – Possession would be the end result of a long, painful process of oppression and slavery in a foreign land

“And God said to Abram, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they

will serve; and afterward they will come out with many possessions.”

Clearly speaking of bondage in Egypt and God’s deliverance

- b. (:15) Of Abram – Peace for Abram – but no quick possession
*“And as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace;
you shall be buried at a good old age.”*

Abram would not personally experience this bondage; died at age of 175

- c. (:16) Of the Timeframe
*“Then in the fourth generation they shall return here,
for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.”*

Parunak: A delay in judgment occasioned the delay in covenant fulfillment.

Patience of God is emphasized

Steven Cole: “Amorite” is here a general term for all the residents of Canaan. That phrase tells us that God has a predetermined limit to which He allows nations to go in their sin before He steps in and judges them. It shows us the awesome sovereignty of God, who knows in advance when the sins of a nation will be ripe for judgment.

5. (:17-21) Performance of the Covenant

“And it came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite.’”

Steven Cole: There are different guesses as to what this symbolized. Some say that it meant to invoke that the same thing that happened to the animals might happen to the party who broke the covenant. Others say it pointed to the essential unity of the two parties, and that there is life and strength in unity, death in separation. Thus the two parties were solemnly signifying their commitment to the covenant.

Parunak: The remarkable thing about the ceremony in Gen 15:17 is that only God walks between the pieces of the animals. He takes on himself full responsibility for the fulfillment of the promises. This covenant is **unilateral**; Abram is asleep through the entire ceremony. God unconditionally grants to him the benefits described in the following section. (This insight is extremely important eschatologically. It means that no failing of Abram’s seed can deprive them of this promise, and thus forms the foundation for the future earthly reign of our Lord Jesus over the earth.)

Steven Cole: boundaries which were approximated under the reign of Solomon (**1 Kings 4:21**), but which still await complete fulfillment. . .

it’s refreshing to read **F. B. Meyer** (born in 1847), who wrote, “Somehow the descendants

of Abraham shall yet inherit their own land, secured to them by the covenant of God. Those rivers shall yet form their boundary lines: for ‘*the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*’” (Abraham [Christian Literature Crusade], p. 72).

CONCLUSION:

Deffinbaugh: The bottom line for Abram was that God’s promise was now much more specific. Abram would have a son of his own through whom blessings would be poured out. Abram’s offspring would be very numerous and, in time, would possess the land. But before this, they would go through a time of delay and great difficulty. . . he is brought to the realization that faith cannot be separated from suffering, for God uses this to draw men into intimate fellowship with Himself.

Standing on the Promises of God

1. *Standing on the promises of Christ, my King, thro’ eternal ages let His praises ring; Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing, standing on the promises of God.*
2. *Standing on the promises that cannot fail, when the howling storms of **doubt** and **fear** assail, by the living Word of God I shall **prevail**, standing on the promises of God.*
3. *Standing on the promises of Christ, the Lord, bound to Him eternally by love’s strong cord, overcoming daily with the Spirit’s sword, standing on the promises of God.*
4. *Standing on the promises I cannot fall, list’ning every moment to the Spirit’s call, resting in my Savior as my all in all, standing on the promises of God.*

Steven Cole: Adoniram Judson, the great 19th century missionary to Burma, lost two wives and several children to death in that difficult land. He saw very little fruit from his labors, and had many discouragements and setbacks. Then a war between England and Burma broke out and Judson, being a foreigner, was imprisoned in squalid conditions. There, sick with fever, he received a letter from a friend who asked, “Judson, how’s the outlook?” Judson penned his classic reply, “**The outlook is as bright as the promises of God!**”

DON'T FEAR ... DON'T DOUBT ... DON'T QUIT

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What fears or doubts have you faced recently? What promises of God help to anchor your faith?
- 2) How do believers today participate in the promises that God made to Abram?
- 3) Why did the Lord cause a deep sleep to come upon Abram?
- 4) Why would God give such specific dimensions of the Promised Land if He did not intend there to be a literal fulfillment?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak:

1. The Lord introduces himself and declares his beneficence toward Abram.
2. Abram expresses doubts about this beneficence.
3. The Lord allays those doubts in statement and symbol.

Steven Cole: There is a story told of **Martin Luther**, that one day the devil approached him and tried to get him to doubt his salvation by presenting the reformer with a long list of sins of which he was guilty. When he had finished, Luther said to him, "Think a little harder; you must have forgotten some." The devil did this and came up with more to add to the list. At the conclusion of this, Luther simply said, "That's fine. Now write across that list in red ink, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.'" There was nothing the devil could say to that. Assurance depends on God's sure promise, not on our shaky performance.

David Thompson:

You can count on the promises of God even when you don't have tangible evidence of them at this point in time.

How many promises in the bible? Hard to determine.

5 narrative segments

1. (:7) **Reassurance of God** – this land is indwelt by enemies; just come through a major war; needed this reassurance; this land will be yours; Is God still looking out for us? We live in a world where people don't keep their promises; there may be some lapse of time but we can be sure God will fulfil every promise;
2. (:8) **Request of Abram** – "know" – have a great level of understanding; not doubting God's Word; wants further insight as to when this will happen; should have just accepted Word of God; comfort comes when we learn as much as possible by plan and program of God; wants to know specific details; the more we know of word of God the more stable we will be when surrounded by difficulties; we can go to bed at night
3. (:9) **Response of God** – when your descendants have a righteousness which comes via my system of blood sacrifices, they will receive the land; Israel rejected Jesus as Messiah; unconditional promise; right now Israel is trying to protect a small portion of the land promised to her
4. (:10-12) **Response of Abram** – following the instructions of God explicitly; birds are evil forces attacking program of God; deep sleep with nightmare; a division; many attacks; and then God will put the nation back together; 2 phases to the sacrificial approach of the promised seed;
5. (:13-21) **Revelation of God** – You want to know; I am going to let you know; specific details given; the way to possess the land will not be quick or smooth; oppressed by Egyptians for 430 years; because they don't see the need for the sacrifice to get them into this land; eventually I will bless you; Abram would not be enslaved like his descendants; died at 175 years old; died in peace; generation about 100 years; wickedness does not go unnoticed by God; don't dabble around in sin;

Bruce Goettsche: The Bible wants us to have **assurance of our salvation**. Why?

- He wants us to live with gratitude rather than fear
- He wants us to spend our time getting to know Him rather than trying to "find Him"
- He wants us to trust in His grace rather than in our efforts

- He wants us to keep looking forward rather than over our shoulder
- He wants us to serve with confidence rather than be shackled by uncertainty
- He wants us to repent and get up when we fall rather than get depressed and give up
- He wants us to enjoy the journey rather than simply endure it

J. Ligon Duncan: So the two parts of the chapter are clear. Abram's faith wrestling for assurance about the promise about having **an heir**, and of course ultimately having descendants to great to number. And then the second part of the chapter from 7 to 21 dealing with Abram's faith seeking assurance that God would indeed give him **the land**.

Dimensions of Promised Land:



TEXT: Genesis 16:1-16

TITLE: THE GOD WHO SEES

BIG IDEA:

WHENEVER WE TRY TO PLAY GOD WE MAKE A MESS OF THINGS -- BUT GOD CAN SHOW MERCY

INTRODUCTION:

Easy to go down the wrong trail when studying the Scriptures. We are warned against twisting Scripture to suit our own purposes – politicians quote the Bible this way all the time – For example, our Big Idea today could be: “*Never listen to the counsel of your wife*” – but that would be way off base ... definitely chauvinistic ... definitely contradicted by my own personal testimony of a multitude of excellent counsel I have received from my wife ...

So what is God communicating in this text?

1) Don't give in to the temptations of:

- **Presumption** (look at the scheming of Sarah = playing God) and
- **Passivity** (look at how Abram fails to take the leadership in his home)

Abraham is not as mature in the faith as we might expect him to be at this point

2) Don't turn and run when the pressure is on or imagine that you are outside the scope of God's deliverance and mercy – story of Hagar

Hughes: first marital triangle in biblical history. Here we have the multiplication of rejection, anger, hurt, jealousy, and vicious cruelty. Life complicated itself exponentially, and there was no resolution.

S. Lewis Johnson: Refutes philosophy: God will help those who help themselves

Sarah and Abram tried to help God and help themselves; took matters into their own hands; didn't turn out well; didn't advance God's agenda at all

Two Scenes to this Narrative:

- Interaction between Sarah and Abram – impacts Hagar
- Interaction between Hagar and the Angel of the Lord

WHENEVER WE TRY TO PLAY GOD WE MAKE A MESS OF THINGS -- BUT GOD CAN SHOW MERCY

The Angel of the Lord is the only hero in this story

(:1) PROLOGUE – PRESENT REALITY

A. Fulfillment of God's Promise Looks Hopeless

“Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children,”

Had been in the Promised Land for 10 years ... was 75 years old ... still not child

Famine in Chap. 12 was a threat to the **land promise**

Here in Chap. 16 Sarah's barrenness was a threat to the **seed promise**

Ligon Duncan: God is sovereign and we have a hard time accepting that. . . The problem is when God's sovereignty conflicts with our desires.

Parunak: From the perspective of the book, it stands as a roadblock to the promises that God has made. In **15:2**, Abram raises this issue with the Lord. Here, the narrator observes it. This shift has the effect of making the problem much more prominent. First Abram raises it: "Lord, how am I going to have a seed?" Now the narrator picks it up, as though in a background voice: "That's right, folks. How is he going to have a seed?" It is now not just Abram's problem, but a major problem with the plot, which centers around the divine promises.

2 Options come to our fleshly thinking:

- Maybe God doesn't see my situation
- Maybe God doesn't care to take action

B. Other Options are Available

"and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar."

Sarah looks around and considers her options

Abram had considered a solution that involved his servant Eliezer as well – but the difference was that he consulted the Lord in that situation

Calvin: The faith of both of them was defective; not indeed with regard to the substance of the promise, but with regard to the method in which they proceeded; since they hastened to acquire the offspring which was to be expected from God, without observing the legitimate ordinance of God.

Where did Hagar come from?

Deffinbaugh: The probability is great that Hagar was a gift from Pharaoh to Abram, a part of the dowry for Sarai: *"Therefore he treated Abram well for her sake; and gave him sheep and oxen and donkeys and male and female servants and female donkeys and camels"* (**Genesis 12:16**).

Alan Carr: He is still reaping the harvest he sowed in Egypt! (**Note:** You never go into sin and come out clean! There is always some reminder, some evidence that you were there! That is the Law of Sowing and Reaping, **Gal. 6:7-8.**)

I. (:2-6) INTERACTION BETWEEN SARAH AND ABRAM – PLAYING GOD MAKES A MESS OF THINGS

A. (:2) God's Promises Never Depend on Fleshly Fixes

1. Poor Perception Leads to Presumptuous and Precarious Plans

a. Poor Perception

"So Sarai said to Abram,

'Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children.'"

Our **Discernment Alarm** needs to be going off when we hear this faulty interpretation of reality
Sarah's theology was faulty

What was Sarah's view of God?

- Do we view God as some type of Scrooge that plots to prevent our dreams from becoming reality?
- Do we view God as someone who forgets about His promises or is unable to overcome obstacles?

What is our view of God?

- James 1 – loving heavenly Father who longs to give good gifts to His children
- The God who is faithful to keep all His promises and all powerful to control all things
- The God who sees my situation and cares deeply about me

b. Presumptuous and Precarious Plans

“Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children through her.”

Petitions her husband to follow her presumptuous plan
Culturally acceptable plan in this day and age – didn't make it right

Hagar from line of Ham, not line of Shem so this would never work – had not thought it through from every angle

Constable: Sarai tried to control the will of God by seizing the initiative from God (cf. **Genesis 3:17**). She and Abram chose fleshly means of obtaining the promised heir rather than waiting for God in faith (cf. **Genesis 25:21**) . . . Resorting to fleshly means rather than waiting for God to provide what He has promised always creates problems. This story also shows that human failure does not frustrate God's plans ultimately.

Deffinbaugh: In my estimation Sarai did not act in faith, but in presumption. Her primary concern seems to be with the social stigma upon her barrenness. She may well have persisted in her proposal until Abram gave in. Faith never tries to force God to act, nor to act in God's place, nor to accomplish what is supernatural in the power of the flesh.

2. Presumption Ignores the Counsel of God

“And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.”

Where is the prayer and the seeking of the counsel of God?

Deffinbaugh: Abram's failure was not in listening, but in heeding her instructions without weighing their implications

Parunak: 3 Principles:

1. The wife is more likely to be deceived than the husband.

1 Tim 2:14, drawing on the woman's own confession in **Gen 3:13**.

Recall that the NT associates the fall always with Adam, never with Eve.

2. She inherits from Eve a tendency to rebel against her husband and seek to control him:

Cf. **3:16b**, interpreted in the light of **4:7** (see previous notes).
Here we see Sarai exhibiting the tendency of **3:16b**.

3. The man must obey the injunction of **3:16b** and lead the wife, obeying the Lord above all.

- **Luke 14:26**, we are to hate our wife in comparison with the Lord.
- This is not just a NT principle; **Deut 13:6-11** requires the Israelite to give up a wife who has fallen into idolatry.

B. (:3-6) The Consequences of Fleshly Choices Lead to Compounded Sin

1. God's Timetable Can Be Perplexing and Frustrating

"And after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan,"

Sarah was 10 years younger than Abram

2. The Carrying Out of Fleshly Fixes Yields Fleshly Results

a. Execution of the Plan

"Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram as his wife. And he went in to Hagar,"

Emphasis here is not on sexual wrongdoing – this is not a case of couples swinging or Abraham indulging in sexual lust

Deffinbaugh: It is ironic how the tables have been turned. In chapter 12, Abram's unbelief caused him to agonize while Sarai was in Pharaoh's palace. Now, Sarai, due to her proposal, is left to ponder what is going on in Hagar's bedroom.

b. Results of the Plan

"and she conceived;"

No problem with fertility on Hagar's part – but did not play out as Sarah had hoped and anticipated

3. Unintended Consequences Compound the Pain

"and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight."

Didn't see this coming – when we play God ... we lack God's vision – we are not "The God who Sees"

Hagar: false pride; gloating; making things difficult for Sarah

Borgman sermon: **Tension in the Tent** –

Solomon comments on this tension: **Prov. 30:21-23** (origin of the Top Ten lists – but here he quotes only 4 items)

4. Sin Easily Snowballs – Sarah's Scheme Backfired – **What a Mess!**

a. Sarah's Attempt at Deflection of Blame

"And Sarai said to Abram, 'May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave

my maid into your arms; but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May the LORD judge between you and me.”

This is all your fault

b. Abraham’s Attempt at Washing His Hands of Accountability –
Passivity vs. Taking Spiritual Leadership in the Home

“But Abram said to Sarai, ‘Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight.’”

Deffinbaugh: Abram did not change his course either. He should have learned that his passivity was not piety. Letting Sarai have her way was relinquishing his leadership. He was the accomplice to sin by refusing to resist it or to rebuke Sarai. Sarai’s stinging rebuke served only to cause Abram to retreat further. He did not acknowledge his sin, nor did he confront Sarai with hers. Instead he persisted in allowing Sarai to have her own way. . .

Bill Gothard came to Dallas to speak to 2600 pastors. There he made a statement that was condemning to all of us. He said that, by far, the greatest complaint of pastors’ wives was that **their husbands were failing to take the spiritual leadership in their homes.**

Hughes: He hid behind the conventions of the **Code of Hammurabi** (Law 146), which stipulates that if a concubine claims equality with her mistress because she bore children, her mistress may demote her to her former status. Abram impotently abdicated any responsibility for the situation, or for that matter for poor Hagar who had recently become his wife

c. Sinful Treatment of Hagar by Sarah

“So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.”

Parunak: “*humbles*” Hagar. The verb is the one used to describe what Egypt does to Israel (Gen 15:13; Ex 1:11-12), and it is a prohibited action toward defenseless people (Ex 22:21-24). This is what a man does to a woman in taking her (Deut 21:14; 22:24).

Out of sight is not always out of mind

Fleshly solutions lead to tension and aggravate the situation rather than providing long term solutions

It is dangerous to **Play God**

II. (:7-14) INTERACTION BETWEEN THE ANGEL AND HAGAR – THE GOD WHO SEES SHOWS AMAZING MERCY IN THE MIDST OF OUR MESS

A. (:7) Divine Intervention

“Now the angel of the LORD found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur.”

Difficult journey across barren wilderness; stopped at one of the few points where she could obtain water; gearing up for final leg of her journey

Parunak: Ex 15:22 -- the region just beyond the border of Egypt into which Moses brought Israel after the Red Sea. The point of this detail is that Hagar is heading back home, **toward Egypt**. This is the first reference in the Bible to an angel, and in particular to “*the angel of the Lord*.” We meet him again in Gen 22, and numerous times later, in Exodus 3 (Moses at the bush), Numbers 22 (Balaam), Judges 2 (Israel), 6 (Gideon), 13 (parents of Samson), 2 Sam 24 (David), 1 Kings 19; 2 Kings 1 (Elijah), etc.

Who was this **angel of the Lord**?

Appearance of God Himself in person of His son

- **Vs. 10** – speaks in first person making exact promise God made
- **Vs. 13** – Hagar recognized this was God Himself

Interesting – appears to a woman ... one outside the family of God’s chosen people

Reminds us of Jesus meeting with Samaritan woman by the well in John 4

“*found her*” – God takes the initiative to find the lost in their time of greatest need and offer mercy and comfort and deliverance

B. (:8) Divine Interrogation

1. Probing

“And he said, ‘Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from and where are you going?’”

Parunak: the purpose is not to gain information, but to put the person questioned on the spot.

Trying to bring her to point of repentance

2. Confessing

“And she said, ‘I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.’”

Deffinbaugh: Running away does not change relationships, nor does it remove responsibility. Jonah, even in the belly of that fish, was still God’s prophet with a message for the Ninevites. Hagar continued to be Sarai’s maid, and it remained her duty to serve her mistress.

C. (:9-10) Divine Instruction

1. (:9) Tough Command

“Then the angel of the LORD said to her, ‘Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority.’”

Harsh treatment is not a justification to remove oneself from the realm of legitimate authority. We need to learn to submit in difficult circumstances and trust in the God who sees all and can deliver and vindicate us.

1 Peter 2:18-20

2. (:10) Tender Promise

“Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, ‘I will greatly multiply your

descendants so that they shall be too many to count.”

D. (:11-12) Divine Interpretation

1. (:11) Child of Promise

“The angel of the LORD said to her further, ‘Behold, you are with child, And you shall bear a son; And you shall call his name Ishmael, Because the LORD has given heed to your affliction.’”

Familiar formula of God’s magnificent promise

Ishmael = *God hears*

This woman has no claims on the mercy of God; yet God responds to her suffering
God undertakes for the broken-hearted

2. (:12) Child of Problems

“And he will be a wild donkey of a man, His hand will be against everyone, and everyone’s hand will be against him; And he will live to the east of all his brothers.”

Living to the East in the Bible typically not a good thing

Ishmael is father of many of the Arab people

There will be ongoing conflict

Parunak: lit. *“a wild ass of a man,”* the desert donkey, fiercely independent. A figure of independence and self-will throughout the OT (cf. **Job 39:5-8; Jer 2:24**). He will not submit to any authority.

Compare the angel’s words with Hagar with the initial promise to Abram in 12:1-3.

• Both include a command, though the commands are very different: Abram is to *“leave his father’s house,”* while Hagar is to *“return to her mistress.”*

• Both include the promise that they will become great through their offspring. This is the most similar point.

• Both include a description of the relation of their seed to others. Abram’s seed are to be a blessing to all nations, but Hagar’s will be a source of universal contention and strife.

E. (:13-14) Divine Identity

1. (:13) Name of God = The God who sees

“Then she called the name of the LORD who spoke to her, ‘Thou art a God who sees’; for she said, Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?’”

The Transcendent God sees the affliction of the lonely and broken-hearted – He sees me;
Has some concept of the Holiness and Justice of God – dangerous for a sinful woman to have seen this God; humbled here; in awe at God’s mercy to a nobody

Waltke: only place in Bible where a human being is represented as conferring a name upon God

Parunak: an abstract noun meaning “*seeing*.” It leaves open the question as to who is doing the seeing and who is seen -- Probably, as her following explanation shows, the ambiguity (God who sees; or Hagar who sees God) is intentional. God has seen her, and she now realizes that she has also seen him. Hagar’s insight is to recognize that this high God, who is also the creator of all things, is in addition in personal contact with his people. He is not distant and hidden, but accessible.

Ligon Duncan: the idea of God ‘*seeing*’ in the Old Testament is identical with the idea of God ‘*caring*.’ If He sees, then He cares.

2. (:14) Name of Well = The well of the living one who sees me

“Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.”

Borgman: this encounter is memorialized right there in the wilderness

(:15-16) EPILOGUE – PRESENT REALITY

A. (:15) Fulfillment of Promise to Hagar

“So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael.”

Repented and returned to Sarah; didn’t resolve all of the tension

How did Abram come up with this name? Hagar must have related her encounter with the Angel of the Lord

Application to Abram and Sarah – Don’t play God; constant reminder of need for faith = God hears

B. (:16) Time Stamp

“And Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to him.”

Promise is getting old – When will God act?

Ligon Duncan: But I want you to see that after all these machinations, after all these attempts on the part of Abram and Sarai and Hagar to work out their situation, that with regard to the fulfillment of the promises of the covenant, Abram is right back where he started from. He has not taken one step forward towards the fulfillment of God's promises towards him since the beginning of the chapter. Many troubles, many sorrows, but not one step forward in the progress of redemption because God is going to do things His way.

CONCLUSION:

WHENEVER WE TRY TO PLAY GOD WE MAKE A MESS OF THINGS -- BUT GOD

CAN SHOW MERCY

Ligon Duncan: Galatians 4:21: *"Tell me, you who want to be under the law, do you not listen to the law for it is written that Abraham had two sons. One by the bondwoman and one by the free woman."* And the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh and the son by the free woman through the promise. Now Paul goes on to expand that and continue that thought through the very end of that chapter, down to verse 31. But I want you to concentrate on that last phrase in verse 23. The son by the bondwoman was born how? According to the flesh. And the son by the free woman through the promise.

Now Paul is pointing there to the fact that Hagar's giving birth to Ishmael was the result of the design of the flesh. The will of man, indeed, the sinful will of man produced Ishmael, whereas Isaac was the product of Abraham and Sarai's trust in the covenant promises of God. So Ishmael is the **product of Abram and Sarai's failure of trust in the Lord.**

WE CAN TRUST IN THE PROVIDENTIAL FULFILLMENT OF GOD'S PROMISES BECAUSE HE SEES US AND CARES FOR US

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where are some instances where you have tried to play God? What lessons did you learn?
- 2) Why does God make us wait when we think it should be time for God to act?
- 3) When have you had to submit to an authority figure that was being cruel or unreasonable or unfair? What was the outcome?
- 4) When have you been tempted to imagine that God has abandoned you?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Robert Deffinbaugh: When Women Wear the Pants

Each of the three: Sarai, Abram, and Hagar, has been caught in the web of sin. Sarai acted in presumption; Abram lapsed into passivity; Hagar was the victim of pride. In yet another round of sin, each responds wrongly to the dilemma into which their sin has brought them.

Faith, I believe we can see, is trusting in the promises of God despite the problems, and knowing that with God all things are possible. Unbelief focuses upon the problems and supposes that if God does not act within our time frame and within our expectations, we must give Him a hand. Faith believes not only that God will give us what He has promised, but that He will provide us the means to do so, and if not, that He alone will do it.

Hughes: it all began when people of faith began to distrust God's word. It took shape when they decided that God needed help in fulfilling his word. It took off when Abram and Sarai took a shortcut to obtain what they knew God had promised, the good promise Their expedience

TEXT: Genesis 17:1-27

TITLE: EL SHADDAI MAKES IT HAPPEN

BIG IDEA:

OUR FAILURES DON'T NEGATE EL SHADDAI'S COVENANT PROMISES –

GOD ALMIGHTY REAFFIRMS HIS COVENANT PROMISES AND COMMANDS CIRCUMCISION AS THE SIGN OF HIS COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

INTRODUCTION:

Our faith in God's ability to bless us and carry out His promises to us always needs strengthening. We are no different than the **disciples** whom Jesus patiently trained – as Jesus lamented over and over again – “*O Ye of little faith. How long Have I been with you and you still struggle with completely trusting Me.*” How easily we grow impatient when God's timetable does not correspond to our expectations. How easily we doubt despite all of the times God has proved to us His power and His faithfulness. How fragile is our faith when it should be robust and a shield against the darts of Satan. How easily our failures and our sins drag us down.

We are no different than **Abraham** who tries to play God and take matters into his own hands and makes a mess of things as we saw in Chap. 16. He first tried to put forth his servant Eliezer as the one through whom God could fulfil His promises. Then he and Sarah resorted to having a child through her hand maiden Hagar. But this Ishmael was a child of the flesh – not the child of promise. Against all odds; despite the impossibility of the situation – God is going to accomplish His program His way. He will always keep His covenant promises to His people.

Chap. 17 offers great encouragement to our faith. Because

OUR FAILURES DON'T NEGATE EL SHADDAI'S COVENANT PROMISES –

Here God presents Himself as *El Shaddai – God Almighty* – the one who makes it happen for His people.

GOD ALMIGHTY REAFFIRMS HIS COVENANT PROMISES AND COMMANDS CIRCUMCISION AS THE SIGN OF HIS COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

I. (:1-8) COVENANT PROMISES REAFFIRMED TO ABRAHAM – DESPITE HIS FAILURES

A. (:1-2) General Reaffirmation by God Almighty

1. (:1a) Divine Revelation

*“Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old,
the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him,”*

13 year timeframe has intervened since Abram and Sarai tried to play God and come up with their own pathway to the promise through Hagar giving birth to Ishmael; Now God breaks the silence and speaks to Abram once again

Hughes: Ishmael, the shortcut heir (the child of fleshly expediency), was rushing toward

manhood. . . It had been some 23 years since the initial promise.

2. (:1b) Divine Identity

“I am God Almighty;” El Shaddai / all sufficient

S. Lewis Johnson: Now, we have had three names for God so far. You remember the word “*Elohim*,” that is “God who creates and preserves nature,” and then we have had “*Yahweh*”, He is the God who makes covenants of grace, and now *God Almighty*, and it is clear from the context in which it appears here and the remainder of the context of the Old Testament that this is the God who controls nature.

Parunak: This is the predominant name for God in the patriarchal period, used more times in Genesis than anywhere else (17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25), and described in **Exod 6:3** as the dominant patriarchal name. . . Combines 2 concepts from study of etymology:

- **God’s personal care** for His people
- **God’s power**

El Shaddai is the almighty God, but not in an abstract sense. He deploys this power to bring blessing to his people. [often associated with fruitfulness]

Youngblood: The God who makes things happen by means of his majestic power and might.

3. (:1c) Divine Charge

“Walk before Me, and be blameless.”

“Be holy as I am holy”

Waltke: The expression does not imply **moral perfection**, for David claims this (**2 Sam 22:24**) even after his adultery and murder in the case of Bathsheba. The Hebrew word literally means “*complete*,” and it describes “wholehearted commitment and wholeness of relationship.”

Leopold: The one command demands a God-conscious life of the best type; the other, faithful observance of all duties. The one is sound mysticism; the other, conscientious conduct. The one is the soul of true religion; the other, the practice of it.

S. Lewis Johnson: To walk before God seems to me to walk with the eyes of God upon all of our affairs. It means that we do not run ahead of Him. It means that we do not hang back behind Him as if we are afraid that He will examine our steps but we walk before Him. That is desirous of His approval, of His pleasure. . .

I find no difficulty in accepting that as the teaching of the word of God. The Apostle John said, “*These things I write unto you that you sin not*,” not that you sin not often or something like that. So, to be blameless, to be perfect, well, it would be all right to say the standard is the standard of perfection. The word, however, probably does not quite connote that idea.

4. (:2) Divine Promise

*“And I will establish **My covenant** between Me and you,*

And I will multiply you exceedingly.”

Parunak: The AV, “*I will make my covenant,*” is misleading. The verb for initiating a covenant is “*cut,*” which we saw in **15:18**. Here the verb is “*give.*” The emphasis is not on the initiation of the covenant, but on the conveyance of its benefits to Abraham. Up to this point he has had only words. Now he is to receive tangible evidence: the sign of circumcision, and the promise of a son within the year.

- “*Cutting*” a covenant establishes the relationships between the parties;
- “*Giving*” a covenant makes it tangible; it enables the recipient to be more full conscious of it.

9 references to “**My covenant**” -- not *Our covenant* – This is **God’s Covenant**
God is the one who will make all this happen; He guarantees its execution
He is God Almighty

B. (:3-8) Specific Reaffirmation to Abraham

(:3) Divine Revelation

“And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,”

1. (:4-5) Name Change

*“As for Me, behold, **My covenant** is with you, And you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations.”*

“*As for me*” vs. 4 – **Emphasis on Divine Sovereignty** –
coupled with “*As for you*” vs. 9 – **Emphasis on Human Responsibility**

Ab-ram means “*exalted father.*”

By adding an “h”, it becomes a pun for “*father of a multitude,*” *ab-hamon.*

S. Lewis Johnson: What is your name? Exalted father! Oh! What a wonderful name. How old are you? I am 99. Are you married? Oh, yes, I am married. How many children then do you have? None.

So Abram, you can just imagine the years of embarrassment. One morning, he came down to breakfast, came into the tent, the maids in the back were cooking bacon and eggs, and as Abram sat down, he said I have an announcement to make — and so there was quiet, and he waited. He said, “I have changed my name.” “Ah,” someone said, in the back, “He couldn’t not take it; the old man finally could not take it.” “Exalted father” and all he has got is Ishmael from Hagar.

He said my name is no longer going to be “exalted father”, it is going to be “father of a multitude,” and you can just imagine them saying, “What do you know?” Some of them said the old man has gone around the bend. And then some said, no doubt, “Well, after all he had one child by Hagar and now he is beginning to get ideas.” You can just see this is a most amazing situation.

2. (:6-7) Seed Promise

*“And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. And I will establish **My covenant** between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you.*

Key Aspects of this Seed Promise:

- International Promise
- Royal Promise
- Eternal Promise
- Relationship Promise

3. (:8) Land Promise

“And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

II. (:9-14) CIRCUMCISION COMMANDED AS THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT – DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY DOES NOT NEGATE HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

A. (:9-10) Covenant Responsibility Comanded = Circumcision

*“God said further to Abraham, ‘Now as for you, you shall keep **My covenant**, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is **My covenant**, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.’”*

Circumcision -- the cutting off of the foreskin of the male sex organ is what is in view here; Involves pain and blood

B. (:11) Application to Abraham = Sign of the Covenant

“And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.”

MacArthur: The symbolism had to do with the need to cut away sin and be cleansed. It was the male organ which most clearly demonstrated the depth of depravity because it carried the seed that produced depraved sinners. Thus, circumcision symbolized the need for a profoundly deep cleansing to reverse the effects of depravity.

Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4

Hughes: As a sign, circumcision functioned much as a wedding ring symbolizes commitment. The external sign signified a whole life commitment. But unlike a wedding ring, circumcision could not be cast aside. It was a permanent, ineradicable sign. It would bear terrible, unremitting witness against a sinful, unconsecrated heart.

Parunak: What is our obligation today, as the spiritual seed of Abraham?

- The early church logically thought that circumcision continued to be the required sign. The pharisaic party in Acts 15 actually had logic on their side. But God’s explicit intervention in the case of Cornelius indicated that though the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant extend to Gentiles, the sign does not.

- The doctrine of infant baptism is based on a supposed parallel between baptism, as the sign of the new covenant, and circumcision, as the sign of the old. But baptism is nowhere called a “sign” or “seal” of the covenant.

- What in fact was the sign that persuaded the early church that Cornelius and other Gentiles were in the covenant? The outpouring of the HS, Acts 10:44-48. Note the following linguistic detail:

- a. Paul calls circumcision a “seal” of the Abrahamic covenant, Rom 4:11. (Gk “seal” can mean either instrument or impression; Heb must distinguish the two, and so uses “sign.”)

- b. He uses the same word to describe the Holy Spirit as seal of the New Covenant, Eph 1:13,14; 4:30; 2 Cor 1:22, which corresponds with God’s promise in Ezek 36:24-27.

So our seal is the HS. Thus injunctions not to grieve (Eph 4:30), tempt (Acts 5:9), resist (Acts 7:51), or quench (1 Thes 5:19) the Spirit are tantamount to the command to Abraham not to neglect circumcision. The penalty now, as then, is temporal death through divine cutting off: cf. Acts 5:9.

C. (:12-13) Application to All Males in Abraham’s Household

*“And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall **My covenant** be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.”*

Guzik: Unfortunately, through the centuries, the Jews began to trust more in the sign of the covenant (circumcision) than in the God of the covenant, believing that circumcision by itself was sufficient and necessary to save. Paul refutes this idea extensively, especially in light of the finished work of Jesus (**Galatians 5:1-15**).

D. (:14) Penalty for Remaining Uncircumcised = Breaking the Covenant

*“But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken **My covenant**.”*

Constable: This expression undoubtedly involves a wordplay on cut. He that is not himself *cut* (i.e, circumcised) will be *cut off* (i.e, ostracized). Here is the choice: **be cut or be cut off**.

Two views:

- **excommunication** from the covenant community and its benefits.
- **execution**, sometimes by the Israelites, but usually by God, and premature death

III. (:15-22) COVENANT PROMISES REAFFIRMED WITH RESPECT TO SARAH – DON'T DOUBT GOD'S ABILITY TO MAKE IT HAPPEN ACCORDING TO HIS PLAN

(:15a) *"Then God said to Abraham,"*

A. (:15) Name Change – Raise Your Level of Expectations

"As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name."

Constable: Name change from *my princess* [perhaps a reference to her noble descent; confines her dominion to one family] to "Sarah" (*royal princess* [from whom kings would come;

- Abraham's name emphasized the **number** of his seed.
- Sarah's evidently stressed the **royal nature** of their line

B. (:16) Integral Role in the Covenant Promise – Don't Dismiss Sarah's Role

"And I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

Parunak: The error of **ch. 16**, at root, was a failure to understand that God's covenant with Abraham included his wife. She is not just an accessory. The promise that Abraham will have a seed necessarily includes her. The two of them haven't fully grasped this up to this point, so here God makes it explicit.

C. (:17-19) Miracle Methodology – Don't Doubt God's Ability

1. (:17-18) Abraham's Disbelief

a. (:17) Impossibility of Conception at This Late Age

*"Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart,
'Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old?
And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?'"*

Parunak: **Rom. 4:19** seems to point to faith on Abraham's part -- "*Fully persuaded*" (**Rom 4:21**) implies that one has overcome the opposition, not ignored it.

[**Gen. 25:1-4** -- After Sarah died; Abraham remarried and had 6 more children]

b. (:18) Ishmael Proposed as Alternative Solution

"And Abraham said to God, 'Oh that Ishmael might live before Thee!'"

2. (:19) God's Declaration

*"But God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son,
and you shall call his name Isaac;
and I will establish **My covenant** with him for an everlasting covenant for his
descendants after him.'"*

Isaac = "*he laughed*" = Abraham's response in **vs. 17**

Hughes: a sweet symbol of faith's struggle

D. (:20-22) Distinction Between Ishmael and Isaac – Don't Confuse Their Unique Roles

1. (:20) Child of the Flesh – But Still Abundantly Blessed

“And as for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation.”

2. (:21) Child of the Promise = Covenant Line

*“But **My covenant** I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.”*

(:22) *“And when He finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.”*

(:23-27) EPILOGUE -- CIRCUMCISION CARRIED OUT BY ABRAHAM AND HIS HOUSEHOLD

A. (:23) Circumcision Applied to Entire Household

“Then Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all the servants who were born in his house and all who were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's household, and circumcised the flesh of their foreskin in the very same day, as God had said to him.”

2 Categories:

- Born in his house
- Bought with his money

B. (:24-26) Circumcision Applied to Abraham and Ishmael

“Now Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. In the very same day Abraham was circumcised, and Ishmael his son.”

C. (:27) Circumcision Applied to Remainder of Household

“And all the men of his household, who were born in the house or bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.”

CONCLUSION:

Charge to us = same as to Abraham:

Walk before Me / Be Blameless

TEXT: Genesis 18:1-33

TITLE: LIVE OUT YOUR THEOLOGY

BIG IDEA:

**ORTHODOX THEOLOGY ONLY HELPS YOU IF YOU APPLY IT --
ANSWERING 2 KEY THEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS THAT MUST BE APPLIED**

INTRODUCTION:

What is your concept of the person of God? What do you know of His attributes? How orthodox is your theology? Satan has a pretty good understanding of who God is ... but it doesn't benefit him. Sometimes our intellectual understanding of who God is doesn't benefit us either.

Helpful when God is the one teaching us theology and answering our questions.

How do we interact with God's Revelation??? Communicating Theology – Truths about the Person of God

Parunak: This chapter is a hinge between 17 (the promise of Isaac) and 19 (the destruction of the cities of the plain). Its own cohesiveness comes from the focus on the three visitors who come to Abraham's camp.

5 INSIGHTS REGARDING DIVINE REVELATION:

I. (:1-15) Q1 -- IS ANYTHING TOO DIFFICULT FOR THE LORD

A. (:1-8) Insight #1 -- Revelation Arrives Unexpectedly -- Teaching Setting -- Visit by the Three Angels

1. (:1) Engaging Presence of the Lord

“Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.

Not aloof; but the God who draws near to His people – engaging presence
We know it is the Lord; don't know at what point Abraham got the full picture

Normal everyday activity for Abraham; did not know that this was going to be a very special day
Outside of Hebron; not some small tent but an entire encampment encompassing his whole household

Mid-day siesta in the heat of the day

Parunak: Mamre [wealth, fatness] is an Amorite chieftain with whom Abraham had an alliance (14:13). Both the man and his grove are first mentioned in 13:18, where Abraham camped after Lot chose the best part of the land.

2. (:2-5) Entertaining Angels Under the Tree – Humble and Hospitable

“And when he lifted up his eyes and looked, behold, three men were standing

opposite him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth, and said, 'My lord, if now I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by. Please let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree; and I will bring a piece of bread, that you may refresh yourselves; after that you may go on, since you have visited your servant.' And they said, 'So do, as you have said.'"

Abraham did not see them approaching – even though the terrain was very flat; he looked up and they just appeared before him

Hughes: In Old Testament times, supernatural visitors often appeared from nowhere and then disappeared (cf. **Judges 6:11-21**).

Pre-incarnate Jesus with 2 angels

Parunak: The word translated “*my Lord*” is the same used in **15:2**, where we rendered it, “*Sovereign Lord*.” [Did Abraham recognize Jesus up front or just by the end of the encounter?]

“*bowed himself*” – same word used for worship when God is the object (**24:26**)

Could still run at age 100; gene pool on hamstrings has deteriorated over the centuries; Would have been easy for Abraham to miss or reject this opportunity to receive God’s revelation.

Heb. 13:2 “*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.*”

3. (:6-8) Extravagant Feast

“Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, ‘Quickly, prepare three measures of fine flour, knead it, and make bread cakes.’ Abraham also ran to the herd, and took a tender and choice calf, and gave it to the servant; and he hurried to prepare it. And he took curds and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and placed it before them; and he was standing by them under the tree as they ate.”

Started out promising them just “a piece of bread” – quickly escalated into a sumptuous feast; 3 measures = 6 gallons of fine flour

B. (:9-10) Insight #2 -- Revelation Addresses the Key Issue -- Teaching Lesson -- Prophecy of Sarah Giving Birth to Son Next Year

“Then they said to him, ‘Where is Sarah your wife?’ And he said, ‘Behold, in the tent.’ And he said, ‘I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son.’ And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him.”

Not dealing with some peripheral issue here; not something of no consequence or importance; Abraham and Sarah are consumed with this promise – How can it possibly be fulfilled

C. (:11-15) Insight #3 -- Revelation Attacks Our Doubts and Fears -- Teaching Application
-- Sarah Wrestling with Applying Her Knowledge of the Power of God

1. (:11) The Difficulty

“Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing.”

2. (:12) The Disbelief

“And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, ‘After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?’”

Steven Cole: Have you ever thought about how embarrassing it would be if your thoughts were uncontrollably linked to your vocal cords, so that whatever you were thinking was broadcast for everyone to hear? Instead of, “I’m pleased to meet you,” you would blurt out, “Oh, no! I’m going to miss the kickoff if I talk to him now!” Instead of, “Great sermon, pastor,” as you go out the door, you would hear yourself saying, “I thought it never would end!”

3. (:13) The Key Theological Question

“And the LORD said to Abraham, ‘Why did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?’”

Is anything too difficult for the LORD?’”

Hughes: literally, “too wonderful” or “too surpassing” or “too incredible”

Is. 9:6 – name of Messiah – “*Wonderful*”

Cf. response of Mary, the mother of our Lord to announcement by Gabriel – “*How wilt this be, since I am a virgin?*” (**Luke 1:34**). And Gabriel’s answer – “*the power of the Most High will overshadow you*” (v. 35)

Steven Cole: God brings us to the end of our strength so that we will trust in His ability to do the impossible. . . That’s where the Lord wants us in our relationship with Him, to recognize our weakness so that we will trust His strength. Many people mistakenly think that the reason they struggle in their Christian lives is that they’re too weak. That isn’t so. The reason we struggle in our Christian walk is that we do not recognize our own weakness for what it is, and so we trust in ourselves rather than in the Lord. When we see our weakness and cast ourselves on the Lord’s strength, then we’re strong. God doesn’t help those who help themselves. God helps those who are helpless. . .

There’s a theologically staggering verse in **Mark 6:5**, which states that Jesus could do no miracle in His home town of Nazareth, except for healing a few sick people. The next verse adds that “*He wondered at their unbelief.*” Even though God is sovereign in His almighty power, He has chosen to limit His working through our faith. So He views unbelief as a serious sin, and He confronts it in His people, just as He confronted it in Sarah

4. (:14) The Declaration Repeated – Specific Time-Stamped Prophecy

“At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son.”

5. (:15) The Denial and Rebuttal

“Sarah denied it however, saying, ‘I did not laugh’; for she was afraid. And He said, ‘No, but you did laugh.’”

Sarah came to believe God’s promise – **Heb. 11**

How do we respond to God’s revelation?

Steven Cole: Jeremiah the prophet was a godly man who faithfully spoke God’s word to a disobedient people who rejected both him and his message. For years he warned them of coming judgment if they did not repent, but they didn’t want to hear it. They mocked him, threw him in a muddy pit, and listened to the false prophets who told them what they wanted to hear, that God wouldn’t judge them for their sin. Finally, just as Jeremiah had warned, the powerful Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar came and besieged Jerusalem. Jeremiah was thrown into prison by the wicked Jewish king Zedekiah because he was predicting a Babylonian victory.

In that bleak situation, a strange word came to him from God. The Lord told him to buy a field from his cousin because he was the closest relative with a right of redemption. This would be like telling someone to buy a house in Sarajevo when it was under siege. It was obvious that the country was about to fall to a foreign king, who would confiscate all property. So you would be throwing away your money. But God told Jeremiah to buy it as a testimony of the Lord’s faithfulness to His promise to restore His people to the land. So Jeremiah obeyed God and handed over the precious little money he had to purchase this field. In that context Jeremiah prayed, *“Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for You” (Jer. 32:17)*. The Lord confirmed Jeremiah’s prayer by answering, *“Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?” (Jer. 32:27)*.

II. (:16-33) Q2 -- SHALL NOT THE JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH DEAL JUSTLY?

A. (:16-21) Insight #4 -- Revelation Arms God’s Servants to Fulfill Their Unique Role in God’s Program

1. (:16-18) God Grants Special Revelation to Equip His Special Servants

“Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off. And the LORD said, ‘Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?’”

Hughes: So as God’s friend and conduit of blessing to the whole world, it was essential that Abraham know what was going down in respect to the neighboring cities where his nephew Lot dwelt.

2. (:19) Abraham Chosen By God to Reflect God’s Righteousness and Justice

“For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and

justice; in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.”

Steven Cole: Verse 19 can be translated as either “*I have chosen him,*” or “*I have known him.*” **H. C. Leupold** translates it, “For I acknowledge him to be My intimate friend” (Exposition of Genesis [Baker], 1:544). The Lord shares His secrets with His friends. Jesus told His disciples, “*No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you*” (**John 15:15**). Abraham here is shown to be God’s friend, as the Lord reveals the divine plan to him.

Parunak: this knowledge is active, not passive. “*I have known him in order that something will happen.*” This is an example of God’s elective knowledge of people, choosing them for his purposes. . .

The purpose of the intimate relationship that God establishes with Abraham is the **ordering of his family**. This ought to encourage us concerning the first priority of the family. God does not elect Abraham in order to be a great preacher, or in order to subdue uncivilized nations, or in order to generate a prosperous society, but in order to rule his family well.

Steven Cole: **Righteousness** refers to conduct which conforms to the ethical or moral standard stemming from God’s character. **Justice** points to the administration of God’s righteousness in human affairs, such as government and society, through honest and consistent application of the law.

David Thompson: God doesn’t take the saved to heaven right away because He wants us to be a witness to the world of His righteousness and justice

3. (:20-21) Sodom And Gomorrah Need a Practical Display of God’s Righteousness and Justice

“And the LORD said, ”The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave. I will go down now, and see if they have done entirely according to its outcry, which has come to Me; and if not, I will know.”

Hughes: when God judged Sodom and Gomorrah, their ruins would become a powerful teaching tool to Abraham and his descendants. There on the border of Israel, the eerie, burnt-out, Sulphur-stenched remains of Sodom and Gomorrah permanently testified to what happens to a people who reject righteousness and justice.

The Hebrew word for “*outcry*” is used in Scripture to describe the cries of the oppressed and brutalized. It is used for the cry of the oppressed widow or orphan (cf. **Exodus 22:22, 23**), the cry of the oppressed servant (cf. **Deut. 24:15**), and the cries of the Israelites in Egpt (cf. **Exodus 2:23; 3:7, 9**). Jeremiah uses it to refer to the scream of terror by an individual or city when it is attacked (cf. **Jer. 18:22; 20:16; 25:36; 48:3-5, 34; 49:21; 50:46; 51:54**). Such an outcry is the miserable wail of the oppressed and brutalized.

Robert Chisholm: The Lord would not arbitrarily destroy them [the people of Sodom and Gomorrah]. As a fair and just Judge, He would examine the evidence and then reward their deeds appropriately. The anthropomorphic language veils the ontological reality of God’s omniscience,

but the Lord seems to have been more concerned in this context with revealing Himself as a **fair Judge**.

B. (:22-32) Insight #5 – Revelation Does Not Always Seem Fair Due to Our Limited Human Perspective

Series of 6 Objections put forth by Abraham in the form of interrogating the Judge of all the earth

What is really compatible with Divine Righteousness and Justice?

1. (:22-26) First Objection

“Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD. And Abraham came near and said, ‘Wilt Thou indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; wilt Thou indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from Thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee!’

Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?’

So the LORD said, ‘If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account.’

Jonathan Edwards: This verse caused him to say: “The justice of God will eventually be revealed in the damnation of the sinner”

Bob Deffinbaugh: Undoubtedly Abraham’s primary concern was for Lot and his family. While this is not stated, it is implied (**19:27-29**). His appeal is based upon the justice of God. Justice would not allow the righteous to suffer the punishment due the wicked (**verse 25**). Abraham appealed for the sparing of Sodom in order to spare Lot, not so much out of concern to save the city or the wicked.

2. (:27-28) Second Objection

“And Abraham answered and said, ‘Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes. Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, wilt Thou destroy the whole city because of five?’

And He said, ‘I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there.’”

3. (:29) Third Objection

“And he spoke to Him yet again and said, ‘Suppose forty are found there?’

And He said, ‘I will not do it on account of the forty.’”

4. (:30) Fourth Objection

“Then he said, ‘Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?’

And He said, ‘I will not do it if I find thirty there.’”

5. (:31) Fifth Objection

“And he said, ‘Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord; suppose twenty are found there?’

And He said, ‘I will not destroy it on account of the twenty.’”

6. (:32) Sixth Objection

“Then he said, ‘Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?’

And He said, ‘I will not destroy it on account of the ten.’”

It turns out there were only three righteous in Sodom, Lot and his two daughters – and their conduct left much to be desired as we will see later.

Jack Arnold: God answered Abraham’s prayer but not exactly like Abraham had petitioned. His petition was that the righteous would be spared and the city not destroyed. God destroyed the city and spared all the righteous. Abraham’s desire was answered but not his entire petition.

(:33) Epilogue – Revelation Finished

“And as soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the LORD departed; and Abraham returned to his place.”

CONCLUSION:

Bob Deffinbaugh: Mature Christians have a clear grasp of two eternal truths: the **greatness** of God, and the **goodness** of God. These truths undergird the 18th chapter of Genesis. The first is found in the question of our Lord in verse 14, *“Is anything too difficult for the Lord?”* The second is the basis for Abraham’s intercession in **verse 25**, *“Shall not the Judge of all the Earth deal justly?”*

The first truth rebukes all worry and lack of prayer, for *“with God, nothing is impossible”* (**Luke 1:37**). Every time we worry about the future we reject the truth that God is all-powerful.

The second truth provides an answer for life’s most distressing and perplexing problems. The God who is all-powerful is also loving, kind, just, merciful, and so on. Infinite power is joined with infinite purity.

TEXT: Genesis 19:1-29

TITLE: *BE IN THE WORLD . . . BUT DON'T LET THE WORLD BE IN YOU*

BIG IDEA:

**BOTH COMPROMISE WITH MORAL DEPRAVITY AND DIVINE JUDGMENT PUT
WORLDLY BELIEVERS AT RISK**

INTRODUCTION:

Illustration: W. H. Griffith Thomas: Like Lot, much of the American church has moved into downtown Sodom. We're so surrounded by its stench that we don't notice it any more. A ship in the water is perfectly right, but water in the ship would be perfectly wrong. The Christian in the world is right and necessary, but the world in the Christian is wrong and disastrous.

Not arguing for a separate class of "carnal believers"; yet in this story we see a man – Lot - whom the Scriptures characterize as "*righteous*" involved in a life of compromise with moral depravity. The bad life choices that Lot has made are now going to come home to roost. Earlier we saw some of the consequences as Abraham had to rescue Lot and the inhabitants of Sodom from the attack by the coalition of kings in chap. 14. Now we see more of the tragic consequences of his conformity to the world.

**BOTH COMPROMISE WITH MORAL DEPRAVITY AND DIVINE JUDGMENT PUT
WORLDLY BELIEVERS AT RISK**

**I. (:1-11) COMPROMISE WITH MORAL DEPRAVITY PUTS WORLDLY
BELIEVERS AT RISK**

**A. (:1-3) Godly Virtues (Like Hospitality) Cannot Protect Against Compromise with
Moral Depravity**

1. (:1a) Opportunity for Hospitality

"Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening as Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom."

Very different visit to Lot (even though some parallels) with a very different message – one of impending doom rather than future blessing

They arrived in darkness –

"sitting in the gate" – look at the progression of Lot conforming his life to worldliness – now we find him in prominent leadership role in depraved city of Sodom

- **13:12** "*moved his tent as far as Sodom*"
- **14:12** "*dwelling in Sodom*"

His connection to Abraham probably contributed to his popularity

Steven Cole: Sodom shows us the world without God. On one level, it is an ugly, repulsive picture. It was a city where it wasn't safe to be on the streets after dark, where not only the young men, but even the old (**19:4**) were living to satisfy their lusts, even if it meant homosexually

raping two visitors. But on another level, Sodom, like our society, had its attractive side. It was sophisticated and prosperous.

Ezek 16:48-50 -- sins of Israel compared to Sodom

2. (:1b-2a) Offer of Hospitality

“When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them and bowed down with his face to the ground. And he said, ‘Now behold, my lords, please turn aside into your servant's house, and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way.’”

Difference: he did not run to meet them
Gracious invitation

MacArthur: most likely not just courtesy, but an effort to protect them from the known perversity of the Sodomites

3. (:2b) Option of Spending the Night in the Public Square

“They said however, ‘No, but we shall spend the night in the square.’”

Rejecting the initial offer of hospitality

Parunak: Possible **Motive** of 2 angels in initially refusing hospitality from Lot:

- Given the inhospitable nature of the rest of the people of Sodom, they want to test whether Lot is being superficial or whether he really wants them to stay. Unlike Abraham, who recognized one of the visitors as the Lord, Lot and his family “*entertained angels unawares*” (**Heb 13:2**). He is genuinely concerned for the wellbeing of these strangers, an indication of the “*righteousness*” that the NT ascribes to him (**2 Peter 2:7**).
- The angels’ task, according to **18:21**, is to verify the condition of Sodom. Perhaps they propose to do this by observing the city at night, a good time to detect its moral fibre.

4. (:3) Insistence on Hospitality

“Yet he urged them strongly, so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.”

B. (:4-11) Good Intentions Cannot Protect Against Compromise with Moral Depravity

1. (:4-5) Compromise with the World Puts One in Dangerous Situations

“Before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, surrounded the house, both young and old, all the people from every quarter; and they called to Lot and said to him, ‘Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have relations with them.’”

Mob mentality
Uncomfortable situation
These were men that Lot knew well

2. (:6-8) Conflict with Wickedness Cannot Be Resolved by Alternative Wickedness

“But Lot went out to them at the doorway, and shut the door behind him, and said, ‘Please, my brothers, do not act wickedly. Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man; please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like; only do nothing to these men, inasmuch as they have come under the shelter of my roof.’”

Brave action on Lot’s part; understood and took seriously his responsibilities as host

MacArthur: Lot’s response betrayed tension in his ethics; his offer to gratify their sexual lust contradicted his plea not to act “wickedly.” Such contradiction make clear also the vexation of spirit under which he lived in wicked Sodom (cf. 2 Pe:6,7).

Parunak: But sacrificing his daughters isn’t right! We see here the dilemma of those who try to enjoy the friendship of the world: they are caught in moral dilemmas in which there is no way to live godly. Consider once again **2 Pet 2:7**, which says that he was “*vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.*” Vexation will be our lot as well if we allow ourselves to sympathize with the world.

Bob Deffinbaugh: Lot’s response is typical of his spiritual state; it is a strange blend of courage and compromise, of strength of character and situationalism. The crowd demanded that Lot turn over his guests, an unthinkable violation of the protection guaranteed one who comes under the roof of your house. Lot stepped outside, closing the door behind him, hoping to defuse the situation. He pleaded with them not to act wickedly, and, just as we are about to applaud his courage, he offers to surrender his two daughters to the appetites of these depraved degenerates. How unthinkable! Lot’s virtue (his concern for his guests) has become a vice (a willingness to substitute his own daughters for strangers).

3. (:9) Community Relationships Can Go South in a Hurry When the Wicked are Consumed with Carnal Lusts

“But they said, ‘Stand aside.’ Furthermore, they said, ‘This one came in as an alien, and already he is acting like a judge; now we will treat you worse than them.’ So they pressed hard against Lot and came near to break the door.”

4. (:10-11) Countermeasures Only Succeed via Supernatural Intervention

a. Saving Hands

“But the men reached out their hands and brought Lot into the house with them, and shut the door.”

Horse collar tackle

b. Smiting Hands

“And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves trying to find the doorway.”

Flash bombed them

Even after being blinded they are so driven by their lustful depravity that they continue to press

forward

II. (:12-26) DIVINE JUDGMENT PUTS WORLDLY BELIEVERS AT RISK

A. (:12-16) Danger of Hesitating Instead of Responding with Urgency

1. (:12-13) Warning of Imminent Destruction

“Then the men said to Lot, ‘Whom else have you here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring them out of the place; for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the LORD that the LORD has sent us to destroy it.’”

They had come to check out the moral condition of the city; not any question as to the depth of its depravity and what God would now do

2. (:14) Weakness of Lot’s Family Leadership

“And Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, ‘Up, get out of this place, for the LORD will destroy the city.’ But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting.”

Parunak: “Married” may mean either that these daughters were already out of the house, or that they were engaged to the two daughters who were in the house and left Sodom with him. Probably they were already married, since v.15 distinguishes the two daughters who left with him as those “*which are here.*” Thus Lot’s extended family includes at least eight people: himself, his wife, two daughters at home, at least two married, and their husbands. This may have been the grounds for Abraham’s plea for ten.

Compare Paul’s assessment of the gospel as “*the foolishness of God*” in **1 Cor 1:25**; cf. **1 Cor 3:18**, we are to become fools in the world’s eyes for the sake of Christ. They do not believe either

- the seriousness of their sin,
- the fact of the coming judgment, or
- the nature of the escape that God has provided.

S. Lewis Johnson: You see, the Christian man because of his worldliness has lost his testimony in the midst of the unsaved. It’s always that way. It’s always that way. If you want to reach the lost, you have to be different, not the same, different. It is Abraham who is able to reach those who are outside of Christ. Not Lot, not the men who went down and was the lovely citizen in the community, gained influence and position as if that were a testimony to the grace of God; it was just the opposite. It was Abraham who was the man of God and was able to exhort the vile sinners.

3. (:15-16) Waffling When It Came Time for Action

a. Direct Instructions

“And when morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, ‘Up, take your wife and your two daughters, who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.’”

- b. Divided Loyalties
“But he hesitated.”

“Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:21)

- c. Divine Intervention
“So the men seized his hand and the hand of his wife and the hands of his two daughters, for the compassion of the LORD was upon him; and they brought him out, and put him outside the city.”

Parunak: “The men laid hold” of him, his wife, and his daughters by the hand. Each angel has two in tow, one in each hand, like little children who must be led across the street lest they scamper away.

B. (:17-23) Danger of Repeating Your Mistakes Instead of Learning From Them

1. (:17) Urgent Command to Flee to Safety

“And it came about when they had brought them outside, that one said,”

Chiastic structure of 4 instructions:

- A1 “Escape for your life!”
B1 “Do not look behind you,”
B2 “and do not stay anywhere in the valley;”
A2 “escape to the mountains,”

Motive: “lest you be swept away.”

Act of divine mercy for God to warn people ahead of time of coming judgment and of way of escape

Song: The Gambler

“Know when to hold them;
know when to fold them;
know when to walk away and know when to run”

Chorus: “I have decided to follow Jesus; no turning back; the cross before me; the world behind me”

2. (:18-20) Uninformed Compromise that Maintains Exposure to Risk

“But Lot said to them, ‘Oh no, my lords! Now behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have magnified your lovingkindness, which you have shown me by saving my life; but I cannot escape to the mountains, lest the disaster overtake me and I die; now behold, this town is near enough to flee to, and it is small. Please, let me escape there (is it not small?) that my life may be saved.’”

Steven Cole: Lot wants to barter with them to keep a bit of his old way of life intact. He thanks them for their mercy in saving him, but then he protests that he can’t flee to the mountains as

they tell him to do. That would be just a bit too much. Instead, he wants permission to go to a small town nearby, the implication being that since the town was small (Zoar means “small”), its sins won’t be too bad. **Derek Kidner** observes, “Not even brimstone will make a pilgrim of him: he must have his little Sodom again if life is to be supportable” (Genesis [IVP], p. 135). Note that God didn’t prevent him. The Lord will let you hang onto your sinful way if you insist on it.

3. (:21-22a) Unending Mercy Despite Lot’s Failure to Obey

“And he said to him, ‘Behold, I grant you this request also, not to overthrow the town of which you have spoken. Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there.’”

How could Lot have received such mercy when he was so stubborn and unwilling to learn the lessons God wanted to teach him? Intercessory prayer of Abraham

4. (:22b-23) Unimpressive Name for Unimpressive Town

“Therefore the name of the town was called Zoar. The sun had risen over the earth when Lot came to Zoar.”

Name of town means “small”

C. (:24-26) Danger of Looking Back Instead of Forsaking and Fleeing

1. (:24-25) God Raining Hell on Earth

“Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven, and He overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.”

Constable: All that Lot had gained by living in Sodom burned up like wood, hay, and stubble (cf. **1 Corinthians 3:10-15**). The Apostle Peter cited Lot as an example of the Lord's deliverance of the godly from trials that He uses to punish the ungodly (**2 Peter 2:6-10**). John called believers not to love the world or the things in the world because they will pass away (**1 John 2:15-17**).

2. (:26) Lot’s Wife Refusing to Forsake and Flee

“But his wife, from behind him, looked back; and she became a pillar of salt.”

MacArthur: she became poignant example of disobedience producing unwanted reaction at judgment day (cf. **Lk. 17:29-32**), even as her home cities became bywords of God’s judgment on sin (cf. **Is. 1:9; Ro 9:29; 2 Pe 2:5-6**).

(:27-29) EPILOGUE – DIVINE DELIVERANCE IN THE MIDST OF DIVINE DESTRUCTION

A. (:27-28) Vision of Abraham – Divine Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah

“Now Abraham arose early in the morning and went to the place where he had stood before the LORD; and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace.”

Abraham had been praying for Lot

B. (:29) Value of Abraham – Divine Deliverance of Lot

“Thus it came about, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot lived.”

Transitional

God saved Lot because He remembered Abraham; associated with God’s blessing of Abraham

Constable: "The substitution of Abraham for Lot in this sentence [*"God remembered Abraham," Genesis 19:29; cf. Genesis 8:1*] makes an important theological point. Lot was not saved on his own merits but through Abraham's intercession." [Note: **Wenham, Genesis 16-50**, p59.]

Abraham rescued Lot twice: from the Mesopotamian kings (**ch14**) and from Sodom.

Bob Deffinbaugh: these verses underscore the real reason Lot was spared. While a just God would not destroy the righteous with the wicked (**18:25**), the stress here is that *‘the prayers of a righteous man availeth much’* (James 5:16). It was Abraham’s faithfulness and not Lot’s which resulted in Lot’s deliverance. Humanly speaking, there was little reason for sparing Lot other than the character of God and the concern of Abraham over his fate.

CONCLUSION:

Mal. 4:1-2 *“For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze.’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,’ says the Lord of hosts.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can you tell to what extent you have become conformed to this world?
- 2) What was Lot’s rationale for offering up his virgin daughters?
- 3) Why was Lot unwilling to flee to the mountains?
- 4) Is it wrong to preach “fire and brimstone” themed sermons?

* * * * *

TEXT: Genesis 19:30-38

TITLE: LEGACY OF A LOSER

BIG IDEA:
A LIFE OF WORLDLINESS WON'T END WELL

INTRODUCTION:

Today's sordid text paints the last chapter in the life of worldly Lot and his dysfunctional family. This is how Lot ended up. This is the legacy of a loser. All of the small compromises he made with worldliness have compounded and ended up in this ultimate end game of degradation and shame. We know from the NT that Lot was actually a believer – in a covenantal relationship through faith in a God who had provided him with every opportunity to enjoy God's blessings. But time after time Lot made sinful choices that led to tragic consequences.

This text has been **avoided** by many well-known commentators because of its lurid content: the old set of **Calvin's commentaries** translated by the old Calvin Translation Society last century, when they get to Genesis 19, verse 31 they stop translating. They say now this passage just shouldn't be in Calvin's commentaries, just shouldn't be read. They don't even give you the Latin text. They leave it out and they move on to Genesis 20. **H.C. Leupold** in his commentary on Genesis (after making his few observations) says, "This is a text that should never be preached."

What a **warning to believers today**. Are we truly seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness or are we pursuing a life of pleasure and possessions and worldly praise and worldly lusts? Look at how Jesus described the type of culture that will exist in the last days right before His final revelation and return to Judge the world – **Luke 17:20-37**.

Who claims Lot was a righteous man?

- Peter
- Abraham

More than just in a forensic sense of justification

Parunak: This section is here for two reasons.

1. Though the chiasm has finished, this section still recalls **Noah**, whose final days were marred with intoxication and sexual impropriety. Like that section, it sounds the warning that when God brings judgment and delivers a remnant, sin still lives in the flesh of that remnant, and arises again to repeat the cycle of rebellion.

2. One important function of Genesis is to show how the nation Israel originated in the context of its neighbors. Two important neighbors are **Moab** and **Ammon**, and this story describes their origin and relation to Abraham.

A LIFE OF WORLDLINESS WON'T END WELL

How did it end for Lot?

I. (:30) A LIFE OF WORLDLINESS ENDS IN FEAR AND ISOLATION

“And Lot went up from Zoar, and stayed in the mountains, and his two daughters with him; for he was afraid to stay in Zoar; and he stayed in a cave, he and his two daughters.”

No question that this is a hole – compare Lot’s former station in life and all of the opportunities presented to him by the Lord

Remember how Lot and his daughters ended up in this hole

- Smaller sinful choices are the slippery slope that cast you down into more desperate situations
- Daughters have not made godly choices; were prepared to marry men from Sodom; only rescued via their association with their father; have not had a good example in their home upbringing

Fear and isolation are not the environment for spiritual vitality – we need **faith and community**

Hughes: Spiritually entombed, Lot lived a degenerated, death-like existence, sinking into ever deeper depression and corruption.

Lot has run out of options:

- Too scared to continue to align himself with wickedness in Zoar
- Too proud to humble himself and return to Abraham; not accustomed to fellowship with the righteous community

Duncan: Lot is clearly **controlled here by fear** and not by faith. He had initially refused God's call and command to leave Sodom and flee to the mountains. He had begged the Lord. If you look back in verses 17 through 22 of Genesis 19, he had begged the Lord to stay in this little town. But once again we are told that he was afraid to stay in Zoar. And so now he goes to the mountains as the Lord had originally commanded him. So fear was the driving motivation on both occasions. He fears to go to the mountains first. He wants to stay in Zoar. Now he fears to stay in Zoar and he wants to go to the mountains. Even though God has assured him, and you'll see that assurance in verse 21 that he will be safe in the city, he still fears.

Parunak: Perhaps he saw the corruption in Zoar and feared that a judgment like that of Sodom would fall on it as well. Thus the Lord often lets us have our way, that we might realize that his instruction was better after all. . . Lot was once a wealthy nomad with flocks so numerous he could not coexist with Abraham. Now he is reduced to living as a fugitive. If Zoar were too corrupt for him, he could have returned to Abraham, but his pride is too great.

Look at how the “seeker sensitivity” approach of many of our modern day evangelical mega-churches actually fosters an environment of worldliness –

Dr. Robert Gundry:

The “seeker sensitivity” of evangelicals – their practice of suiting the gospel to the felt needs of people . . . contributes to their numerical success but can easily sow the seeds of

worldliness (broadly conceived). How so? Well in a society such as ours where people do not feel particularly guilty before God (though in fact they are), seeker-sensitivity – if consistently carried through – will soft-pedal the preaching of salvation from sin, for such preaching would not meet a felt need of people. As a result, the gospel **message** of saving, sanctifying grace reduces to a gospel **massage** of physical, psychological, and social well-being that allows worldliness to flourish.

Lot is an emotional and spiritual wreck – things are only going to get worse

II. (:31-32) A LIFE OF WORLDLINESS ENDS IN FAMILY DYSFUNCTION AND DEGRADATION

A. (:31) Perverted Perception

“Then the first-born said to the younger, ‘Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come in to us after the manner of the earth.’”

Lot about 65 years old

These daughters were remarkably both virgins

Steven Cole: First they create a false crisis, a worst case scenario: “There aren’t any men on earth we can marry!” It shouldn’t have been all that difficult to match the caliber of the men in Sodom! But they’re pushing the panic button. Then they add a noble reason to make it sound spiritual: “We need to preserve our family line.” But they’re just rationalizing gross sin. . .

It never occurred to them that they could pray and wait on God to provide them the husbands they desired. . .

Compared to what they were used to seeing in Sodom, drunkenness and incest were no big deal, especially if it served a noble purpose! By degrees, a culture that is living after “*the manner of the earth*” degenerates into increasingly abhorrent corruption, but it doesn’t regard it as bad!

Once you adopt the values of the world, your worldview and your perception are corrupted.

That is why **Apostle John** warns:

“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.” (1 John 2: 15-17)

Defining Worldliness:

- Materialistic Orientation – need to seek first God’s Kingdom
- Pleasure-seeking Obsession – need to live to please our Lord Jesus Christ
- Entertainment Driven – our food is to do the work of the Father who sent us
- Conformity to the Ungodly Culture – be transformed by the renewing of our mind
- Addicted to the Lusts of the Flesh – controlled by the Spirit of God

B. (:32a) Perverted Plan

“Come, let us make our father drink wine, and let us lie with him,”

Nothing sinful about drinking a little wine ... but so easy to cross over the line to sinful inebriation

No lack of alcoholic beverages in this isolated cave existence; probably Lot was used to drowning his sorrows in strong drink; it wasn't difficult to get him drunk

Prov. 23:29-35 If you pursue strong drink ... how will you end up???

Rom. 13:13 *“Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy:*

Gal. 5:19-21 deeds of the flesh vs. fruit of the Spirit

Ephes. 5:18 *“And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit”*

1 Pet. 4:3 *“For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.”*

C. (:32b) Perverted Purpose

“that we may preserve our family through our father.”

Is this a family worth preserving??

Hearkens back to our title: Legacy of a Loser!

Would have been a lot easier for the nation of Israel if Lot's daughters had never conceived; Where is the interest in seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness??

No biblical sense of purpose governed their actions
Flawed motivations

III. (:33-36) A LIFE OF WORLDLINESS ENDS IN DRUNKEN IMMORALITY AND MANIPULATION

A. (:33) Older Sister Takes the Lead

“So they made their father drink wine that night, and the first-born went in and lay with her father; and he did not know when she lay down or when she arose.”

David Thompson: abominable sin of incest with his own daughters; this sin was even immoral by standards of Sodom culture – they even forbade this; law of God forbids this [**Lev. 20:11-13; Ezek. 22:10, 11**]; drinking brought down his defenses; his moral fiber is gone; doesn't just happen overnight; you never deal with sin; you linger in a Sodom-environment; look at what alcohol did to Noah; one sin leads to another

B. (:34-35) Younger Sister Follows Suit

1. (:34) Repeating the Sinful Rationale

“And it came about on the morrow, that the first-born said to the younger, ‘Behold, I lay last night with my father; let us make him drink wine tonight also; then you go in and lie with him, that we may preserve our family through our father.’”

2. (:35) Repeating the Sinful Act

“So 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.”

C. (:36) Both Sisters Impregnated by Their Father

“Thus both the daughters of Lot were with child by their father.”

Most sins you can’t undo ... you can seek forgiveness and cleansing from the Lord;

But you must live with the consequences

1 Cor. 10:12-13 an example to us; written for our instruction; *“let him who thinks he stand take heed that he does not fall”*

IV. (:37-38) A LIFE OF WORLDLINESS ENDS IN SOWING SEEDS OF FUTURE UNGODLINESS AND ENEMY OPPOSITION

A. (:37) Moabites

“And the first-born bore a son, and called his name Moab; he is the father of the Moabites to this day.”

Not ashamed of what she had done; look at name she gave to her son:

Moab = *“from the father”*

Mercy of God

Yet God is still merciful and gracious – look at **Ruth** who ended up being important link in the Messianic line -- she married Boaz, King David’s great grandfather.

Likewise, **Naamah** was an Ammonite and she was one of King Solomon’s wives, the one who gave birth to Rehoboam who was also in the royal lineage of Jesus Christ.

“to this day” – perpetual, ongoing problem; no relief

lived just east of the Dead Sea

Moab led Israel into Baal worship on its way into Canaan (**Num. 25:1-3**).

Their chief god was Chemosh

B. (:38) Ammonites

“And as for the younger, she also bore a son, and called his name Ben-ammi;

he is the father of the sons of Ammon to this day.”

Ben-ammi = “*son of my people*”

occupied the countryside north of Moab

worshiped the gods Milcom and Molech

Molech was a fire-god with the face of a calf; his images had arms outstretched to receive the babies who were sacrificed to him.

Both the Ammonites and the Moabites hired Balaam to curse Israel as it journeyed toward the Promised Land and were thus forbidden to enter the Lord’s assembly (**Deut. 23:3–4**).

Prophetic word of judgment against these 2 nations: **Zephaniah 2:9**

“Therefore, as I live, declares the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Surely Moab will be like Sodom, and the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah—a place possessed by nettles and salt pits, and a perpetual desolation. The remnant of My people will plunder them, and the remainder of My nation will inherit them’”

CONCLUSION:

We hear no more about the life of Lot as we continue through Genesis – this is surely **The Legacy of a Loser!**

Apostle Paul understood the difference between the **Legacy of a Loser** and **Finishing Strong**:

Phil. 3:13-14 *“forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”*

1 Tim. 1:19 *“keeping faith and a good conscience, which some have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to their faith”*

2 Tim. 4:7-10 *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course. I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. Make every effort to come to me soon; for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica;”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What little sins do we need to crucify and forsake before they potentially lead to bigger sins?
- 2) How diligently do you deal with encroaching sins on the thought level before they even express themselves in word and deed?
- 3) How would you define worldliness in today’s culture? What are the signs of worldliness in

the church?

4) Where do you see the sins of your parents impacting your own life? Or your sins impacting the life of your children?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: Bottom line: do not be too quick to conclude that someone is saved. Only those who bear fruit can enjoy the assurance of God’s salvation in their lives. We need to assess those around us by this guide.

Parable of the Soils (e.g., Mark 4)	Lot's family
Wayside; the word cannot take root.	Married daughters and their husbands mock at the warning.
Rocky soil: fall away in time of temptation	Lot's wife turns back
Thorns: cares and lusts choke the word	Lot's unmarried daughters, careful for seed and lustful
Good soil	Lot himself, declared "righteous" in the NT

Steven Cole: The reason Lot failed is illustrated by an event that happened on June 5, 1976. On that day, under clear skies, without warning, the massive Teton Dam in southeastern Idaho collapsed, sending a torrent of water surging into the Snake River basin. There was extensive property damage and loss of life. It seemed to happen so quickly. Some workers on the dam barely had time to run for their lives.

But it really didn't happen suddenly. Beneath the water line, a hidden fault had been gradually weakening the entire structure. It started with just a tiny bit of erosion. But by the time it was detected, it was too late. No one had seen the little flaw; no one got hurt by it. But everyone saw the big collapse, and many were hurt (adapted from Luis Palau, Heart After God [Multnomah Press], p. 68).

That's what happened to Lot. He allowed little sins in his life to go unchecked. They weren't major, shocking kinds of sins--just "little" sins. But they were steadily eroding his moral character, until finally the sordid incident recorded here burst the dam. . .

So Lot's final degradation with his daughters was really just the cumulative result of many little compromises with the world that he had been making for years. Greed had led him to Sodom and kept him there in spite of God's warning. In the Bible, greed is often mentioned next to sexual immorality, because it's a sin of desiring the things of the flesh. So Lot's children readily learned the greed and sexual sins of Sodom.

David Thompson:

Lot regressed in life instead of progressing; ended up a pathetic loser;
If you are a believer, you could be connected to some of the best believers in the world, but if you live worldly you will end up in pathetic state as a loser;
This is the last look you get at Lot = a spiritual waste;
A believer could have a wonderful pedigree and still plunge himself headlong into sin and end up like Lot

3 Historical Responses to Divine Judgment of Sodom

1) Response of Abraham (:27-29)

2) Response of Lot (:30-38) – warning to believers – not an automatic guarantee that you will finish as a reward winner

a) ended up in total fear – shaking and trembling; his choices in life have not left him a stable man; was first afraid to go into the mountains; then afraid to stay in Zoar; **Calvin**: led by blind anxiety; emotional wreck instead of stable

b) ended up in a cave – had built a nice home in Sodom; had moved to plush valley and initially built tent outside the city; so in love with his possessions; home gave him false sense of security; don't make your own pleasure your primary goal; entombed by his own lust;

c) ended up a drunk – bible warns against abuse of wine; close relationship between wine and immorality; drinking himself every night into a drunken stupor; had some stock pile of wine even though he did not have many possessions; trying to forget about the past; lost family members; afraid of life; has made his own bed in worldliness and now he is sleeping in it; that's not the way to get over past mistakes

d) ends up in immorality –

e) ended up producing godless offspring – two enemy nations that would continually try to lure Israel into idolatry and immorality; what a legacy; potential for Christians to end up like Lot is very real – despite being in a covenantal relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ

3) Response of His Daughters

Dysfunctional family

a) ended up afraid – no confidence in God providing a man for them; never saw their Dad seeking the Lord

b) ended up in sin – no shock here; raised in environment of Sodom; father was willing to allow them to be raped; their mother loved Sodom more than warnings of the Lord; would you expect them to act any differently? Look at how our decisions impact others

c) their children were godless

there was one Moabite woman that turned things around – Ruth ended up being in the line of Jesus Christ; being in godless line no excuse for continuing on in that course

Last days will be similar to days of Lot:

- Increase in homosexuality
- Increase in brutality
- Increase in lack of compassion for the hurting
- Increase in pleasure-seeking

Brian Borgman: What You Lose When You Linger

Sense of loss on the part of Lot as he fled Sodom must have been overwhelming; he had made his home there; lost much more than his money and his possessions; lost a part of his soul; when someone drifts they always lose more than they realize;

Peter saying something more than Lot was justified; he was also an ethical man; incredibly complex person; progressively degenerates; fails as a host, a citizen, a husband, a father;

Lot was a righteous man on 2 counts:

- His hospitality – tries to meet the challenge; seeks to protect his guests

- His own standard of righteousness never totally collapsed – despite his compromises
– his soul was vexed with ungodliness around him

Abraham was convinced that Lot was righteous

Sodom shaped Lot far more than he knew

1) Lot sitting in the gate of Sodom – how did he get there?

Incredibly selfish decision to choose this portion of land = the Jordan Valley

Small decisions that lead to big tragic ones

Taken captive and rescued by Uncle Abraham who is blessed by the Lord – but missed opportunity to change where he lives

His daughters were engaged to Sodomite men

Lot married a Sodomite woman

2) Lot in the cave – you see the cultural imprint of Sodom; his family loved Sodom;

Bad company corrupts good morals

If you walk with fools, you become a fool

What about Lot's witness? Cannot persuade two men to flee with him

Having seen his life, they could not hear his words;

No influence on his family or community; ends up in a cave;

Why didn't he ever go back to Abraham?

Lot ends up just drifting = imperceptible to the one drifting until you look up and see how far from the shore you now are

Wakes up and is drunk and debased

3) Legacy of Lot – 2 grandsons – Moab and Ammonites

Traditional enemies of people of God; continually persecute and oppress people of God; outside of God's covenant love

TEXT: Genesis 20:1-18

TITLE: THE TREADMILL OF REPEATING THE SAME SIN

BIG IDEA:

GOD OVERRULES EVEN OUR BESETTING SINS TO ACCOMPLISH HIS KINGDOM PURPOSES

INTRODUCTION:

We have been tracking Abraham in his journey of faith. We have seen him rise to great heights – such as when he manifested such a magnanimous spirit in Chap. 12 to give his nephew Lot the choice of where to live; or when the Lord used him in Chap. 14 to deliver Lot and the residents of Sodom from the confederacy of invading kings; or when he interceded on behalf of Lot and his family despite the wickedness around them in Sodom and Gomorrah. But we have also seen surprising lapses in his dependence on God – such as when he passed off Sarah as his sister back in Chap. 12 as a means of self-preservation. Here again we see that same sin revisited. It is as if Abraham is on some type of treadmill of besetting sins – repeating the same unwise behavior over and over so that he fails to make any progress.

Yet we are struck by the mercy and power of God who intervenes to still protect Sarah and Abraham and accomplish the fulfillment of His covenant promise. What an embarrassment it must have been for Abraham to have been rebuked by this pagan king who was filled with moral shock and indignation at the outrageous behavior of his guest that had endangered the royal family. How could Abraham have so blatantly repeated the same moral blunder? Yet that is true for all of us. We each have particular sins that might not seem so threatening to others, but seem to enslave us in a grip that we have trouble breaking. Abraham was a giant when it came to trusting God. But in certain types of pressure situations he still resorted to his own human scheming and patterns of deception to try to help God out and preserve his life. This in spite of God's clear promises of what he would accomplish in the lives of Abraham and Sarah; this in spite of God's demonstrated faithfulness over and over in proving His greatness (there is nothing too difficult for God) and His goodness (Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is right?).

GOD OVERRULES EVEN OUR BESETTING SINS TO ACCOMPLISH HIS KINGDOM PURPOSES

I. (:1-7) REPEATING PAST SINS -- FEARFUL AND FAITHLESS ABRAHAM

A. (:1-2) Pressure Situations Make Believers Vulnerable to Besetting Sins

1. (:1) Pressure Situation

“Now Abraham journeyed from there toward the land of the Negev, and settled between Kadesh and Shur; then he sojourned in Gerar.”

Parunak: There is no mention here of **famine**. This appears to be normal nomadic migration, perhaps strengthened by a desire to move away from the scene of the recent judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. He does not go all the way to Egypt, but **stays in the land**.

- “Shur” (“wall”) is the northern Sinai desert adjacent to Egypt.

- “kadesh” is probably kadesh Barnea, Ain el Qudeirat, 096006
- Gerar is Tel Abu Hureireh (Tel Haror), 112087

What is important here is that he remains within the land of promise per **15:18**, not crossing over “*the river of Egypt*” (probably one of the branches of the Nile, perhaps the one now dried up that marked the eastern border with Sinai).

2. (:2) Besetting Sin (Heb. 12:1-2)

“*And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, ‘She is my sister.’
So Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.*”

Sarah must have been very beautiful to have been taken into the king’s harem at such an old age = 89

Title: “*my father is king*”

Steven Cole: Probably Abimelech wanted her in his harem to cement an alliance with the wealthy and powerful Abraham, who posed as her brother. Later, Abimelech did enter into an alliance with Abraham (**21:22-34**). Thus while Sarah was not in the flower of her youth, she was an attractive woman whose family ties could help Abimelech politically.

Jack Arnold: Old habits, thought to be done away with, can crop up in the life of the true believer. Former weaknesses and inveterate tendencies, which we think no longer powerful suddenly arise and bring about our downfall. Believers are often found to slip and fall where they have previously fallen. Inconsistency of faith ...

Parunak: Components of Abraham’s error:

- Forgetfulness of God’s past protection. Thus the Scriptures exhort us frequently to “*bless the Lord, and forget not all his benefits.*”
- Not discerning distinctions among unbelievers. Pharaoh’s antagonism is very different from the inclination toward God of Abimelech.
- The letdown after the mountaintop. **Ch. 18** was certainly a high point of his experience: meeting personally with the Lord, interceding for Sodom, receiving the promise of a son. In such times, it is easy to grow self-confident, and let down our dependence on the Lord. **1 Cor 10:12**, “*let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.*”

Why does God allow His children to suffer besetting sins?

- Keeps us humble; attacks our pride
- Makes us more dependent on God
- Magnifies His power and grace in the midst of our weakness

Steven Cole: Five observations about besetting sins:

- Besetting sins are always a danger.
 - o Can experience victory
 - o But must always be on guard against them cropping up again

- Avoid situations that put us at risk
- Besetting sins are rooted in the love of self.
 - Abraham putting self ahead of glory of God and love for his wife
 - Answer is to deny self – not put more eggs in the basket of self esteem
- Besetting sins always hurt others.
 - We like to think our sins are harmless
 - We never sin just in private without impact on others
- We tend to excuse besetting sins, not confess and forsake them. [treat this below]
- Besetting sins always dishonor God.
 - Abimelech, a pagan, has more integrity here than Abraham, God’s prophet.

Focus Switches to Abimelech and his culpability – we have a picture of the gospel message coming to a prominent Gentile king

B. (:3) Sin Leads to God’s Certain Death Sentence

*“But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, ‘Behold, **you are a dead man** because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married.’”*

Parunak: lit., *“Thou art dying.”* Cf. **v.17**. God had smitten him and his people with an illness, and here announces that it will be fatal if not stopped.

Shows the seriousness of **adultery** – God always treats sin as a serious offense against His holy nature; shows the importance of marriage – God’s design for society; powerful men cannot simply abuse women as they please with no consequences

This is no different than the Death Sentence God delivered to the original couple in the Garden of Eve – *“you shall surely die”* **Gen. 2:17; 3:3**

Denied by Satan – *“You surely will not die!”* **Gen. 3:4** direct contradiction; battle lines drawn
But you had better take God at His Word

No different than the message throughout Scripture:

“the soul that sinneth it shall surely die” **Ezek. 18:20**

“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” **Rom. 3:23**

“the wages of sin is death” **Rom. 6:23**

How are you going to respond to that declaration from God?

C. (:4-5) Men Are Quick With Plausible Excuses for Sin

1. I haven’t done anything wrong

“Now Abimelech had not come near her; and he said, ‘Lord, wilt Thou slay a nation, even though blameless?’”

2. I was misled and misinformed

“Did he not himself say to me, ‘She is my sister?’”

And she herself said, 'He is my brother.'"

3. I acted in good conscience

"In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this."

D. (:6-7) God Always Has the Final Word

1. (:6a) Integrity is an Important Claim but not the Determining Factor

"Then God said to him in the dream,

'Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this,'"

Parunak: God acknowledges only one of the three items that Abimelech claims for himself: *"integrity of heart."* He grants that Abimelech did not think he was doing wrong, but this is not the same as being either righteous or innocent. Even if we know nothing against ourselves, that does not prove that everything else is OK. **Prov 21:2; 1 Cor 4:3-4.**

2. (:6b) Intervention by God was Actually the Key

*"and I also kept you from sinning against Me;
therefore I did not let you touch her."*

Parunak: He points out that in the end it was God's sovereign intervention, not any merit of Abimelech's, that guarded him from falling into sin.

3. (:7) Ignorance of the Law is No Excuse – Only 2 Options

a. Repentance and Restoration via Intercession of Abraham

*"Now therefore, restore the man's wife, for he is a prophet,
and he will pray for you, and you will live."*

First use of word *"prophet"* in the Bible – **Jer. 27:18** *"If they are prophets, let them entreat the Lord of hosts"*

Parunak: It is part of the role of prophet to intercede for those to whom one gives revelation. Thus Moses (at the episode of the golden calf, **Exod 32:11-13**, or the return of the spies, **Num 14:13-19**); Samuel (at the approach of the Philistines, **1 Sam 7:8-10**, or in view of their asking a king, **1 Sam 12:16-25**), Jeremiah (concerning the flight to Egypt, **42:1-6**), **Amos (7:2,5)**. If God speaks to people through a man, it is reasonable for the people to expect the man to carry their concerns back to God.

b. Family Execution

*"But if you do not restore her,
know that **you shall surely die**, you and all who are yours."*

Parunak: This part of the discussion reveals two aspects of sin that run counter to unsaved intuition.

- Sin is objective, not subjective. It consists in the fact of offending against God’s law, whether or not we know we have done it. Abimelech was ignorant that he was doing anything wrong, but it was still sin, and he was still under sentence of death.

- Sin is persistent: even after we have stopped doing it, our previous offense still burdens us down. The world sometimes thinks that simply stopping sinning is enough, but this does not take care of the offense that has already been committed, which must be paid for.

II. (:8-18) RESCUED AND REWARDED -- FAITHFUL AND SOVEREIGN GOD

A. (:8) Fear of God is Proper Response to Divine Indictment

*“So Abimelech arose early in the morning and called all his servants and told all these things in their hearing; and the men were **greatly frightened.**”*

Didn’t waste any time in addressing the serious infraction and the divine indictment that was hanging over the head of the royal household

Could have just dismissed what Abimelech said as a wild dream

Could have tried to appease God with some type of sacrifice of their own imagination

Instead responded with deep-rooted fear of God

Focus now switches back to Abraham

B. (:9-10) 2 Indignant Accusations – made by Abimelech – expressing moral shock and indignation

1. (:9) Undeserved Malice

“Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him,

‘What have you done to us?

And how have I sinned against you, that you have brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin?

You have done to me things that ought not to be done.”

Deffinbaugh: Abimelech had been wronged by Abraham. He had not only done what was wrong in the eyes of God, but also in the eyes of pagans. Abraham, who was to be a source of blessing (12:2,3), had become a proverbial pain in the neck to those in whose land he sojourned.

2. (:10) Undisclosed Motivation

“And Abimelech said to Abraham,

‘What have you encountered, that you have done this thing?’”

C. (:11-13) 3 Bad Excuses – offered by Abraham

1. (:11) Bad Theology – Situational Ethics – No Viable Options

*“And Abraham said, ‘Because I thought, surely there is no **fear of God** in this place; and they will kill me because of my wife.’”*

Deffinbaugh: Situational ethics = a system of ethics based upon the denial of either the existence of God or His ability to act in man's behalf. Situationalism always posits a dilemma in which there is no alternative other than a sinful act. In such cases we are forced to decide on the basis of the lesser of two evils.

2. (:12) Bad Deception – Semantics Obscuring Truth – Loophole Approach

“Besides, she actually is my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife;”

3. (:13) Bad Faith – Scheming Substituted for Faith – Consistent Practice

“and it came about, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said to her, 'This is the kindness which you will show to me: everywhere we go, say of me, 'He is my brother.'”

Borgman: Vs. 13 is the disturbing part; this is our common practice whenever we travel for past 25 years;

Elohim = “gods” plural noun; usually takes a singular verb; here Abraham uses a plural verb = “caused me to wander” – saying: *when the gods caused me to wander ...*

No sense of witness for the true and living God – talks about God in Abimelech's terms;

“That's the way we have always done it” – appealing to tradition and previous experience

D. (:14-18) Divine Deliverance for All Parties Involved

1. (:14-16) Restitution and Vindication

a. Restitution for Abraham

“Abimelech then took sheep and oxen and male and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and restored his wife Sarah to him. And Abimelech said, ‘Behold, my land is before you; settle wherever you please.’”

b. Vindication for Sarah

“And to Sarah he said, ‘Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, it is your vindication before all who are with you, and before all men you are cleared.’”

Albert Barnes: A “covering of the eyes” does not mean a veil, the proper word for which is *תְּצַיֵּץ* *tsā'îyp* but is a figurative phrase for a recompense or pacificatory offering, in consideration of which an offence is overlooked.

2. (:17-18) Intercession and Healing

a. (:17) God Answers Abraham's Petition

“And Abraham prayed to God; and God healed Abimelech and his wife and his maids, so that they bore children.”

Abraham had been praying for a child for decades; only took 1 prayer here

b. (:18) God Acts to Protect Sarah

“For the LORD had closed fast all the wombs of the household of

Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife."

Deffinbaugh: By means of some undisclosed physical malady, no one in the royal household was able to conceive. Further, it seems that sexual activity was prohibited altogether. This would ensure Sarah's purity, as well as prevent the birth of a child by Abimelech. The revelation Abimelech received in the dream thus explained the reason for the plague which had fallen upon his household. This also sheds light on the great fear of the male servants in Abimelech's household. They, too, suffered from this affliction which prohibited normal sexual activity. In a culture that placed a high value on many offspring and virility, the situation would have been taken as critical. And so it was.

Parunak: Finally Abraham acts the part of a prophet, and intercedes successfully for Abimelech. He interceded successfully before, in **ch. 18** on behalf of Sodom, but there he was alone with the Lord. This chapter shows that he was reluctant to act the prophet with unbelievers, but God is teaching him that his mission to bring blessing to all nations requires that he speak for God among all men. The Lord has graciously led him to this action by telling Abimelech that this is what must happen, and now finally we see Abraham behaving as he ought.

Deffinbaugh: Our failures will not keep a person from coming to faith in our Lord.

CONCLUSION:

Steven Cole: Juan Carlos Ortiz has captured the balance between God's grace and our good works nicely. He writes (*Leadership*, Fall, 1984, p. 46.),

Watching a trapeze show is breathtaking. We wonder at the dexterity and timing. We gasp at near-misses. In most cases, there is a net underneath. When they fall, they jump up and bounce back to the trapeze.

In Christ, we live on the trapeze. The whole world should be able to watch and say, "Look how they live, how they love one another. Look how well the husbands treat their wives. And aren't they the best workers in the factories and offices, the best neighbors, the best students?" That is to live on the trapeze, being a show to the world.

What happens when we slip? The net is surely there. The blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, has provided forgiveness for all our trespasses. Both the net and the ability to stay on the trapeze are works of God's grace.

Of course, we cannot be continually sleeping on the net. If that is the case, I doubt whether that person is a trapezist.

God has not intended for us to live on the treadmill of bondage to repeating sins.

That is the tension that Paul described in **Romans 7**.

"But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What types of pressure situations give us the most problem?
- 2) When are we tempted to be fearful and faithless? What would you call your besetting sin? What is the reason behind your besetting sin?
- 3) What types of excuses and rationalizations do we make for our sins?
- 4) How can our perseverance draw upon God's character of being patient and merciful and gracious towards us?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh: The man in **chapter 20** is a far cry from our expectations for a patriarch and a prophet. He is a man compared to whom Abimelech looks saintly. In spite of this sad state of affairs, the grace of God is seen for the marvel it is, not so much in spite of Abraham's failure of faith as because of it. Abraham is an unwilling witness to the wonderful grace of God Who saves and sanctifies men and women in spite of themselves.

Ian Duguid (quoted by **Hughes**): God's ability to use even our sins for his own purposes shows that he doesn't love us simply for the great things we can do for him.

Jesus loves me when I'm good,
When I do the things I should.
Jesus loves me when I'm bad,
Though it makes Him very sad.

Steven Cole: Thank God that He doesn't deal with us according to our sins! Because the Lord Jesus Christ bore the penalty we deserved, God is now free to deal with us in grace. Just as God sovereignly chose Abraham and blessed him in spite of his sins, so He has sovereignly chosen us and blesses us in spite of our sins. That shouldn't make us be sloppy about our sin. It should make us want to be holy in order to please the God who loved us and gave Himself for us!

Borgman: Faithful to the Fearful and Faithless

God is faithful to His fearful and faithless children

Abraham has very specific revelation from God as the friend of God; specific promises; specific covenant; will have a son within a year; sees God fulfil His Word in destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; we are expecting a birth story in chap. 20; Instead we have Abraham jeopardizing the promise once again with the same sin as in chap. 12 which was 25 years earlier; this wasn't just a two event issue;

I. (vv.1-2) Abimelech takes Sarah

Text doesn't tell us why Abraham moves; sounds like **12:9-10**; what are you doing, Abraham? Abraham's deception out of fear; half lie; dynastic title = "my father is king"
Sarah and Abraham are on the brink of conceiving the promised child = what they have been waiting for these 25 years; God's purposes don't depend on frail, sinful men;

II. (vv. 3-7) God threatens Abimelech

Adultery considered a crime even among most pagan cultures; Abimelech has a pretty good defense; king and nation tied together; talking about a death sentence on the nation as well; says he is innocent in the manner; **Gen. 18:25**; Didn't Abraham cause this mess?

No malice of heart; not trying to steal another man's wife;

Maybe God had afflicted him with some physical ailment that prevented sexual intercourse;

It was God's intervention that let Abimelech keep his conscience clean;

Is he a prophet or a deceiver, a coward, a weasel??

Not acting like a prophet; you need his intercession to get you out of your trouble

III. (v. 8) Abimelech and his servants very afraid

Dream, left an indelible impression; language of immediate obedience;

Emergency staff meeting with all his officials;

Abraham was so wrong about their reaction to God's warning;

Who really feared God in this story?

IV. (v. 9-13) Abimelech confronts Abraham

How did Abraham sleep that night?

Frustration and anger

Prophet being called to reckoning by the pagan;

What should Abraham have said? Brought up a loophole;

Abraham had besetting sins – fear and unbelief that controlled him when he travelled;

V. (v. 14-18) Abimelech restores Sarah and more and Abraham prays for him

Beginning of Abraham's wealth goes back to Pharaoh;

Peculiar way he keeps profiting;

"your brother" wink, wink; jab, jab

Massive sum of money; form of public apology; you were not defiled by me;

Had been praying for 25 years for a son; now ironic what he prays for Abimelech just once and God answers

Not the case of the morally superior praying for the morally inferior;

God blesses the nations through His chosen servant Abraham; free and sovereign grace

We all have besetting sins rooted in unbelief and fear

Kent Butterfield: Besetting Sin and Persevering Grace

We have seen the great sins of the men of great faith in Genesis – Adam, Noah, now Abraham;

Need much grace throughout our entire journey of faith;

Mirrors chap. 12 when Abraham went down to Egypt;

God does not always deal with us accordingly to our sins;

Sin has patterns when we are under parallel pressure situations

The sin which so easily ensnares us = besetting sins

Abraham fearing sinners and their imagined sins; instead should think of God's record of faithfulness to him

We don't have enough hatred for our besetting sin; we excuse ourselves by saying I can't help it so that we don't deal with it; old, familiar sin – our failsafe mechanism in time of stress; what is behind the temptation to commit this sin? Study the reason behind your sin?? See it not as a comfort but as an enemy = hindering our consistent walk of faith;

We must be vigilant because sin attacks;
When you have the fear of people you will always dishonor God;
God restrains sin – even in the lives of unregenerate;
Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds
You should wear a veil and make it clear that you are another man's wife and you are not available;
Last week we were very shocked at the offer Lot made of his 2 daughters to the wicked men of Sodom;
But here we have the father of the faith putting his wife in jeopardy;
Failed to overcome the besetting sin of unbelief

TEXT: Genesis 21:1-21

TITLE: CHILD OF PROMISE . . . CHILD OF FLESH

BIG IDEA:

GOD DETERMINES THE DESTINY OF BOTH THE ELECT AND THE NON-ELECT

INTRODUCTION:

For those that find the doctrine of the sovereignty of God distasteful or offensive (due to their understanding of free will or what they think is fair), this passage will be unsettling. To say that God determines the destiny of the elect is quite a theological mountain to climb. But to add to that conviction, the understanding that God also determines the destiny of the non-elect is more than many Christians are willing to swallow. Yet, as we have taught before, “a God who does not control everything, cannot control anything.” It is an all-or-nothing proposition.

We have already witnessed God’s sovereign choice in these early chapters of the first book of the bible:

- Remember God being pleased with the sacrifice of **Abel** but not of Cain – then we have the designation of the descendants of both **Seth**, the favored line, and Cain
- Remember the choosing of **Noah** and his family as the only ones to enter the ark; Then we have the descendants that flow from the 3 sons of Noah with the **line of Shem** being singled out

Parunak: Genesis is a **history of successive election**, as God repeatedly distinguishes between the chosen line and those not chosen.

- 11:27, God chooses **Terah** from the other descendants of Noah.
- 12:1, God chooses **Abraham** from the family of Terah. Abraham’s nephew Lot comes along, and it seems as though he might become the heir of the childless patriarch.
- 13:11, Lot departs, leaving Abraham.

Now in our story for today, we see the favor shown to **Isaac** over Ishmael.

Yet we also see that God controls the destiny of both individuals, despite their contrasts – which the Apostle Paul developed in his commentary in **Gal. 4** as a description of an **allegory** describing **two very different people groups**.

GOD DETERMINES THE DESTINY OF BOTH THE ELECT AND THE NON-ELECT

Def. of Destiny: “the events that will necessarily happen to a particular person or thing in the future.” “your future or the pre-ordained path of your life.”

How is **God’s Control Demonstrated** as we work our way through the passage?

List of 14 observations --

**I. (:1-8) GOD DETERMINES THE DESTINY OF THE ELECT --
SARAH’S CHILD OF PROMISE – GREAT FEAST – LAUGHING – PROMISED LAND
INHERITOR – FATHER OF A GREAT NATION**

A. (:1-2) God’s Intervention with Sarah – Birth of Isaac

1. (:1) God's Control Shown in Faithfulness to His Promises

“Then the LORD took note of Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had promised.”

“visited”

Parunak: Probably the reference is to God's gracious intervention in the lives of Abraham and Sarah to enable them to have a child. This is the sense of the verb “*visit*.” It never means simply to “drop in,” but always implies purposeful intervention in someone's life, either for good or for bad (cf. **Zech 10:3**). One study on the verb concludes that its overall meaning is “**determine someone's destiny**.” It indicates that God has not forgotten Sarah. He intervenes in her life as he has promised, to give her a son.

Constable: a common metaphor that describes **God's intervention** in nature and human affairs. The Hebrew word translated “visited” (paqad) also appears when God intervened to save the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (**Genesis 50:24-25; Exodus 4:31**) and when He ended a famine (**Ruth 1:6**). It also occurs when He made Hannah conceive (**1 Samuel 2:21**) and when He brought the Jewish exiles home from Babylonian captivity (**Jeremiah 29:10**). Thus its presence here highlights the major significance of Isaac's birth.

Deffinbaugh: I have a friend who is an insurance agent, and he would be quick to tell me that an “*act of God*” in his line of work is **a disaster over which man has no control**. Isaac was an “act of God” in a very different sense. He was the result of divine intervention in the lives of Abraham and Sarah, both of whom were too old to bear children. It was the fulfillment of a promise made long before the birth of the child and often reiterated to Abraham (cf. **Genesis 12:2; 15:4; 17:15-16; 18:10**):

2. (:2) God's Control Shown in Working According to His Timetable

“So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him.”

A very special birth – next big step in God's kingdom purposes for mankind
Major defeat for Satan in his efforts to thwart the kingdom purposes of God

Parunak: The event itself is described as simply and sparsely as it can be: “*Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son*.” Like a diamond in a solitaire setting, with no other adornment around it, the fact itself needs no elaboration. Sarah and Abraham have a baby. This fact is sandwiched between assertions of God's faithfulness both to Sarah (before, **v.1**) and to Abraham (after, **v.2b**), two on each side, both founded in the dual promises of **ch. 17** and **ch. 18**. Moses leaves no doubt about the supernatural nature of this occurrence. Contrast the detailed narrative in **ch. 16**, around the birth of Ishmael. Here, the focus is not on what Abraham and Sarah did, but on what the Lord has done.

Parunak: “*in his old age*” - This word occurs only in Genesis, here and in **v.7** (with reference to Abraham at the birth of Isaac), and **37:3; 44:20** (describing Joseph and Benjamin respectively as dear to Jacob). The issue here is not childlessness. The references to Jacob show that it was considered a special blessing for a man to have a son in his old age, independent of whether the man had other sons already or not. It would be a **comfort** to him as he grows feeble to see the continuity of life.

“*at the appointed time*” - God works according to His established timetable; we have been anticipating this birth for some time; finally it arrives; but no delay from God’s perspective

Gal. 4:4

God is always **on time**; never late; never early; how dependable is our God!

B. (:3-5) Response of Abraham – Obedient in Naming and Circumcising Isaac

3. (:3) God’s Control Shown in the Name Given to the Promised Son

“And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.”

“He laughs”

4. (:4) God’s Control Shown in the Covenantal Sign of Circumcision

“Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.”

Sign of God’s ownership – **Gen. 17:12**

5. (:5) God’s Control Shown in Doing the Impossible with Abraham

“Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.”

C. (:6-7) Response of Sarah – Testimony of Transformation from Incredulous to Rejoicing

7. (:6-7) God’s Control Shown in Doing the Impossible with Sarah

“And Sarah said, ‘God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.’”

[Before she had made herself to laugh]

“And she said, ‘Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.’”

From laughter of unbelief to laughter of joy and praise and thanksgiving

All the years where people had made fun of Abraham for his name = Father of a multitude

Now God has the last laugh

Luke 1:58 – after Mary’s Magnificat – neighbors rejoicing with Elizabeth at birth of John the Baptist

S. Lewis Johnson: when the Virgin Mary sings the Magnificat, there are expressions from that Magnificat that are taken from the Greek translation of this chapter right here. Evidence of the fact that Mary herself had studied this chapter and had made some of these things subjects of her own meditation and Luke further uses expressions from this chapter in order to describe our Lord’s growing. When we read *the child grew and was weaned*, the precise expression is used with reference to the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of Luke.

D. (:8) Healthy Development of Isaac Celebrated

7. (:8) God's Control Shown in the Celebration of the Healthy Growth of Isaac in Anticipation of the Fulfillment of His Destiny

*“And the child grew and was weaned,
and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned.”*

Great Thanksgiving Day Feast Message

Borgman: Isaac center of attention; probably more than a little spoiled

Parunak – 2 reasons for the feast:

- High rate of infant mortality -- a study of evidence for ancient Israel (<http://faculty.biu.ac.il/~barilm/infant.html>) suggests that 30% of infants born did not live to maturity.
- Children nursed for longer period of time (even up to 2-3 years)

II. (:9-21) GOD DETERMINES THE DESTINY OF THE NON-ELECT -- HAGAR'S CHILD OF FLESH – GREAT FAMINE – MOCKING/WEEPING – WILDERNESS WANDERER – FATHER OF GREAT NATION

A. (:9-14) Separation of Hagar and Ishmael from Household of Abraham – to Protect Isaac's Destiny

8. (:9) God's Control Shown in Disrupting the Status Quo

“Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking.”

Ishmael around 16 years old – bullying younger brother; name not mentioned throughout chapter; being dismissed; disrespected in the narrative

Constable: The Hebrew word translated "mocking" (**Genesis 21:9**) comes from the same root as Isaac's name and means "laughing." However, this participle is in the intensive form in Hebrew indicating that Ishmael was not simply laughing but ridiculing Isaac (cf. **Galatians 4:29** – persecuting Isaac). Ishmael disdained Isaac as Hagar had despised Sarai (**Genesis 16:4**). Abraham understandably felt distressed by this situation since he loved Ishmael as well as Isaac (cf. Genesis 17:18).

9. (:10) God's Control Shown in Initiating the Separation Between Ishmael and Isaac

“Therefore she said to Abraham, ‘Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac.’”

God working behind the scenes to secure the full inheritance for just Isaac; no sharing with Ishmael

10. (:11-13) God's Control Shown in Overriding Abraham's Paternal Instincts

a. (:11) Abraham's Hesitation

“And the matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son.”

He loves his son greatly

S. Lewis Johnson: the great divine sanctifier, by discipline prepares, Abraham for loftier expressions and experiences of trust in God. . . if Abraham is able to **lean upon Ishmael**, then the test in the offering up of Isaac would be that much easier. It's easier to give up Isaac if one still has Ishmael at home, and so consequently God must wean Abraham from Ishmael and Ishmael must be sent off in order that when the test comes in Genesis chapter 22, it's the kind of test which, if by the grace of God, Abraham manages to succeed in, then it is true.

b. (:12-13) God's Confirmation

"But God said to Abraham, 'Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named. And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant.'"

Great verse on husband listening to voice of wife

Griffith Thomas: Her **counsel** is to be followed even though her **conduct** could not be approved

God encourages Abraham by reminding him that Ishmael will still be blessed with the blessing of Abraham and be made a nation

Deffinbaugh: We should notice that it is both Hagar and the boy who are close to Abraham's heart. Heretofore Hagar has been referred to as Sarah's maid, but here she is called "*your maid*" by God. Sarah, we recall, was intensely jealous of Hagar and of her son (cf. **Genesis 16:5**). It is impossible for a man to enter into an intimate relationship such as the one Abraham had with Hagar and then to simply walk away. Sarah knew this, and so did God. In more than just a physical way Abraham had become one with Hagar, and Ishmael was the evidence of this union.

11. (:14) God's Control Shown in Hagar and Ishmael Departing

"So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and gave her the boy, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba."

A lot takes place early in the morning – **Gen. 20:8; 22:3**

Borgman: Abraham does not always obey God, but when he does he does it immediately

Parunak: The current episode recalls the history of Lot's departure. In both cases,

- There is a potential rival heir,
- The heir leads to strife in the family,
- And the strife is resolved with the departure of the rival.

Hagar and Ishmael only given the provisions they could carry

Why not sent away with a delegation of servants and beasts of burden to carry some wealth?

No sharing of the inheritance between Child of Promise and Child of the Flesh

John Gill: perhaps this was all she would grant; or it might be so ordered by the providence of God, as a chastisement for their ill behaviour, and that they might know the difference between being in Abraham's house and out of it; and that there might be an opportunity given to show favour to them for Abraham's sake, who might probably direct them to some place where to go; and, till they came there, this might be a sufficient supply, when he gave them reason to expect more from him; but they got into the wilderness, wandered about and lost their way, and so became destitute of provisions; and this may be an emblem of the low, mean, and starving condition such are in who are under the law, and seek for happiness by the works of it:

B. (:15-21) Special Provision by Divine Intervention to Preserve Ishmael's Destiny

12. (:15-16) God's Control Shown in Draining Hagar of All Resources and All Hope

“And the water in the skin was used up, and she left the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him, about a bowshot away, for she said, ‘Do not let me see the boy die.’ And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept.”

13. (:17-19) God's Control Shown in Providential Provision

a. (:17a) God Hears All Cries

“And God heard the lad crying;”

Ishmael = the God who hears – responding to cries of Ishmael, not Hagar

Parunak: It contains a hidden occurrence of Ishmael's name. Otherwise the boy is unnamed in the episode, fading into the background as Isaac becomes prominent. But the phrase “*God heard*” is in Hebrew “wayishma ‘el”, echoing his name, “yishma ‘el”, reminding us that God's earlier promise to Hagar still holds. He is as faithful to his promise to her as he is to his promise to Abraham.

b. (:17b) God Encourages and Builds Courage

“and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, ‘What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.’”

The *angel of the Lord* – pre-incarnate **Jesus Christ** – directly intervenes

Nouthetic, biblical counseling

God meets the desperate and the hopeless right where they are

We might have expected judgment on the mocking Ishmael;
Instead illustration of common grace (goodness on both the just and the unjust) – even inclusion of Gentiles in family of God

c. (:18) God Instructs and Promises a Future

“Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him by the hand; for I will make a great

nation of him.”

d. (:19) God Supplies All Needs

*“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.”*

Always act of mercy on God’s part when He opens our eyes – shows her what is there already

14. (:20-21) God’s Control Shown in Directing Ishmael to the Fulfillment of His
Destiny

a. (:20a) Growth due to God’s Favor

“And God was with the lad, and he grew;”

Father of many of the Arab people
Blessed because he is Abraham’s son

Deffinbaugh: God’s working in Hagar’s life may seem harsh to us, but I understand His dealings to be such that His promises were accomplished. You remember that Ishmael was to be a “wild ass” of a man, hostile toward his brothers, and a free spirit. This kind of man could not be raised in the city with all of its conveniences and advantages. Learning to survive in the desert, to prevail over hostile elements was just what it took to make such a man out of Ishmael. As boot camp makes a good Marine, so desert survival made a man of Ishmael.

b. (:20b) Survival Skills for Hunting in the Wilderness

“and he lived in the wilderness, and became an archer.”

c. (:21a) Geographic Focus

“And he lived in the wilderness of Paran;”

“beauty, glory, ornament”

Num. 10:12 – children of Israel in that region during their wilderness wanderings on the way to the Promised Land

d. (:21b) Egyptian Wife for Nation Building

“and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.”

Not good to go down to Egypt for a wife – even though natural for Hagar

LESSONS / APPLICATION:

- Fate is usually thought of as a predetermined course of events beyond human control. A typical response to a belief in fate is resignation—if we can’t change destiny, then why even try? Whatever happens, happens, and we can’t do anything about it. This is called “fatalism,” and it is not biblical.
- **Psalm 139** says, *“All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (verse 16, NIV)*. God created you for your destiny, and your destiny is

part of a long plan that extends before and after you.

- Precursor to Arab Christians – just as Hagar and Ishmael rescued in the wilderness – points to greater rescue by Jesus Christ, the ultimate Isaac, the Promised Seed
- Heart of **Thanksgiving and Praise** for the one who controls our destiny

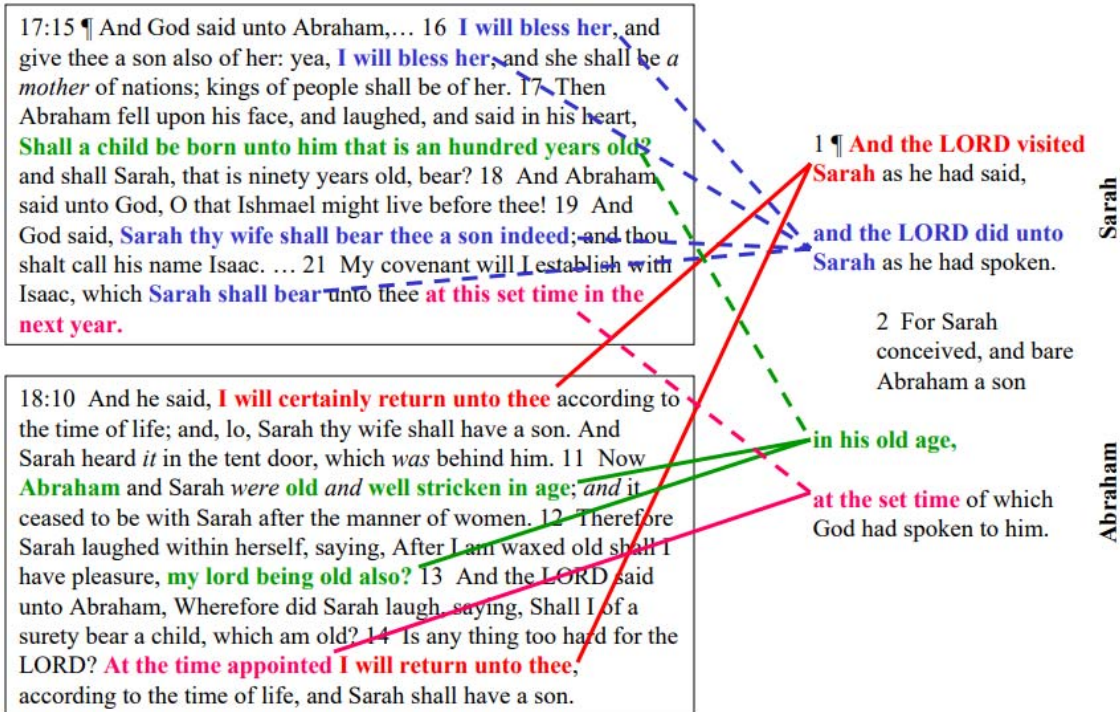
DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Am I confident that God hears my cries and is able to make every provision for my needs?
- 2) How should I respond to mocking and jealousy and malice?
- 3) What promises of God am I counting on?
- 4) Since God controls my destiny, why do I still need to obey Him?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak:

Gen 21 Fulfills the Promises of 17 and 18



Steven Cole: The Joy and Pain of a Life of Faith

Isaac represents that which only God can do. Sarah had always been barren. Now, due to age, Abraham and Sarah were physically unable to produce a child. So Isaac was the result of God's power, apart from human ability. But Ishmael represents what man can do without God.

Abraham and Hagar produced Ishmael by natural means. In **Galatians 4:21-31**, Paul says that this story has a spiritual lesson behind it. Ishmael was born according to the flesh, but Isaac was born according to the Spirit (**Gal. 4:23, 29**). Abraham and Sarah could not boast in Isaac, but could only glorify God for him. But Abraham could boast in Ishmael, because he produced him.

God chose Isaac so that we would know that the life of faith requires total dependence on God, so that all the fruit comes from Him. That which stems from our flesh, which we can do apart from God, can never please Him. It exalts human pride and robs God of His glory. That which the Spirit produces in and through us brings God the glory due His name. So even though it seems unfair that Hagar and Ishmael be expelled, it was necessary for God's purpose and glory. This story teaches us that the joy of the life of faith comes from obtaining what only God can do; the pain comes from separating from what I can do in my own power. Let's first look at the joy and then at the pain.

1. **The joy of a life of faith** comes from obtaining that which only God can do (Isaac, 21:1-7).
 - A. There is joy in knowing that what God promises, He does.
 - B. There is joy in knowing that what God promises, He does in His time.
 - C. There is joy in knowing that what God promises, He does when we reach the end of ourselves

2. **The pain of a life of faith** comes from separating from that which I do in my own power (Ishmael, 21:8-21).

Dr. Joel Beeke: God's Grace in Giving and Taking Away

God's Grace:

- **Birth of Isaac** (all true of birth of Christ as well – but greater – Jesus is greater Isaac)
 - o 1. Grace because of **God's Faithful Word**
God is true to His Word; dependable;
 - o 2. Grace in His **Accurate Timing**
God knows when to do what He has promised to do; not our timing
His timing is for our ultimate good
God's waiting is not meant to frustrate us
 - o 3. Grace shown through **Miraculous Fulfillment**
A way of impossibility with man ... but possible because of the power of God
 - o 4. Grace in God's **Significant Promise**
Isaac = essential, inevitable link to coming of Messiah; salvation of world depended on birth of this child; everlasting issues at stake; What is important to God is the conversion of people
 - o 5. Grace because of God's **Sacramental Covenant** – circumcision = mark of God
Sphere of parental covenantal obedience; more than a mark of national identity; sign and seal of righteousness which is by faith
 - o 6. We see God's Grace Because of **God's Given Laughter** = Holy Joy

- Departure of Ishmael

- Different kind of *laughter* – despising, hostility, cruelty, threat of physical violence; Ishmael was jealous;
- Point of story is told us in **Gal.4** – this story is an allegory representing 2 people groups = the Jews persecuting the Gentile Christians; the fervent Jews are acting like Ishmael here – proud of their Jewish heritage and angry at Gentile dogs coming into the church without their spiritual tradition; similar to Pharisees and Sadducees giving Jesus a hard time
- Sarah saw that there was no room for both of these boys to co-exist in the same home; religion of works vs grace; faith plus vs faith alone; there must be a parting of ways; same battle in our own parts – Ishmael trying to creep back into our hearts; legalism that is self-defeating;
- Never rest in external, covenant privileges and practices; faith in promises of God
- God sometimes calls us to separation for our souls to be guarded and our usefulness to Christ to be preserved; it grieved Abraham
- Preliminary test to sacrificing Isaac – proving he loves God more than his son; Abraham never saw Ishmael again though he lived 137 years; only came back to bury his father
- Jim Elliott: “He is no fool who loses what he cannot keep to keep what he cannot lose”

- Covenant at Beersheba

- God untangles one more self-created mess in life of Abraham
- Restores our reputation in Christ – God’s reputation and ours intertwined in minds of people
- Abraham no longer timid and compromising in dealing with royalty
- Planting of tree is symbol of gratitude for God’s grace – granting Abraham all he needed
- New name = the Everlasting God – His plans can never be thwarted

Brian Borgman: The Birth of Isaac and the Grace of God

Need to see a bigger picture than just family dysfunction and jealousy

I. Birth of Isaac –

Reiterations of the promise; and then disappointment after disappointment; then alternative methods suggested by Abraham and Sarah; they had waited 25 years; finally God keeps His promise;

Passage opens up without a lot of fanfare; “*God visits Sarah*”

This comes after the gigantic fiasco of Chap. 20;

Why is focus on Sarah instead of on Abraham here?

“*He who promised is faithful*”

Miracle child; covenant promised fulfillment

We see Abraham’s obedience; 17:21 – name him Isaac

TEXT: Genesis 21:22-34

TITLE: BEERSHEBA -- THE WELL AND THE TREE

BIG IDEA:

THE EVERLASTING GOD GUARANTEES THE POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND USING THE COVENANT MOTIF

INTRODUCTION:

This short little paragraph speaks to the **beauty of expositional preaching**. As a preacher who makes it his practice to systematically work through an entire book of Scripture, I found that my thought patterns in approaching today's text track exactly along the same lines of those of a fellow expositor **Brian Borgman**. I listened to his sermon and marveled at how our minds go down the same path. My first decision is how big of a chunk to tackle in a given message. So last week it made sense to contrast the Promised Seed Isaac with the Seed of the Flesh = Ishmael. It is also obvious that **Chap. 22** with the offering up of Isaac stands by itself. So what do we make of this little section (**21:22-34**) in the middle? Most expositors would just skip over it ... but I can't do that. God has it here for a specific purpose.

1) Land Promise -- Remember **Gen. 12:1-3** and the initial promise which consisted of a **seed promise** and a **land promise**.

Bruce Waltke: This second conflict with Abimelech creates a bracket around the Isaac birth narrative. Whereas the first conflict, Scene5 (**Genesis 20:1-18**), concerned **jeopardy of the seed**, the second conflict, Scene7 (**Genesis 21:22-34**), concerns **jeopardy of the land** (i.e, well rights).

2) Participation in Blessing Via Abraham -- You can also draw some **interesting contrasts** between the way in which Ishmael rejected co-existence with Abraham and Isaac by mocking Isaac – thereby **alienating himself** from the promised seed (even though God continued to show kindness in the form of common grace to Ishmael and his descendants); while Abimelech chose the opposite course of seeking a way to embrace the blessing of Abraham and come to a treaty of **peaceful co-existence**. Here you have a Gentile king in a pagan land experiencing God's grace via his association with Abraham.

3) New Covenant Symbolism -- From Paul's commentary in Gal. 4 we know that the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael represents the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. So it is not surprising that in this section we learn valuable lessons about the **covenant motif**.

So what lesson are we to draw from this section?

THE EVERLASTING GOD GUARANTEES THE POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND USING THE COVENANT MOTIF

[motif = theme, dominant feature]

God **sovereignly directing** the whole event that happens here between Abraham and Abimelech

I. (:22-32) GUARANTEE OF POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND VIA NON AGGRESSION COVENANT WITH ABIMELECH -- SIGN = OWNERSHIP OF WATER WELL AT BEERSHEBA

A. (:22-24) Covenant Addressing Abimelech's Concern – Non Aggression Treaty

1. (:22) Motivation for the Covenant -- God's Favor Attracts Gentile Interest

“Now it came about 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;’”

Both the political and military leaders of this Philistine kingdom take the initiative to approach Abraham at this crucial time in history

J. Ligon Duncan: at some point Abraham had moved his tents from Gerah down to Beersheba, which was about twenty-five miles to the southeast. And one gets the impression from this passage that Abimelech exercised control over a vast area south of Gerah as far as Beersheba.

Time of feast at Isaac's weaning; were they guests at the feast??

Deffinbaugh: Abimelech sought a treaty with Abraham because he did not ever wish to go to battle against him. To fight Abraham was to attack Abraham's God and to have to contend with Him. On the other hand, to have an alliance with Abraham was to have God on his side. No wonder Abimelech was so anxious to negotiate such a treaty.

But do you see the lesson this should have taught Abraham? Abraham had lied to Abimelech about Sarah because he thought that there would be no fear of God, and thus no protection of himself, in a land of pagans (cf. 20:11). God rebuked the unbelief of Abraham by this testimony from the lips of Abimelech.

Hughes: Abraham had risen from disgrace to having a positive witness for God.

How did Abimelech recognize God's hand on Abraham? General pattern of success:

- Historical accounts of previous military victories
- Protection of him and Sarah despite his duplicity – knew that Abraham was not a guy you should mess with; remember God's pronouncement: *“You are a dead man”*
- Knew Abraham as a **prophet of God**
- Increasing wealth and reputation of Abraham
- Miraculous birth of promised son Isaac

Parunak: Statement: he recognizes God's blessing on Abraham.

- The appearance of God to him when he took Sarah
- The healing that came when Abraham interceded for him
- Now, the birth of a son under unnatural circumstances.

Duncan: He acknowledges God's presence and God's favor with Abraham. God is with you, Abimelech says to Abraham. That same fact would be noticed about Isaac. Abimelech would see him in Genesis 26, verse 28 and say, Isaac, God is with you, I can see it. It would be noted of Jacob in Genesis 30, verse 27, "God is with you." And again it would be noted of Joseph in Genesis in 39, verse 3, "God is with you."

2. (:23) Substance of the Covenant

a. Negative Side of Oath

“now therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me, or with my offspring, or with my posterity;”

Look at the position of power and prestige that Abraham occupies that the king Abimelech and his military powers would be in a position of entreating him for a peace pact.

Purpose of making such a covenant: designed to establish **security** and **stability** in their relationship.

b. Positive Side of Oath

“but according to the kindness that I have shown to you, you shall show to me, and to the land in which you have sojourned.”

Duncan: Technical word -- God's *chesid*, God's **covenant love**, God's covenant loyalty to His people, and Abimelech is asking that Abraham would show Him that kind of covenant loyalty.

MacArthur: A parity treaty formally struck between Abimelech and Abraham guaranteed the proper control and sharing of the region's limited water resources and also assured the king of the patriarch's fair and equitable treatment for years to come.

Parunak: Positively, Abraham is to return Abimelech's kindness, his *xesed*. This term is used in the first instance to describe the reciprocal obligations inherent in close human relations, such as man and wife (**Gen 20:13; Ruth 1:8**), cousins (**Gen 24:49**), father and son (**47:29**), friends (David and Jonathan), or as here, host and guest (cf. also **Jos 2:12,14**). The fact that Abimelech asks for a promise of it here suggests that he realizes he may not always be in the position of host, and he wants to ensure that as Abraham becomes stronger, he treats Abimelech as Abimelech has treated him. Similar instances of a host requesting *xesed* of a guest who is in the ascendancy: *Jos 2:12,14; Gen 19:19*.

3. (:24) Ratification of Covenant

“And Abraham said, ‘I swear it.’”

Parunak: There are either two separate covenants, or one with two parts.

B. (:25-27) Threat to the Covenant Addressed – Property Rights of Contested Well

1. (:25) Specific Concern

“But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized.”

Growth on Abraham's part: here Abraham takes a more direct and honest approach to dealing with a potential difficulty – did not shy away from confrontation

2. (:26) Denial of Culpability

“And Abimelech said, ‘I do not know who has done this thing; neither did you tell me, nor did I hear of it until today.’”

Reproaching Abraham for not having personally brought this to his attention earlier
Dismisses the concern as no issue at all – nothing stands between good relations between Abraham and Abimelech

Abimelech seems to always be getting into trouble for stuff he doesn't do!

Deffinbaugh: Not only would Abimelech not take a wife that was not his, he would not even take a well that did not belong to him. How foolish the fears of Abraham seem after this incident!

Importance of gracious confrontation and dealing with issues; problem may just be one of perception or oversight; may be a simple solution

3. (:27) Ratification of the Covenant

“And Abraham took sheep and oxen, and gave them to Abimelech; and the two of them made a covenant.”

Blood sacrifice involved
Death of innocent substitute

Similar to the Abrahamic Covenant – seems very one-sided; almost unilateral

- Abraham pledging to act kindly
- Abraham bringing the gift of the animals for sacrifice

C. (:28-32) Claim Established for Rightful Ownership of Well at Bathsheba

1. (:28) Special Payment

“Then Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves.”

Parunak: Abraham makes a special gift of seven ewe lambs as a sign of their agreement over the matter of the well.

- The relevance of the sign is that the economy in this area is primarily **pastoral**, not agricultural. The function of a well is to water the flocks, not to irrigate the ground. With Abraham's ewes among their flocks, bearing future generations, Abimelech's servants will think twice before they try to displace him from the wells he has dug for his own flocks.
- Why seven lambs? Not only for the sacred use of the number, but also because of a pun. Seven is *sheba*, and the verb “to swear” is *shaba*, with the cognate noun “oath” *shebua*. The very number of the lambs indicates the seriousness of the commitment they are undertaking.
- We have here also an instance of the usefulness of symbols in commemorating important events. Compare wedding rings. Our memory is weak; symbols help make important things vivid to us. The greatest examples are the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's Supper, which remind us of our death and resurrection with Christ and of his

sacrifice for us.

The name records this covenant. “*Beer-sheba*” means literally, “*the well of seven,*” and then through the pun, “*the well of the oath.*”

2. (:29-30) Significance of the 7 Ewe Lambs

a. (:29) Question

“And Abimelech said to Abraham, ‘What do these seven ewe lambs mean, which you have set by themselves?’”

Abraham had brought sheep and oxen ... but these 7 ewe lambs are set aside as a special gift; Ewe lamb - a young usually **unweaned** female sheep. Contrast with feast to celebrate weaning of Isaac;

b. (:30) Explanation

“And he said, ‘You shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand in order that it may be a witness to me, that I dug this well.’”

3. (:31-32a) Significance of name Beersheba

“Therefore he called that place Beersheba; because there the two of them took an oath. So they made a covenant at Beersheba;”

45 miles SW of Jerusalem

Steven Cole: Here God shows Abraham that not only would the people of the land not take his wife, they wouldn’t even take his well. If he would walk with God, so that it was evident to others, Abraham had nothing to fear. Though he was surrounded by pagans who had no scruples about murdering and plundering a wealthy man’s belongings, Abraham could live securely because of God’s faithful protection, apart from any schemes on Abraham’s part

4. (:32b) Successful Completion of the Covenant

“and Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, arose and returned to the land of the Philistines.”

Parunak: This is sometimes criticized as anachronistic, since the Philistines are not mentioned in secular historical documents until 1190. They were sea people from Crete and the Aegean isles who settled in the levant, and in fact gave it the name “Palestine.’ But there are records to trade with Crete in the patriarchal age (the Mari archives), and Cretan artifacts from this period at various archaeological sites, so we should understand Abimelech and his people as an earlier wave of settlers from the same ethnic stock that later settled the pentapolis of Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gath.

II. (:33-34) GUARANTEE OF POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND VIA GOD’S CHARACTER AS THE EVERLASTING GOD – SIGN = PLANTING OF TAMARISK TREE AT BEERSHEBA

A. (:33a) Memorial – Significance of the Planting of the Tree – Putting down roots

“And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba,”

Similar to a Christmas tree (cf. book that spoke against Christmas trees)

Hughes: symbol of fruitfulness and prosperity . . . also demonstrated his rootedness in the land

Constable: By planting a tree Abraham indicated his determination to stay in that region. Tamarisk trees (**Genesis 21:33**) were long-lived and evergreen. [Note: Mathews, **Genesis 11:27-50:26** , p282.] This tree was an appropriate symbol of the enduring grace of the faithful God whom Abraham recognized as "*the Everlasting God*" (*El Olam*). Abraham now owned a small part of the land God had promised him.

Alan Carr: He is making an investment for the future. At his age, he might never cool himself under its shade, but Isaac will, and his grandchildren will. He is looking beyond himself to those who will follow and is making a difference for them while he can.

B. (:33b) Testimony / Worship – Significance of the New Name of God

“and there he called on the name of the LORD, the Everlasting God.”

El olam - Unique reference in the Bible
Unchangeableness and dependability of God

Live for eternity
Have long term perspective

Hughes: the one whose will for man cannot be thwarted

Parunak: The distinctive feature of this action is public proclamation. It may be translated, “*to make proclamation with the name of the Lord,*” crying aloud while uttering the Lord’s name. As in ch. 4, the concept to be noted is “*worship as witness.*” It is the duty of God’s people to be known as such, to “*Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted*” (**Isa 12:4**).

Is. 40:28

C. (:34) Peaceful Coexistence – Significance of Dwelling in the Land

“And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days.”

There are enemies in the Promised Land; but these enemies cannot deprive God’s elect from possession of the Promised Land

Duncan: The land around Beersheba would remain Abraham's chief base for the rest of his sojourn in the land. And it would become the home base for Isaac as well at a later time.

CONCLUSION:

Duncan: Moses, the inspired writer, may have been called by God to remind the Israelites that even in this land of opposition, this strange land, this land of their dread and mortal enemies, the Philistines, that their father, Abraham, was ready to lift up his voice and worship God publicly, setting them and us this example. I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines even as David would hundreds of years later, and while he was there he worshiped God. May the Lord grant us grace to worship God no matter where He calls us to sojourn.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is the significance to you of God's name as the Everlasting God?
- 2) How can others look at your life and come to the assessment that God is with you and your family?
- 3) Why were the 7 ewe lambs set aside?
- 4) When has the Lord provided times of special rest and refreshment for you?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: The Faithfulness of God in the Ordinary

In the immediately preceding verses, God has provided Isaac and dismissed Ishmael, so that Abraham would learn that God's promises do not depend on human schemes and effort for their fulfillment. Now, without Abraham's initiative or schemes, Abimelech comes and proposes this peace agreement, so that Abraham receives from God what he previously had tried to get through his deceptive scheme. Now Abraham and his descendants can dwell securely in the land. And, God provides for his need for water through this well. It is a beautiful illustration of how ... **God faithfully provides everything we need for life and godliness so that we can fulfill His purpose.** . .

The point is, as God faithfully provides protection and for our daily needs, and as we walk with Him and give Him the credit for His care for us, as Abraham did, He uses us in the ordinary matters of life to bear witness to a world that desperately needs to turn to Him.

Brian Borgman:

What do you do with this section? Must ask yourself the question, Why is it here? Here for a specific reason;

Abimelech sees Abraham's blessing; wants a pact of non-aggression;

The news of Isaac's birth spread throughout the land; indication of God's blessing;

Wants to firm up the agreement since Abraham has proven to be somewhat deceptive; get it in writing;

I dug this well with my servants and your servants have seized it;

By taking the 7 lambs you are telling everyone that the well is mine;

TEXT: Genesis 22:1-24

TITLE: FINAL EXAM -- THE TESTER WILL PROVIDE

BIG IDEA:

YOUR DEGREE OF SPIRITUAL COMMITMENT WILL DETERMINE YOUR DEGREE OF DIVINE BLESSING – BUT . . . THE SAME GOD WHO TESTS OUR COMMITMENT, ENABLES OUR OBEDIENCE BY FAITH AND BLESSES US ABUNDANTLY

INTRODUCTION:

Growing up in school there was always a big distinction between surprise **pop quizzes** and the all-important **Final Exam**. You never knew going into a class whether this was the day for a Pop Quiz. But you always had time to prepare for the Final Exam that would make up such a heavy percent of your overall grade. Here in Abraham's school of faith, we find the Lord combining the two experiences as He pops a **Surprise Final Exam** that interrupts the peaceful tranquility of life in Beersheba by the well and the tamarisk tree that we saw in the last chapter.

Growth in faith involves testing. This was true for Abraham and it is true in our spiritual journey. This particular test gets at the heart of the **degree of Abraham's commitment** to His God. How committed is he?

David Thompson: 8 Tests so far in the narrative -- So far passed 5 tests and failed 3:

- 1) **Family Test** – Will you leave your family and go to a new land -- passed
 - 2) **Famine Test** – should he stay in the land and wait on the Lord and trust him or take matters in his own hands -- failed
 - 3) **Fellowship Test** with Lot – do I let Lot have first choice and trust God – passed
 - 4) **Fight Test** – Lot taken along with possessions; could he trust the Lord to recover Lot – passed
 - 5) **Fortune Test** – King of Sodom wants to contribute large sums of money to him – or do I trust that God will supply my needs -- passed
 - 6) **Fatherhood Exam** – told he would have a son; would he patiently wait on the Lord to fulfill His Word or take things into his own hands and produce a son from your handmaid Hagar– flunked
 - 7) **Fear Exam** – went down into Gerar – do I lie about Sarah or say she is my wife and risk perhaps losing her – failed
 - 8) **Farewell Test** – had to be willing to let Hagar and Ishmael depart and let the Lord take care of them – Passed
- Now we come to the all important **Final Exam** --

Jesus was always posing similar tests to His disciples. Listen to some of them:
Matt. 10:37-39; 16:24-27; 19:27-30

YOUR DEGREE OF SPIRITUAL COMMITMENT WILL DETERMINE YOUR DEGREE OF DIVINE BLESSING – THE SAME GOD WHO TESTS OUR COMMITMENT, ENABLES OUR OBEDIENCE BY FAITH AND BLESSES US ABUNDANTLY

But not ultimately about us ... **about the Lord who will Provide**

COMMITMENT TESTED AND REWARDED

I. (:1-14) COMMITMENT TESTED – SPIRITUAL TESTING REQUIRES CRISIS OBEDIENCE VIA FAITH IN GOD'S SUPERNATURAL PROVISION

A. (:1-2) Spiritual Testing

1. (:1) Test Introduced

“Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, ‘Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’”

Timeframe – Abraham enjoying relative tranquility; peaceful coexistence with the Philistines; living at Beersheba; enjoying non aggression pact with Abimelech; raising his precious son Isaac; relieved of the pressure from Hagar and Ishmael

You never know what a day will bring; live in the moment

Your past exercise of faith and demonstration of spiritual commitment will not give you a pass when God comes to test you today;

But on the flip side, your past failures will not doom you to failure today

James 1 – give insight into how and why God tests us

Parunak: When God tests or tempts, he has one of two purposes:

1. Exam: to make manifest some quality of the person being tested (which is the case in Gen 22).
2. Exercise: to improve the person being tested

Recalls God calling out **Samuel** by name -- **1 Sam 3:1-10**

Remember God is the one who named Abraham = *Father of multitude*

We must always be listening for God's call and be available for God
Something dramatic about to take place

2. (:2) Test Instructions

- a. Focal Point of the Test = Give up what you cherish the most

“And He said, ‘Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac,’”

Parunak: *“Please take”* – In general, the word “please” is used by a less powerful person addressing a more powerful one. . . if Isaac is 15 at this point, Abraham is 115 based on **21:5**, and he was 75 when leaving Haran, **12:4**

With each phrase God drills deeper into the depths of the precious relationship between the father and his only son whom he loves deeply

- b. Location of the Test

“and go to the land of Moriah;”

similar to expression in **12:1**; God specializes in sending people to different places

50 mile journey – mountainous country around Jerusalem --

Here also Solomon built his temple (**2 Chronicles 3:1**) and Jesus Christ died.

there will be a lot of time to consider turning back or changing your mind;
Would be easy for second thoughts to creep in; to formulate some type of rationalization for an alternative humanistic solution

- c. Shocking Substance of the Test = seems out of character with God
“and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”

Did I hear you correctly?

Hughes: To an ancient Middle Easterner, “burnt offering” suggested a process: first cutting the offering’s throat, then dismemberment, and then a sacrifice by fire in which the body parts were completely consumed on the altar. . . God was asking him to act against common sense, his natural affections, and his lifelong hope.

Parunak:

- The appropriate response to promises is gratitude, not fleshly effort.
- The appropriate response to commands is obedience, not compromise.

Constable: Every time Abraham made a sacrifice for God the Lord responded by giving Abraham more.

1. Abraham left his homeland; God gave him a new one.
2. Abraham left his extended family; God gave him a much larger family.
3. Abraham offered the best of the land to Lot; God gave him more land.
4. Abraham gave up the King of Sodom’s reward; God gave Abraham more wealth.
5. Abraham gave up Ishmael; God made Ishmael the father of a multitude of Abraham’s posterity.
6. Abraham was willing to give up Isaac; God allowed him to live and through him gave Abraham numerous seed.

In each case God gave Abraham a deeper relationship with Himself as well as more material prosperity.

B. (:3-6) Crisis Obedience

1. (:3) Immediate and Complete Obedience

“So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.”

Rose early -- No hesitation on his part -- **19:27; 21:14**

2. (:4-6) Insightful and Compliant Obedience

Insightful on the part of Abraham

Compliant on the part of Isaac

- a. (:4) Vision of the Father – Obedience to God

“On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.”

- b. (:5) Instructions from the Father – Confidence in God

“And Abraham said to his young men, ‘Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and return to you.’”

Convinced that both he and Isaac would return – required faith in resurrection power of God
Heb. 11:17-19

Bruce Goettsche: Why didn't Abraham bring the servants up the mountain with him? I think Abraham told the servants, "stay here while I offer the sacrifice" because he knew the servants would try to stop him. They would have kept him from placing his son on the altar. They would have concluded that he had lost his mind and surely tried to subdue him "for his own good."

- c. (:6) Companionship Between Father and Son

*“And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. **So the two of them walked on together.**”*

Rest of the journey was too steep up the mountain for the donkey to navigate

Picture here is symbolic of Jesus bearing his own cross on his back (**John 19:17**)

Parunak: **Amos 3:3** echoes almost exactly this same phrase, and is the only place in the OT that uses this combination of words other than here and v.7: *“Can two walk together except they be agreed?”* Amos' insight focuses our attention on the perfect concord between father and son. Isaac does not yet know the full details of the sacrifice, but he trusts implicitly in his father, who for his part loves his son unfailingly.

C. (:7-14) Faith in God's Supernatural Provision

1. (:7-8) Anticipation of the Sacrifice

- a. (:7) The Elephant in the Room

“And Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here I am, my son.’ And he said, ‘Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’”

- b. (:8) The Key Lesson

*“And Abraham said, ‘**God will provide** for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.’ **So the two of them walked on together.**”*

2. (:9) Preparation for the Sacrifice

“Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood.”

Hughes: One thing is very clear: Abraham could not have offered Isaac without Isaac’s consent and cooperation.

3. (:10-13) Execution of the Sacrifice

a. (:10) Purpose of Abraham Transitioning from Willingness to Action

“And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.”

Parunak: In spite of a number of classical paintings on this theme, he does not stretch out his hand *with* the knife, but rather to *take* the knife. It is the act of picking up the knife that shows his commitment to carry through with the command.

b. (:11-12) Point of the Test: **Do You Fear God?**

“But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ And he said, ‘Here I am’ And he said, ‘Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.’”

Fear the Lord **Deut. 10:11-12;** God took the willing for the doing

c. (:13) Provision of the Substitute

“Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son.”

Substitutionary theme; look at all of the gospel implications of this passage

4. (:14) Key Lesson

*“And Abraham called the name of that place **The LORD Will Provide**, as it is said to this day, ‘In the mount of the LORD **it will be provided.**”*

Deffinbaugh: The principle is not that God will provide at a certain place, but under a certain condition. At the point of faith and obedience, at the point of helplessness and dependence, God will provide.

II. (:15-19) COMMITMENT REWARDED – PASSING THE TEST BRINGS SPECTACULAR BLESSING

(:15) Test Completed

“Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven,”

A. (:16) Results Commended as the Basis for Blessing

“and said, ‘By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son,’”

Hughes: With this oath Abraham had every possible assurance from God – the initial promise made to him in Ur, the promise made to him when he first visited Canaan, the promise made to him again when Lot took the very best land, the promise that he believed under the stars, the promise confirmed by God’s unilateral covenant when his flaming presence passed through the sacrifice, the promise in the new names (Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac), and the promise in the person of Isaac himself. And now God had sworn an oath by himself that every promise would come to pass! [Heb. 6:13-15]

B. (:17-18a) Blessing Detailed

1. (:17a) Overall Blessing Summarized – Certain and Abundant

“indeed I will greatly bless you,”

Parunak: Abraham’s obedience brings, not the fact of God’s blessing, but the assurance of it in this solemn oath. . . *“I will surely bless you”*

Deffinbaugh: We must realize that God’s choice of Abraham included not only the end God purposed (blessings) but also the means (faith and obedience).

2. (:17b) Incalculable Number of Posterity

“and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is on the seashore;”

Second Person of Triune God promising to make this happen personally

3. (:17c) Governmental Power of Posterity – in political and governmental sense

“and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies.”

Significance of making Jerusalem the capital of Israel for the location of the U.S. embassy
One day Israel will be the central power in the region

4. (:18a) International Impact of Posterity

“And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,”

You obey the Lord you start impacting people

C. (:18b) Results Commended as the Basis for Blessing

“because you have obeyed My voice.”

(:19) Postscript

“So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beersheba; and Abraham lived at Beersheba.”

As soon as he gets back there he is informed about physical prosperity and blessing that is happening to his relatives; had not seen them for many years;

On the back end, Abraham was glad for this test

(:20-24) FOOTNOTE: OFFSPRING OF ABRAHAM’S BROTHER NAHOR

[Transition from blessing on Abraham’s posterity to obtaining a wife for Isaac]

A. (:20-23) 8 Offspring Through Nahor’s Wife Milcah

1. (:20-22) 8 Children Detailed – the promised blessing is underway

“Now it came about after these things, that it was told Abraham, saying, ‘Behold, Milcah also has borne children to your brother Nahor: Uz his first-born and Buz his brother and Kemuel the father of Aram and Chesed and Hazo and Pildash and Jidlaph and Bethuel.’”

A family that seems to be blessed by God with abundant children;
Not insignificant

2. (:23 a) Significance of Rebekah – would become Isaac’s wife

“And Bethuel became the father of Rebekah.”

Parunak: For the promises concerning Abraham’s offspring to be confirmed, we need not only the survival of Isaac, but also a wife. This paragraph lays the foundation for that requirement, tracing the genealogy of Rebekah. Note that she is two generations from Abraham’s generation, unlike Isaac, who is born so late in Abraham’s life that he is only one generation offset.

3. (:23b) 8 Children Summarized

“these eight Milcah bore to Nahor, Abraham's brother.”

B. (:24) 4 Offspring Through Nahor’s Concubine Reumah

“And his concubine, whose name was Reumah, also bore Tebah and Gaham and Tahash and Maacah.”

CONCLUSION:

If you are not in a significant test right now you can be sure that a test is coming.
Are you prepared? Will you choose to obey by faith despite the difficulty of the test?
Are you anchored in your conviction that in all circumstances, God will provide?
Do you really fear the Lord and choose Him and His ways over anything else that is precious in your life? Let Abraham be our example of obedient faith. Spectacular rewards for passing the Final Exam.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When has your faith been tested in a significant way?
- 2) What were the benefits of the test to you?
- 3) How does fearing God harmonize with loving God?
- 4) Is there anything you would have difficulty sacrificing for God if He required it

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: it is that God will provide the lamb for himself. Four points to note in this:

1. The lamb is for God. The purpose of the sacrifice is for him, and it must meet his standards. How often our human efforts at worship stumble at this point. The idea of worship is not to make us feel good; it is to submit ourselves before our creator at his direction.
2. The lamb must come from him. The insight here is the same David had 800 years later when he endowed the building of the temple: “All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee,” 1 Chr 29:14.
3. The Hebrew verb form here can be translated either as present or as future. Thus the statement is ambiguous: “God will provide,” or “God provides.” At this point Abraham still expects Isaac to be the lamb, but he realizes that Isaac is himself a gift of God, one that God can take back at any time.
4. “Provide” is literally, “see to.” This statement is one more reference to the theme of “seeing” throughout the chapter: Moriah is the hill where God causes himself to be seen; Abraham sees the place; God sees to the sacrifice. (In fact, English “provide” comes from “pro-videre,” to foresee a need and make arrangements to take care of it ahead of time.)

Deffinbaugh: We are forced to the conclusion that the sacrifice of Isaac could not have been wrong, whether only attempted or accomplished, because God is incapable of evil (**James 1:13ff; I John 1:5**). Much more than this, it could not be wrong to sacrifice an only son because God actually did sacrifice His only begotten Son:

*All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand (**Isaiah 53:6,10**). For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life (**John 3:16; cf. Matthew 26:39,42; Luke 22:22; John 3:17; Acts 2:23; II Corinthians 5:21; Revelation 13:8**).*

In this sense, God did not require Abraham to do anything that He Himself would not do. Indeed, the command to Abraham was intended to foreshadow what He would do centuries later on the cross of Calvary.

Only by understanding the typological significance of the “sacrifice of Isaac” can we grasp the fact that God’s command was holy and just and pure. Abraham’s willingness to give up his only son humanly illustrated the love of God for man, which caused Him to give His only begotten Son. The agony of heart experienced by Abraham reflected the heart of the Father at the suffering of His Son. The obedience of Isaac typified the submission of the Son to the will of the Father (cf. Matthew 26:39,42).

David Thompson: Comprehensive Faith Exam

How do you prove that you really love the Lord and have faith in Him? By obeying Him in faith regardless of the cost involved or sacrifices involved

You are never too old to face big challenges; big faith battles;
You may be asked by the Lord to trust Him the most when you are older;
You will win big time

3 Observable Actions

1) vv. 1-2 Testing of Abraham

- The essence of the test
- time of the test – “*after these things*” – did not give this test to a novice in the faith; all the events of Abraham’s life that had tossed him up and down; he had been well groomed for this test; test comes when he is older; test comes when he is resting comfortably
- source of the test – God Himself; sovereignty of God; has a reason for bringing this into Abraham’s life at this point; *nobody is tempted by God* (James 1) – God will never tempt a person to do evil, lustful things; but He will test us to demonstrate the genuineness of our love and faith; prove that we are faithful to Him;
- specifics of the test – vs. 2 – ultimate test for any father – especially for Abraham who had waited so long; goes against your natural feelings as a parent; goes against your lifelong hopes and dreams

Historical background: child sacrifice practiced in some pagan cultures at the time

Clearly forbidden in the law of God in OT

Do you love me as much as heathens love their false gods?

Am I willing to give up whatever I cherish the most for the Lord?

- The place of the sacrifice

Exact spot occupied today by Dome of the Rock

God determines the place of acceptable worship

God has sanctioned the church – don’t think you can worship outside the context of the local church;

2) Response of Faith to the Test

No evidence that Abraham told Sarah or other relatives or friends;

More interested in pleasing God;

Powerful look at real faith in action; doesn’t rest on feelings or full explanation from God but on the Word of God and His promises

God may ask you to go through some difficulties – Will you trust me through this?

3) God Provides What is Needed in the Test

David Thompson: Passing the Ultimate Faith Test Leads to Great Reward

Now time for rewards ceremony;

When believers obey the Lord even to the point of making great personal sacrifices, God will greatly reward them;

Take us to a new level in our relationship with God

1) God the Son is the Source of the Reward (:16)

Vs. 12 sacrifice was made to the angel of the Lord; must be a person of Godhead; also he swears by himself

Preincarnate person of Jesus Christ;

I by myself am going to make sure you receive these blessings;

Gets a fresh word in brand new dynamic way from God after his proven obedience;

2) God the Son Gives Him the Specifics of the Reward (:17-18)

- numerical prosperity – the new feature: this incalculable number will come by virtue of the second person of the Triune God

- national prosperity – “*possess the gate of their enemies*” – forcible possession; central govt. power will one day be Jerusalem; who ends up in charge of the Suez Canal; the Gaza strip, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria – one day they will be controlled by Abraham’s seed

- international influence –

It pays to obey God; the dividends are great;

3) God the Son Himself Starts the Process of Reward (:19-24)

Deffinbaugh: The appeal of Paul in Romans 12 is addressed to both our emotions and our minds: I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith (Romans 12:1-3). The sacrifice we are called to give to God is that of our living bodies, and it is our logical or rational (Greek, *logicos*) act of worship. This is accomplished by the renewing of our minds (verse 2). Man’s whole being has been affected by the fall: emotions, intellect, and will. All of these must therefore undergo a radical transformation for us to be conformed to the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Romans 12:3 we are told to think, think, think. This is the use of our new minds. Christianity is rational, but of a vastly different kind than that of the world. Christian reasoning is based upon the presuppositional belief that there is a God, Who is both our creator and redeemer (Hebrews 11:1ff). Christian reasoning is based upon the belief that God’s Word is absolutely true and reliable. God had promised a son through Sarah through whom the blessings were to be given. Abraham believed God in this (Genesis 15:6). God also commanded Abraham to sacrifice this son. Abraham believed God and obeyed Him even though human reasoning would question the wisdom of it.

Abraham’s reasoning was also based upon his experience with God over the years. God had continually proven to be his provider and protector. God’s sovereign power had repeatedly been demonstrated, even among the heathen such as Pharaoh and Abimelech. While Abraham and Sarah were “as good as dead” so far as bearing children were concerned, God gave them the

promised child (Romans 4:19-21).

Abraham did not understand why he was told to sacrifice his son nor how God would accomplish His promises if Abraham obeyed, but he did know Who had commanded it. He did know that God was holy, just, and pure. He did know that God was able to raise the dead. On the basis of these certainties Abraham obeyed God, contrary to human wisdom, but squarely based upon godly reason. Godly reason has reasons. We may not know how or why, but we do know Who and what. That is enough!

Brian Borgman: The Testing of Abraham's Faith

Third in series on this text;

Nobody enjoys taking a test; smart ones prepare for them;

Have you ever had a gigantic test of your faith?

Pretty clear: will I trust God? Will I trust His Word? Will I obey Him right now?

Reason for tests of faith: God loves us and wants us to grow into the likeness of His Son;

To examine somebody and prove whether they are qualified and genuine and approved;

Prov. 17:3 *the Lord tests the heart*

Jer. 17:10 *I, the Lord search the heart*

Ps. 26:2 *Examine me*

1 Pet 1:6-7 *the proof of your faith ... tested by fire*

Abraham has gone through all kinds of tests by this point with varying degrees of success;
Comes now to the ultimate test;

Last week: 5 different ways this text points us to the gospel

Today: look at Abraham as a model of faith; an example to those of us who believe

1) Abraham's Faith Tested in Two Ways

a. Commanded to do something that would destroy the promise and undermine the covenant
Abraham did not know the end of the story as he lived it out;

Test would have seemed so out of character for God;

Nothing in the text that gives us insight into inner turmoil of Abraham's thought process

b. Commanded to give up what he cherished most

Tozer: "The Blessedness of Possessing Nothing" = chapter in his book

2) Abraham's Faith Manifested in Obedience

No arguing or debating on Abraham's part;

Got up early the next morning;

Not some sort of stoic robot;

Choosing to walk by faith and not by sight;

It's up to God to get me out of this mess He has put me in;

"I know whom I have believed ..."

God cannot invalidate His own promise;

Abraham had come to know His God

3) Abraham's Obedient Faith Described as Fearing God

Vs. 12 – *now I know that you fear God*

John Murray: Principles of Conduct – the fear of the Lord is the soul of godliness;
Reverential fear that consciously lives in the presence of God and is committed to following God
in all of His ways;

4) Fruit of Abraham's Obedient Faith

At the end of the day, Abraham was glad for this test;

TEXT: Genesis 23:1-20

TITLE: TAKING OWNERSHIP OF THE PROMISES OF GOD

BIG IDEA:

OUR DECISIONS AND INVESTMENTS MUST REFLECT FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISES – ESPECIALLY WHEN DEALING WITH DEATH

INTRODUCTION:

Do we really live like we believe the **promises of God**? God's promises primarily impact our **future reality**. At present we live in hope, not having received the fulfillment of many of God's promises. The very nature of faith is described as "*the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*"

1 Thess. 4:13 instructs believers not to "*grieve as the rest who have no hope.*" The context in that passage is the certain promise of the Lord's return providing hope for believers as they deal with the loss of a loved one. Here in our passage today, we see that lesson played out in the life of Abraham as his wife of 60 years has just died. Abraham can hardly remember life before Sarah. They have certainly had a roller coaster ride in their spiritual journey of faith, but now Abraham finds himself bereft of the companionship of Sarah.

He serves as our example of what it looks like to grieve as one who lives for eternity; as one who knows that death is only the passageway to the other side; as one who looks forward to God fulfilling all of His glorious future promises. Certainly, Abraham does not "*grieve as the rest who have no hope.*"

To understand why Moses spends so much time writing here about the purchase of this burial plot in the land of Canaan, you must understand the unique challenges that the people of Israel faced under Moses' leadership as they prepared to invade the Promised Land. Moses was writing to a people grappling with fear of the reported giants of the land. They knew that 10 of the 12 spies sent to inspect the land of Canaan had come back with disturbing reports advising against the invasion. Only Joshua and Caleb understood that the great blessings of the land would truly be theirs through faith in the promise of God. How could Moses instruct the people of God to take ownership of the promises of God?

Deffinbaugh: None other than Caleb was given the privilege of taking the land which Abraham had purchased as an "earnest of his inheritance" (cf. Joshua 14:13). What motivation this story must have provided for t

he armies of Israel as they marched into Canaan to possess it!

Ownership of this promised land was so critical to the people of Israel. And in our passage today we see Abraham lawfully acquiring that small portion – a simple field with one burial cave – a purchase that would speak volumes about the Lord ultimately fulfilling His promise to give His people the entire land.

OUR DECISIONS AND INVESTMENTS MUST REFLECT FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISES – ESPECIALLY WHEN DEALING WITH DEATH

I. (:1-2) THE DEATH OF SARAH – DEALING WITH DEATH TRIGGERS DEEP EMOTIONAL REACTIONS THAT COULD UNDERMINE OUR FAITH IN GOD’S PROMISES

A. (:1) Summary of Sarah’s Life – Memories of a Full Life and the Faithfulness of God

“Now Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah.”

Seems like a long time ... but eternity puts one’s life in proper perspective

Abraham is 137 and Isaac is 37 years old

They had probably been together for almost 100 years if they got married when Sarah was in her 20’s

Is. 51:1-2 – look to Sarah – godly woman

Heb. 11:10, 16

The “*sacrifice*” of Isaac on Mount Moriah (previous chapter – 22) brought Abraham to a firm faith in God’s power to raise the dead (cf. **Hebrews 11:19**)

1 Peter speaks to the issue of living in light of eternity: outline of first 2 chapters:

Live for Eternity: 3 Living Realities Associated With Our Salvation:

a. Focusing on Our Living Hope (1:3 - 1:21)

Joy in Suffering -- Our Guaranteed Future Spurs Overflowing Joy
Despite Fiery Trials

b. Feeding on the Living Word (1:22 - 2:3)

Living for Eternity Requires Feeding On the Living and Abiding Word
of God in Order to Aggressively Love One Another

c. Functioning as Living Stones (2:4-10)

The Living Stone in Fulfillment of OT Prophecy Elevates the
Privileges and Worship of God's People in the Church

S. Lewis Johnson: as far as Abraham was concerned, the fact that Sarah had died did not mean that she was not going to inherit the promises. Now he was certain of that and he wanted her to have a place in that land so that from that spot, there may be the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises.

B. (:2a) Location of Sarah’s Death – Reminder of God’s Land Promise

“And Sarah died in Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan;”

No matter how long we live, unless the Lord returns first, all of us will die.

If we are trusting in the Lord that death ushers us into His glorious presence.

But for those we leave behind, our death is a reality that must be faced.

Here we have the simple, terse recording of the life of Sarah coming to its inevitable end.

What is highlighted is the **location of her death**.

Keith Krell: Kiriah Arba was its original name, named after Arba, the greatest man of the Anakites, a scary group of warriors (**Josh 14:15**).

Parunak: Moses emphasizes to us that Hebron is “*in the land of Canaan,*” a point that he picks up at the end of the chapter as well (**19**). This reference ties us back to the divine promises.

- Canaan was the objective of his pilgrimage ever since his family first left Ur, **11:31**.
- The name marks their first arrival: **12:5,6**.
- When Lot chooses Sodom, Abraham remains in Canaan, **13:12**
- This is the land that God promises him for a possession, **17:8**.

C. (:2b) Grief of Abraham – Deep Emotional Reaction

“and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.”

24:67 – Isaac needed to be comforted as well

S. Lewis Johnson: One of these words is a word that speaks of very strong expressions of mourning, the kind of outward weeping and wailing that the Easterners do and did, and the other, well the quieter kind of weeping and crying that is familiar to us in the West.

Here we see the real life grief and mourning of faithful Abraham. He does not over-spiritualize the situation. We don't see him in some weird prophetic ecstasy spouting off some spiritual platitudes. We see him fully engaged in the normal emotional

Keith Krell: in addition to the crying he went through the traditional mourning customs of his day: tearing clothes, cutting his beard, spreading dust on his head, and fasting. This was all done in the presence of the body. The Jews had a very elaborate and intense process that they went through when someone died. **Genesis 50** tells us about Jacob, Abraham's grandson. When he died there was a period of 40 days that his family was at hand. As he was being embalmed, the family had a time of grieving and then he was buried. After he was buried, for another seven days they continued to grieve. . .

It is remarkable that this is the only time we are ever told that Abraham wept. He had been through so many bitter disappointments and heartaches in his life: He was disappointed when Lot left him (**13:5-12**). He was heartbroken when he sent Ishmael away (**21:9-14**). He was devastated when he had to offer Isaac (**22:1-10**). But the only time the Scriptures reveal that he wept was when Sarah died. This reveals the depth of his grief and love for this woman. I would also add that a willingness to put Isaac to death enabled Abraham to accept the passing of his wife, Sarah. God used the offering of Isaac to prepare Abraham for the death of his wife.

II. (:3-18) THE PURCHASE OF THE BURIAL SITE FOR SARAH IN THE PROMISED LAND – DEALING WITH DEATH REVEALS OUR PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS ETERNITY AND THE PROMISES OF GOD

A. (:3-6) Exchange #1 – Initiation of Request for Ownership of a Burial Site

1. (:3-4) Request – Need to Possess a Burial Site

“Then Abraham rose from before his dead, and spoke to the sons of Heth, saying, ‘I am a stranger and a sojourner among you; give me a burial site among you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.’”

Hughes: By owning a part of the land he was prophesying its ultimate ownership. . . His beloved wife’s body entombed in Hebron, the center of the land, was his public stake in God’s promise – against all appearances.

Do we have the mindset of Abraham that we are but **pilgrims** and **sojourners** in this journey on earth? Do we truly believe that this world and all that is in it is passing away? Or are we rooted in some type of materialistic bondage to the things of this present age?

Not a property owner so he needed a burial plot to be provided

2. (:5-6) Response – Offer to Use a Burial Site

“And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, ‘Hear us, my lord, you are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our graves; none of us will refuse you his grave for burying your dead.’”

Look at the reputation that Abraham had earned from the unbelievers who observed his life. That is why one of the primary qualifications for spiritual leadership in the church is that an elder must be a man of good reputation. We are not talking about power and possessions but about evidence that the hand of God is upon your life.

Keith Krell: In **23:6**, the sons of Heth offer to “loan” Abraham any tomb he desires, but Abraham clarifies that he wishes to purchase a tomb at “full price” and therefore “own” the land (**23:7-9**). This is important. Abraham could have saved a lot of money by borrowing a burial site. Why did he insist on purchasing a tomb? Because when we borrow something it is only temporarily ours and must be returned, but when we own something it is a permanent possession. Abraham wished to express that the land of Canaan was to be his home and not merely a stopping-off place. This was an act of faith in the future fulfillment of God’s promises. Abraham’s planning demonstrated his faith! We too are to live with the same certainty of God’s promises being accomplished despite how impossible and distant they may seem at the present. We are to have a faith for the future because God’s promises to us are primarily future realities.

Bob Deffinbaugh: Most often when a burial plot is purchased for the first partner another is bought alongside for the surviving partner, and frequently a whole family plot is secured simultaneously. When Abraham decided upon the burial place for Sarah, he also determined the place of his burial and of his descendants. . .

If Abraham wished the use of a burial place, anyone would gladly loan him the best they had. However, a borrowed grave was not acceptable to Abraham. There is really nothing wrong with a borrowed grave; our Lord was buried in one you recall (**Matthew 27:60**), but our Lord only needed His grave for three days, whereas Abraham needed his site for posterity (**Genesis 25:9; 50:13**). Nothing less than a **permanent possession** would satisfy Abraham.

B. (:7-11) Exchange #2 – Expansion of the Offer to Include Both Land and Cave

1. (:7) Respect Shown by Abraham in the Negotiations

“So Abraham rose and bowed to the people of the land, the sons of Heth.”

2. (:8-9) Request to Purchase a Specific Site from a Specific Individual

“And he spoke with them, saying, ‘If it is your wish for me to bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and approach Ephron the son of Zohar for me, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah which he owns, which is at the end of his field; for the full price let him give it to me in your presence for a burial site.’”

Parunak: Abraham again insists on a “possession,” v.9, and makes clear that he wants to purchase it for money, not just gain the use of it. Ephron returns to the original Hittite proposal that he give Abraham the use of it: “bury thy dead.” But this would leave Abraham still as a guest in the land, owing obligations to Ephron.

3. (:10-11) Repackaging the Offer to Include the Field as Well as the Cave

“Now Ephron was sitting among the sons of Heth; and Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the hearing of the sons of Heth; even of all who went in at the gate of his city, saying, ‘No, my lord, hear me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. In the presence of the sons of my people I give it to you; bury your dead.’”

Deffinbaugh: it was not an insincere offer so much as one which no one would accept with honor.

Steven Cole: In offering to throw in the field along with the cave, Ephron wasn’t being generous. Under Hittite law, if he retained ownership of the field, in modern parlance, he would have to pay the taxes on it. But if he sold the larger portion with the cave, the obligation passed on to the new owner. Abraham agreed to this extended package, so all that is left is establishing the price.

Ephron is subtle in this matter as well. He persists as if he is willing to give the property to Abraham, but he attaches a market value to his “gift.” This allows Ephron to mention the value of the land as he sees it, and it implies that if Ephron is so generous as to give Abraham this land, how could Abraham be so petty as to dicker over the price? Abraham accepts the price, pays the money, and the transaction is legally witnessed (**23:16-18, 20**).

C. (:12-16) Exchange #3 – Terms of the Purchase Price

1. (:12-13) Insistence on Payment

*“And Abraham bowed before the people of the land.
And he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying,
‘If you will only please listen to me; I will give the price of the field,
accept it from me, that I may bury my dead there.’”*

2. (:14-15) Proposal of Payment Price

“Then Ephron answered Abraham, saying to him, ‘My lord, listen to me; a piece of land worth four hundred shekels of silver, what is that between me and you? So

bury your dead.”

Keith Krell: Even though Ephron offers to give Abraham the land free of charge, he places a value on the “gift” that is offered. . . Ephron was certainly not being generous to a grieving man. In fact the price and terms of the sale indicate that Ephron was greedy and unfair. This Gentile “gentiled” Abraham out of some money, but Abraham regarded the land as priceless because of what it meant to him spiritually. He now had a part of the land promised to him. First, Ephron insists that the cave and the field be sold to Abraham. Abraham only needed the cave at the end of the field (**23:9**) but Ephron gives Abraham a raw deal. Secondly, the price Ephron asks for the field is exorbitant. Many centuries later Jeremiah buys a field for only seventeen shekles of silver (**Jer 32:9**). David paid only one-eighth that amount—50 shekels of silver—for the purchase of the temple site from Araunah (**2 Sam 24:24**). Nevertheless Abraham bought the field according to those extremely unfair terms and price.

3. (:16) Payment Transacted Publicly Without Any Haggling Over Price

“And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, commercial standard.”

In their culture, unthinkable that you would not haggle over the purchase price; the original offer was usually just the starting point for negotiations

D. (:17-18) Lawful Possession of the Land

*“So Ephron's field, which was in Machpelah, which faced Mamre, the field and cave which was in it, and all the trees which were in the field, that were within all the confines of its border, were deeded over to Abraham for a **possession** in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.”*

Parunak: The epilogue consists of two paragraphs, stating two actions by Abraham. Each action is followed by a statement that Abraham now has “*possession*” of the tomb (**17-18, 20**). Finally he holds full legal title to at least some portion of the land of promise. The first action (**16**) is to pay Ephron the price he has named. To those acquainted with middle eastern haggling, it is unthinkable to pay the asking price without question. But Abraham wants there to be no question that he has cheated Ephron, or that his title is in any way in question. The second action (**19**) is to bury Sarah. Once again we are reminded that this property is “*in the land of Canaan,*” the land of promise.

Trees marked out the boundaries of the whole field; could not be moved like boundary stones;

III. (:19-20) THE BURIAL OF SARAH IN THE PIECE OF THE PROMISED LAND NOW LAWFULLY POSSESSED BY ABRAHAM – DEALING WITH DEATH PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY TO REINFORCE OUR HOPE IN GOD’S PROMISES

A. (:19) Burial Respectfully Accomplished

“And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field at Machpelah facing Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan.”

Keith Krell: Abraham buried Sarah facing “*Mamre*” (cf. **23:17**). Mamre was where Abraham built an altar and worshipped God (**13:18**). It was where the Lord appeared to him and repeated the promise of a son (**18:1**).

All the patriarchs used this burial site:

- Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham there with Sarah (**Gen. 25:9**)
- Isaac and his wife Rebekah were buried there by Jacob and Esau (**Gen. 35:29; Gen. 49:29-33**)
- Jacob (Israel) requests to be buried there – where he buried Leah (**Gen. 49:29-33**)
- Jacob, who died in Egypt, was buried in the cave which Abraham purchased (**Genesis 50:1-14**).
- Genesis ends with Joseph dying in Egypt, outside of the boundaries of the promised land; instructs his sons to take his bones back for reburial when God fulfills His promise to give them the land

B. (:20) Land Lawfully Possessed

*“So the field, and the cave that is in it, were **deeded over** to Abraham for a burial site by the sons of Heth.”*

Keith Krell: This seems strange appearing after **23:19**, which would have been a reasonable note on which to conclude. Its placement here points out that the crucial element in this chapter is not Sarah’s death, but Abraham’s acquisition of land from outsiders. As such, it is an indication of things to come.

[Holy Spirit as the down payment, the earnest, the guarantee of our future inheritance]

CONCLUSION:

The way you demonstrate faith in God’s promises for your future is by investing in those promises; by making decisions in light of those promises; by living for eternity even in the face of death.

Keith Krell:

- Paul writes to Philemon: “*Prepare me a lodging*” or a “guest-room” (NIV, **Phlm 22**). He is in prison but his hope is that prayer will be answered and he will be freed. Preparing the room is an **investment in the promise**.
- Maybe you’re looking for a job. As you search and wait, invest in the promise. Take some symbolic action that shows you believe God will provide that job. Buy a new briefcase or calendar or something that symbolizes a piece of the promise.
- Every believing loved-one whose body you put into the ground is a piece of the promise. Each one is a seed of the resurrection, demonstrating that because Jesus lives, they also live. Through your tears of sorrow and loss take comfort that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.

Deffinbaugh: Jeremiah expressed a similar faith when he purchased the field of Anathoth (**Jer 32:6ff**). While God was to judge His people for their sins by driving them out of the promised land, so He would bring them back when they repented. The purchase of the field of Anathoth evidenced Jeremiah’s conviction that God would do as He had promised (**Jeremiah 32:9-15**).

TEXT: Genesis 24:1-67

TITLE: A BRIDE FOR ISAAC – FAITH IN THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

BIG IDEA:

GOD’S PROVIDENCE GRANTS US SUCCESS AS WE TRUST HIM FOR HIS PROVISION TO ACCOMPLISH HIS DIVINE PLAN

INTRODUCTION:

Some situations are critical for the consummation of God’s kingdom plans. Abraham finds himself in one of those critical situations in Gen. 24. His life is drawing to a close. God has committed Himself to momentous covenantal promises regarding Abraham’s seed and the possession of the Promised Land. But his son Isaac needs a wife – not just any wife – but a wife appointed by God for the fulfillment of these covenantal promises. Abraham has seen God provide for him and Sarah and protect the two of them in many crisis situations. Here, after the passing and burial of his precious companion, Abraham does not waver in his faith but displays full confidence that:

GOD’S PROVIDENCE GRANTS US SUCCESS AS WE TRUST HIM FOR HIS PROVISION TO ACCOMPLISH HIS DIVINE PLAN

Not looking for dramatic miracles here ... counting on the Providence of God in the everyday events of life

J. I. Packer: Believers are never in the grip of blind forces (fortune, chance, luck, fate); all that happens to them is divinely planned, and each event comes as a new summons to trust, obey, and rejoice.

Application: Our church planting group is looking to God to provide a suitable meeting facility as the focal point to reach a specific community with the gospel of Jesus Christ in the overall Catonsville/Linthicum area of Baltimore. This is a need that we judge to be critical for the consummation of God’s kingdom plans as they involve our outreach and goals of evangelism and discipleship. What can we learn from Abraham’s faith and the obedience of his faithful servant?

Parunak: This chapter has four scenes. It begins and ends in Canaan. The middle two scenes are in Haran, one by the well and the other in Laban’s house.

I. (:1-9) FAITH LOOKS TO GOD TO PROVIDE -- RETURNING HOME TO FIND THE BRIDE

A. (:1-4) Servant Commissioned by Abraham – Defining the Mission

1. (:1) Setting for the Commissioning

a. Context of Family Continuity

“Now Abraham was old, advanced in age;”

Parunak: he is somewhere between 137 (at **23:1**) and 175 (his age at death, **25:7**).

In biblical times. Old age associated with God's blessing

b. Context of Favor from the Lord

"and the LORD had blessed Abraham in every way."

God had kept His promises to Abraham to bless him

Borgman: Abraham looking back with gratitude for blessing; sometimes older people can become bitter people – focus on their hardships and difficulties

2. (:2-4) Significance of the Commissioning

a. Significant Because of the Servant Chosen to Carry Out the Mission

"And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his household, who had charge of all that he owned,"

Parunak: Perhaps the "Eliezer" of **15:2**. Trusted, like a son to him.

b. Significant Because of the Lord Who Witnessed the Solemn Oath

"Please place your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and the God of earth,"

Borgman: "under my thigh" -- euphemism – the oath is taken at the place of the sign of the covenant = place of circumcision

Emphasis on sovereignty of God

c. Significant Because of the Difficulty of the Mission

"that you shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I live, but you shall go to my country and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

Negative: Don't take a wife from cursed line of Canaan

Positive: Take a wife from my country and my relatives

Parunak: Abraham here is making a distinction between the land and the people.

- By purchasing a burying ground in **ch. 23**, he shows his faith that his descendants will inherit the land.

- By avoiding union with the people, he avoids any kind of alliance that might enable them to remain there. God has promised to put out the Amorites, **15:12-16**; to join with them (as Lot did, having sons in law in Sodom) would go against the promise.

Keith Krell: But I would suggest that if you want to find a godly spouse you look where godly Christians should be. Furthermore, if you want a godly spouse you need to be the kind of person a godly spouse will be looking for.

B. (:5-8) Servant Counseled by Abraham – Delineating the Mission

1. (:5) Question Regarding Possible Plan B

“And the servant said to him, ‘Suppose the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land; should I take your son back to the land from where you came?’”

2. (:6-8) Answer Affirming Confidence in Divine Providence

“Then Abraham said to him, ‘Beware lest you take my son back there! The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me, and who swore to me, saying, ‘To your descendants I will give this land,’ He will send His angel before you, and you will take a wife for my son from there. But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this my oath; only do not take my son back there.’”

Hughes: Isaac was never once permitted to leave the land, even in time of famine (cf. **26:2**). Isaac encapsulated the divine promise of a people and a land.

Parunak: Abraham no doubt has in mind here not just any angel, but “his angel,” the angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Word. This one has been instrumental in untangling impossible situations before.

- He met Hagar when she first fled from Sarah and brought her back, **16:7**
- He met her again when she was expelled and cared for her, **21:17**
- He stayed Abraham’s hand in the offering of Isaac, **22:11**.

He will surely not leave the servant in an impossible situation. This attitude is fundamental to faith. Consider God’s previous deliverances, and from them take confidence concerning his future faithfulness.

Borgman: Abraham’s life oriented around God’s Call and God’s Promise – life of faith

C. (:9) Servant Confirmed by Solemn Oath – Dedicating the Mission

“So the servant placed his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter.”

Borgman: swearing forms bookends to this scene

Application: If we truly are looking for God to provide, we will take appropriate action with the expectation of God granting us success.

II. (:10-27) FAITH FOLLOWS DIVINE GUIDANCE -- RECOGNIZING THE BRIDE VIA GOD’S GUIDANCE

A. (:10-14) Proper Positioning

1. (:10-11) Staging at the Well
 - a. Rich Provisions

“Then the servant took ten camels from the camels of his master, and set out with a variety of good things of his master's in his hand;”

A lot of camels and provisions

b. Right Place

“and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor.”

c. Ready Position

“And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at evening time, the time when women go out to draw water.”

Borgman: servant puts himself in the path of Providence where something is bound to happen; wise positioning; this is where the chicks hung out; place where women would come and socialize as well

2. (:12-14) Supplication for Divine Favor

a. Petition for Success

“And he said, ‘O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, please grant me success today, and show lovingkindness to my master Abraham.’”

“lovingkindness” - hesed = covenant faithfulness

Parunak: Lit., *“cause it to happen to me today.”* The servant believes that God can cause things to happen; that he can act in the world. Contrast this with the perspective of many today who believe in God only abstractly, and don’t really think he can change anything. The servant has faith in God’s ability to work.

b. Providential Sign

“Behold, I am standing by the spring, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water; now may it be that the girl to whom I say, ‘Please let down your jar so that I may drink,’ and who answers, ‘Drink, and I will water your camels also’;-- may she be the one whom Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac;”

Camels have capacity to drink a lot! Quite a servant-hearted commitment

Borgman: each camel could drink 25 gallons; her jar probably held 3 gallons; $250/3 = 83.3$; 3 gallon jug would weigh 25 pounds; quite a test

Parunak: His request rests on an important assumption: that God has “appointed” a bride for Isaac. The servant’s view of his task is not to select a suitable bride, but to discern the bride whom the Lord has selected.

Hughes: This was not a fleece (cf. **Judges 6:36-40**). The servant did not ask that the normal effects of nature be suspended.

Keith Krell: Culturally it was a normal act of hospitality to provide water to thirsty travelers. But the idea that a woman would also provide water for ten thirsty camels was going far beyond what would normally be expected. In praying this prayer the servant “stacked the deck” against finding someone. It would take a remarkable woman to volunteer for this lowly and backbreaking task.

- c. Proof of Divine Favor

“and by this I shall know that Thou hast shown lovingkindness to my master.”

B. (:15-21) Providential Encounter

1. (:15-16) Identification of Rebekah

- a. Her Lineage

“And it came about before he had finished speaking, that behold, Rebekah who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor, came out with her jar on her shoulder.”

Prayer answered before he finishes praying

Not some daughter of a concubine but legitimate line

- b. Her Beauty

“And the girl was very beautiful,”

- c. Her Availability

“a virgin,”

Parunak: *betulah*, not a technical term as in English, but a young woman of marriageable age

- d. Her Purity

“and no man had had relations with her;”

Keith Krell: She did not practice “safe sex”; she practiced “save sex” for marriage. She understood that sex was a gift from God, to be enjoyed within the commitment of marriage. Maybe you’re thinking, “That’s nice to preach, but I have already made those mistakes. What should I do?” First, seek the forgiveness of God (**1 John 1:9**). Then make a new commitment to God and to the person whom you are dating. Begin practicing God’s standard for moral purity.²⁰

- e. Her Activity

“and she went down to the spring and filled her jar, and came up.”

2. (:17-21) Interaction with Rebekah

- a. (:17-18) Encounter Initiated

“Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, ‘Please let me drink a little water from your jar.’ And she said, ‘Drink, my lord’; and she quickly lowered her jar to her hand, and gave him a drink.”

- b. (:19-20) Extra Test Completed

“Now when she had finished giving him a drink, she said, ‘I will draw also for your camels until they have finished drinking.’ So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough, and ran back to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels.”

- c. (:21) Evaluation Contemplated
“Meanwhile, the man was gazing at her in silence, to know whether the LORD had made his journey successful or not.”

Parunak: The verb means “*to accomplish what is intended.*” This entire chapter is about a mission undertaken and fulfilled, and now that we are in the fulfillment, it is time to talk about “prosperity” in this sense. The servant’s attitude is one that we should have in all our daily undertakings: that prosperity can come only from the Lord. Both the purpose and its accomplishment must be of him; **Phil 2:13**, “*to will and to do of his good pleasure.*”

C. (:22-27) Purposeful Closure

1. (:22-23) Presents to Adorn Rebekah
“Then it came about, when the camels had finished drinking, that the man took a gold ring weighing a half-shekel and two bracelets for her wrists weighing ten shekels in gold,”

Borgman: reward for her kindness way out of proportion for the labor performed

2. (:24-25) Petition for Hospitality
“and said, ‘Whose daughter are you? Please tell me, is there room for us to lodge in your father’s house?’ And she said to him, ‘I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor.’ Again she said to him, ‘We have plenty of both straw and feed, and room to lodge in.’”

Final test

3. (:26-27) Praise for Divine Guidance
“Then the man bowed low and worshiped the LORD. And he said, ‘Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His lovingkindness and His truth toward my master; as for me, the LORD has guided me in the way to the house of my master’s brothers.’”

Borgman: Overcome by clear hand of God’s Guidance and Providence; responds in worship and praise

Application: If we truly are following God’s guidance, we will be in position to experience God’s providential provision.

III. (:28-49) FAITH EXPECTS GOD TO GRANT SUCCESS -- REQUESTING THE BRIDE FROM HER HOUSEHOLD

A. (:28-32) Reception by Laban

“Then the girl ran and told her mother’s household about these things. Now Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban ran outside to the man at the spring. And it came about that when he saw the ring, and the bracelets on his sister’s wrists, and when

he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, 'This is what the man said to me,' he went to the man; and behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring. And he said, 'Come in, blessed of the LORD! Why do you stand outside since I have prepared the house, and a place for the camels?' So the man entered the house. Then Laban unloaded the camels, and he gave straw and feed to the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him."

Borgman: Laban plays major role instead of father Bethuel – maybe he was aged or infirm

B. (:33-49) Review of the Mission

1. (:33-41) The Goal

"But when food was set before him to eat, he said, 'I will not eat until I have told my business.' And he said, 'Speak on.' So he said, 'I am Abraham's servant. And the LORD has greatly blessed my master, so that he has become rich; and He has given him flocks and herds, and silver and gold, and servants and maids, and camels and donkeys. Now Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master in her old age; and he has given him all that he has. And 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 live; but you shall go to my father's house, and to my relatives, and take a wife for my son.' And I said to my master, 'Suppose the woman does not follow me.' And he said to me, 'The LORD, before whom I have walked, will send His angel with you to make your journey successful, and you will take a wife for my son from my relatives, and from my father's house; then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my relatives; and if they do not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.'"

2. (:42-44) The Sign

"So I came today to the spring, and said, 'O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now Thou wilt make my journey on which I go successful; behold, I am standing by the spring, and may it be that the maiden who comes out to draw, and to whom I say, Please let me drink a little water from your jar; and she will say to me, You drink, and I will draw for your camels also; let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's son.'"

3. (:45-49) The Reaction by Rebekah

"Before I had finished speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder, and went down to the spring and drew; and I said to her, 'Please let me drink.' And she quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder, and said, 'Drink, and I will water your camels also'; so I drank, and she watered the camels also."

C. (:47-49) Response by the Servant

"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'; and I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her wrists. And I bowed low and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had guided me in the right way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. So now if you are going to deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, let me know, that I may turn to the right hand or the left."

Application: If we truly are expecting God to grant us success, we will be looking for God to work in all of the details of our particular situation to turn the heart of others to do His will.

IV. (:50-67) FAITH CELEBRATES THE CONSUMMATION OF THE DIVINE PLAN -- RECEIVING THE BRIDE TO HER NEW HOME

A. (:50-51) Submitting to the Divine Plan

“Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, ‘The matter comes from the LORD; so we cannot speak to you bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has spoken.’”

B. (:52-61) Securing the Release of Rebekah

“And it came about when Abraham’s servant heard their words, that he bowed himself to the ground before the LORD. And the servant brought out articles of silver and articles of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave precious things to her brother and to her mother. Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank and spent the night. When they arose in the morning, he said, ‘Send me away to my master.’ But her brother and her mother said, ‘Let the girl stay with us a few days, say ten; afterward she may go.’ And he said to them, ‘Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way. Send me away that I may go to my master.’ And they said, ‘We will call the girl and consult her wishes.’ Then they called Rebekah and said to her, ‘Will you go with this man?’ And she said, ‘I will go.’ Thus they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse with Abraham’s servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, ‘May you, our sister, Become thousands of ten thousands, And may your descendants possess The gate of those who hate them.’ Then Rebekah arose with her maids, and they mounted the camels and followed the man. So the servant took Rebekah and departed.”

Keith Krell: The “I will” statement is typical of countless marriage ceremonies. At my own marriage ceremony Lori surprised me by singing a song by Steven Curtis Chapman entitled “I Will Go There With You.” By singing this song she committed herself to me—to go wherever I felt God calling us to go. The “I will” statement is also typical of the Christian life. Indeed, marriage is the greatest illustration of the love between Jesus and His church. The Christian life is a matter of putting ourselves in the hands of Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes to us and says, “Will you go with this Jesus? Will you go to Him? Will you spend the rest of your life in fellowship with Him?” And we respond and say, “I will.” The best way to know God’s will is to say, “I will,” to God.

Parunak: His response is three-fold.

1. He thanks the Lord, visibly. Now that they have acknowledged the Lord’s role in this decision, he can return thanks to him without appearing “holier than thou.”
2. He offers them rich gifts.
3. Finally, he satisfies his hunger and that of his servants.

Note the priority: the Lord first, then others, and finally his own needs.

C. (:62-67) Sealing the Marriage Relationship

“Now Isaac had come from going to Beer-lahai-roi; for he was living in the Negev. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field toward evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from the camel. And she said to the servant, ‘Who is that man walking in the field to meet us?’ And the servant said, ‘He is my master.’ Then she took her veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.”

Application: If we truly are celebrating the consummation of the divine plan, we will find that God does exceedingly above all that we could ever ask or imagine.

CONCLUSION:

Hughes: God provides and controls in three grand arenas – history, nature, and the lives of individual people. God’s providential control of life is illustrated by virtually every narrative in the Bible.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How does your faith engage you to take action and step out and do something specific in anticipation of God making you successful?
- 2) What can you learn from the attitude and actions of Abraham’s servant in this narrative?
- 3) Why do you think Rebekah was so quick to agree to accompany the servant to a foreign land to marry a man she had never met?
- 4) What principles can you glean from this passage about trusting the Lord for a godly spouse?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hughes: The position of this great story in Genesis at the end of Abraham’s life serves, in effect, to tell us that this is the way God works day in and day out in our lives. Such a God, of course, is great beyond our imaginings because he *maintains* all of life, *involves* himself in all events, and *directs* all things to their appointed end while rarely interrupting the natural order of life.

This is an awesome thought. The God of Scripture is not simply a God of miracles who occasionally injects his power into life. He is far greater because he arranges all of life to suit and effect his providence. This makes all of life a miracle. God is over all. He is all-powerful,

all-knowing, all-present, and all-controlling. This is the God of Scripture. Anything less is an idolatrous reduction of our puny imaginations.

Parunak: *the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth.*—A new title for God, and the last one in the chain that Abraham utters. In order:

- **12:8; 13:4**, “*called upon the name of the Lord.*” He knew him from the first as the covenant-keeping God, one who makes promises and commands obedience.
- **14:22**, “*the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth.*” He combines the name “Lord” with Melchizedek’s collapsing of the old Canaanite mythology: no longer the genealogy Elyon -- Heaven and Earth-- El, but now El = Elyon, and heaven and earth are creatures, not deities. This synthesis shows that he recognizes the universality of the Lord. There are not regional deities to be appeased; the Lord who appeared to him is the same God who demands obedience of the Canaanites (though they were defective in their understanding of him.)
- **15:2,8**, “*Sovereign Lord.*” Adonai YHWH. He indicates his willingness to submit to this one who has commanded him. He uses this title again in **18:3, 27, 30, 31, 32**.
- **21:33**, “*the Lord, the everlasting God,*” YHWH el olam. el olam. am olam in **Ezek 26:19,20** refers to the prediluvians, wiped out by the flood, and it has been suggested that olam refers in general to the world before the flood. The point here is that Abraham recognizes the Lord as the same God from before the flood. Compare el elyon qoneh shamayim wearec in **14**, which combines old Canaanite names and transforms them into a title of the Lord. El olam asserts the identity of God throughout time, just as el elyon does through space.
- **22:8**, “*God.*” In his deepest trial, he cannot voice any higher title, but still acknowledges God as the creator. Yet even here is progress, for this is the first time he uses the title of **Gen 1:1**. He has known the Lord as the promise-maker and has identified him with the gods of foreign lands (**14:22**) and ancient times (**21:33**), but now he goes back to a title he learned at his mother’s knee, from the ancient stories passed down from Adam and Eve.
- **21:14**, “*Lord,*” closing the circle with **12:8**.

Jack Arnold: There is a typological message in this historic event, for it pictures Christ’s love for the Church. Abraham represents God, the Father; Isaac represents Christ; the servant represents the Holy Spirit; and Rebekah represents the Church.

Keith Krell: In **Genesis 24**, we come to one of the greatest love stories known to man: The blind marriage of Isaac and Rebekah.¹ This chapter is the longest chapter in the book of Genesis; yet, it shifts scenes like a romantic movie. Nevertheless, the story of Isaac and Rebekah is more than just a story of “boy meets girl.” It is a wonderful revelation of the sovereign work of God. Driving each scene is the implied question: How will God carry out His incredible promises? Abraham has been promised immeasurable seed that will bless the earth. Therefore, further questions abound: What woman will the Lord find for Isaac to further this promise? How will He overcome the inevitable human stumbling blocks?⁴ In this account we will see that God will guide us, as we are faithful to His Word. . .

Here are a few quick principles in the marriage arena:

Don't worry about finding the right person, become the right person yourself.
If you are married, you are married to the right person.
Practice servant hood in your dating or marriage relationship.
The root characteristic of love is commitment.
Pray for your child's future spouse.

Ultimately, this entire story is about God's faithfulness. He protected and guided the servant on his journey, and He brought Rebekah along with just the right servant-spirit at just the right time. From our historical perspective, centuries later we can see how God used the remarkable obedience of a few family members to accomplish His purposes. For it was through the union of Isaac and Rebekah that the covenant and its wonderful promises were to be perpetuated.

Steven Cole: God will guide us when we walk with Him and are committed to His purpose.

1. To know God's guidance we must be unswerving in our commitment to God and His purpose.
2. To know God's guidance we must move out in obedience accompanied by common sense.
3. To know God's guidance we must seek and expect it, while submitting to His sovereign ways.
4. To know God's guidance we must apply God's wisdom.
5. To know God's guidance we must bathe the whole process in prayer and constant fellowship with God.

Brian Borgman: Abraham's Final Act of Faith – a Bride for Isaac

Introduction: Imagine you are in a tent with Isaac and Rebekah and someone asks: How did you two meet?

Romance – OT style; there is more to the story than meets the eye

Longest narrative in Genesis;

Moses records the servant's speech twice;

Abraham's last recorded words; next time we see him he is dead;

Human hero of story is Abraham's unnamed servant; could be Eliezer (**Gen. 15**) – his faithfulness and piety more important than his name;

Powerful picture of providence of God --

Not a blueprint for how to find a godly wife or how to discern the will of God even though you will see some relevant principles

Everything has to fall into place perfectly for God's plan to be executed

David Thompson: Allegorical Lessons from Gen. 24

Swung the pendulum too far away from allegorical interpretation model;

This passage clearly communicates a marvelous picture of the work of the Holy Spirit in carrying out the entire plan of God for the church; **Heb. 11:17-19** – Abraham is God the Father; Isaac is God the Son;

4 Lessons:

1. **The Purpose of God the Father for the Church Age** – to find a bride for His Son
God has set aside Israel = God's unfaithful wife; and turned to elect from other nations;
Bring bride back one day and present her to His Son; wants bride to be beautiful, humble, pure, diligent, etc.
2. **The Purpose of God the Son for the Church Age** – Isaac doesn't show up in narrative until bride is almost brought back to Canaan; Isaac stayed and did perfect will of the Father; stay

close to Abraham and wait for servant to bring him the bride – that is what Christ is doing today; servant is the Holy Spirit; Isaac gets a report of all things that have been done = Bema seat of judgment for believers at the initial point of introduction to the bride

3. **The Purpose of God the Spirit for the Church Age** – track actions of the servant throughout the passage; no name tag like you get for God the Father and the Son; just descriptive titles; name of servant not mentioned; 6 Purposes:

- a. Find a Bride for the Son – includes the whole process; identify the proper person; bring person under conviction preparatory work; etc. Had to leave security of homeland and find bride in an adulterous, idolatrous world
- b. Find a Specific Individual – election; chosen before the foundation of the world; no bride could come to Isaac unless chosen by the servant; spots people before they even know he is spotting them; cf. calling of disciples by Jesus
- c. Paint a Glorious Picture of the Son – the master is rich and has turned all of the wealth over to the Son; purpose of the Holy Spirit is not to speak of Himself but to glorify the Son; you won't be disappointed when you meet Isaac
- d. Bring the Individual to the Point of Decision – servant presents the evidence; Rebekah agrees to go; she makes a choice – from human standpoint; Holy Spirit offering a relationship with the Son – effectual calling
- e. Offer Gifts to the Church – great gift of salvation; gifts for service; wealth of God including Spirit of God; make us glorious in our appearance -- uses Word of God to wash us and clean us up
- f. Take the Church to Meet the Son –

4. **The Responsibility of the Bride for this Age** –

TEXT: Genesis 25:1-11

TITLE: DEATH AND BURIAL OF ABRAHAM – THE FATHER OF THE FAITHFUL

BIG IDEA:

THE LEGACY OF A GODLY LIFE REFLECTS THE BLESSING OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:

What type of **legacy** will you leave behind when you die? What type of legacy does a godly man of faith like Abraham leave behind? Are you looking forward to a retirement life where you will kick back, read in your rocking chair and sip your iced tea? This is not the type of life that Abraham lived in his old age. He continued to have a passion for the will of God. He longed to see a godly lineage established for his son Isaac and his grandsons that would lead all the way to the birth of the promised Messiah.

THE LEGACY OF A GODLY LIFE REFLECTS THE BLESSING OF GOD

I. (:1-6) A PRODUCTIVE AND PROSPEROUS LEGACY

A. (:1-4) A Productive (Fruitful) Legacy

1. (:1) Additional Concubine

“Now Abraham took another wife, whose name was Keturah.”

Keturah -- Lit. “*fragrant smoke*”

Parunak: We are not told when Abraham took his third wife, Keturah. It might have been in the 40 years he lived after the death of Sarah, or it might have been earlier. Moses’ concern is not to give us the timeline here, but (as in the Table of Nations in **ch. 10**) to fill us in on the background of some of the other nations with whom Israel had to do.

2. (:2-4) Additional Offspring

a. (:2) Sons of Keturah Detailed

“And she bore to him Zimran and Jokshan and Medan and Midian and Ishbak and Shuah.”

b. (:3-4a) Sons of Jokshan and Midian

1) (:3) Sons of Jokshan

“And Jokshan became the father of Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim and Letushim and Leummim.”

2) (:4a) Sons of Midian

“And the sons of Midian were Ephah and Epher and Hanoah and Abida and Eldaah.”

Parunak: Some of these nations (notably the Midianites) later became Israel's enemies. Moses wants us to remember that these people, like the Ishmaelites, originated with Abraham, and

could (had they wished) have retained the knowledge of the truth. But they did not, and thus forfeited their claim to the blessings of Abraham. *"They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed"* (**Rom 9:8**).

- c. (:4b) Sons of Keturah Summarized
"All these were the sons of Keturah."

Hughes: By bookending Abraham's death with genealogical lists, the narrator Moses demonstrates God's faithfulness to his promises of unnumbered descendants.

B. (:5-6) A Prosperous (Generous) Legacy

- 1. (:5) Especially Generous to the Son of the Promise
"Now Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac;"

- 2. (:6) Generous to the Sons of His Concubines

- a. Limitation on His Giving
"but to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts while he was still living,"

- b. Protection of Isaac
"and sent them away from his son Isaac eastward, to the land of the east."

Theodore Epp: Abraham wanted to make it clear to his other sons that Isaac was the chosen son of promise. By giving gifts to the other sons and sending them away, Abraham took the necessary steps to make Isaac's position free from as many difficulties as possible.

II. (:7-11) A PLEASING (SATISFYING), PEACEFUL AND PERPETUATING LEGACY

A. (:7-8) A Pleasing (Satisfying) Legacy

- 1. (:7) Quantity of Life
"And these are all the years of Abraham's life that he lived, one hundred and seventy-five years."

Teach us to number our days – our life on earth is limited: **Ps. 139:16; 90:12; 39:4**

- 2. (:8) Quality of Life
"And Abraham breathed his last and died in a ripe old age, an old man and satisfied with life; and he was gathered to his people."

Parunak: The idea of joining those who have deceased does not mean that they are believers, in heaven. The OT does not distinguish clearly between the destiny of believers and unbelievers after death, the way the NT does. This point is critical for a proper assessment of David's words concerning his first child by Bathsheba in 2 Sam 12:23, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return

to me.” David is not saying that the child is in heaven, but simply that the child is dead.

Constable: quoting **Hamilton** -- It is one thing to live a long life. It is another thing to live a long life that is also a happy life. This obituary notice about Abraham draws attention to the fact that Abraham died not only at an elderly age but in a frame of mind filled with inner shalom and satisfaction. That is the thrust of the phrase “full of days” or “contented.”

Leupold: implies that all wants and all expectations have been satisfied. What **15:15** promised was fully realized.

B. (:9-10) A Peaceful (Restful) Legacy

1. Because of the Love of His Sons

“Then his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him”

MacArthur: Abraham’s funeral brought together two sons who would perhaps otherwise have remained somewhat estranged from each other (cf. **35:29**).

2. Because of the Location of His Grave

“in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite,”

3. Because of the Lawful Ownership of the Accompanying Field

“facing Mamre, the field which Abraham purchased from the sons of Heth;”

4. Because of the Liason in Death with His Beloved Wife Sarah

“there Abraham was buried with Sarah his wife.”

C. (:11) A Perpetuating (Continuing) Legacy

1. Ongoing Blessing

“And it came about after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac;”

Leupold: Transitional paragraph; Outstanding about Isaac from the outset was the fact that God’s blessing was resting upon him. . . Besides, we need to know that Isaac’s more or less permanent dwelling place was the scene of the Angel’s appearance to Hagar, Beer-lahai-roi.

2. Ongoing Possession of the Promised Land

“and Isaac lived by Beer-lahai-roi.”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How does this passage reinforce the doctrine of election and of the sovereignty of God?
- 2) How does God pass the torch of leadership from one generation to the next while still managing to accomplish His long term purposes?
- 3) What did Abraham find so satisfying as he lived out the later years of his life?
- 4) What type of legacy did our forefathers leave to our generation?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: Relative ages:

	Abraham	Sarah	Ishmael	Isaac	Jacob and Esau
16:16	86	(76)	0		
17:17; 21:5	100	90	(14)	0	
23:1	(137)	127 (RIP)	(51)	(37)	
25:20	(140)		(54)	40	
25:26	(160)		(74)	60	0
25:7	175 (RIP)		(89)	(75)	(15)
25:17			137 (RIP)		
35:28				180 (RIP)	(120)

Hughes: What a legacy this great man of faith has left us! Four famous New Testament passages expound the spiritual dimensions of his faith-legacy and together provide essential teaching about faith in the Christian life:

Romans 4
James 2
Galatians 3
Hebrews 11

Steven Cole: The point Moses was trying to impress on his readers was that God's purpose according to His choice will stand. God is sovereign; what He says, He will do. But even so, His chosen people must submit and commit themselves to His purpose if they want His blessing.

Since God's purpose according to His choice will stand, we must submit and commit ourselves to His purpose if we want His blessing.

1. God's purpose according to His choice will stand.
2. We must submit and commit ourselves to God's purpose according to His choice.
3. When we submit and commit ourselves to God's purpose according to His choice, He blesses us.

Bob Deffinbaugh: Over the centuries a number of Bible scholars have maintained that this

marriage between Abraham and Keturah did not take place after the death of Sarah. A number of reasons can be cited in support of this conclusion:

First, the verb translated “took” can as easily be rendered “had taken,” as the margin of the NIV indicates.

Second, Keturah is referred to as a concubine in **I Chronicles 1:32**, which also fits nicely with the word “concubines” in verse 6 of our passage. A concubine held a position somewhat above that of a slave, yet she was not free, nor did she have the status or rights of a wife. The master did have sexual relations with the concubine. Her children held an inferior status to those born of a wife, but they could be elevated to the position of a full heir at the will of the master. Why would Keturah be called a concubine unless Sarah were still alive and this marriage was of a lesser type?

Third, the sons of this union were said to have been “sent away” (verse 6). This could hardly be true of the children of a full marriage, but it would be completely consistent with the children of a concubine. These children would have been sent away in just the same fashion as Ishmael. According to the Code of Hammurabi the sons of a concubine could be sent away, the compensation for which was the granting of their full freedom.

Finally, Abraham was said to have been old, beyond having children at age 100 (cf. **Genesis 18:11**). Paul referred to Abraham as being “as good as dead” (**Romans 4:19**) so far as bearing children was concerned. Those who are mentioned here would have had to have been born to a man at least 140 years old if Abraham married Keturah after Sarah died and Isaac was married to Rebekah. These children listed in verse 3 would have been more of a miracle than Isaac.

The point of verses 1-6 is to establish the fact that Abraham was, in fact, the father of many nations, but that it was Isaac through whom the blessings and promises of the Abrahamic Covenant would be realized. Thus the promise to Abraham in **Genesis 17:4** was fulfilled: “*As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.*”

Leupold: Brief as the table of Keturah’s descendants is, it furnishes foundation for proof of the fact that a multitude of nations descended from Abraham. These, now, who are here listed are the fathers of Arab tribes who leave southern Palestine and migrate to the east, the southeast and the south.

Brian Borgman: Abraham Breathed His Last, In Faith

We have covered 13 chapters of Abraham’s life; God has blessed him in every way; A distinct purpose in this passage – begins with genealogy of Keturah and then the *toledot* of Ishmael followed by *toledot* of Isaac;

It is Isaac, not the sons of Keturah or of Ishmael, who is indeed the elect seed of Abraham

Another purpose: this section **announces the end of an era**; death of Abraham brings a major section of Genesis to a close; incredibly significant event; Gen. 1-11 gives primeval history; Gen. 12-25 the events of the first patriarch; no way to over-emphasize Abraham’s significance –

Rom. 4:16 – the father of us all

Gal. 3:7 – those who are of faith are the children of Abraham

His journey of faith has come to a successful end; he died well; you want to die in faith;

1. (:1-4) Abraham took another wife – really a concubine – **1 Chron. 1:32**

When? Is the big question; prior to the birth of Isaac – maybe long before the birth of Isaac;

- Chronology in Genesis is neither tight nor sequential; birth of Jacob and Esau recorded after death of Abraham .. but born 15 years prior to death of Abraham;
- This is a summary of Abraham's life; concubine was not germane to story line of Sarah's barrenness and birth of Isaac to fulfill the promise
- Would have been a huge miracle if born after death of Sarah; after 140 years old??

Large, extended tribal family

Identifying Isaac as the sole heir despite other offspring; 16 descendants – some are connected to places; some we know; some are mysteries; some become Israel's traditional enemies;

2. (:5-6) Isaac is the true heir; son of the promise

Gave them gifts and sent them East; Adam and Eve and Cain were all expelled to the East; looked down upon

Point of sending them away = separating them away from Isaac

3. (:7-10) Lived 100 years in the Promised Land – still only owns the one field and cave there; Lives to see Isaac's sons; nothing better than having grandsons; Isaac also had barrenness problems but the Lord blessed him with children; burial scene; don't grieve as those without hope;

4. (:11) Transition to Isaac; huge turning point in book; blessing rested on Isaac; Isaac is in position of supremacy over Ishmael – even in the very place where the Angel of the Lord had appeared to Hagar and promised her that her son would be the father of many nations

David Thompson: Leaving a Good Legacy

Peculiar blessings that ought to come to those who grow old – wisdom, strength, righteousness, reflection on God's faithfulness and blessing

Abraham ended his life well; no matter how old ... life is but a vapor and then it is gone;

Loved God supremely from age 75 on despite episodes of failure and sin; primary goal was to do the will of God; enjoyed his life

We need to leave a good legacy behind of one who lived a life that counted for God;

Concerned with lineage that would ultimately produce the Messiah;

4 Final Actions in Abraham's Life:

1) **Produces Children from Keturah** – God fulfilling His promises of innumerable offspring;

mainly descendants of Arab tribes; God is with His people all the time until He calls them home; does not abandon them in old age

2) **Gives his inheritance to Isaac** – he was the son of promise; no debating intent of Abraham regarding inheritance

3) **Abraham dies and is buried** –

- Age at death = 175 – did not see all of God's promises come to complete fruition in his lifetime; had his own moments of failure and sin; had to endure his share of trials; had relationship problems with Lot; had to say goodbye to his wife Sarah; but had a heart for God; man of faith

S. Lewis Johnson: God buries His workman, but carries on His work

- His condition at death – good man; really old man; satisfied man
 - His condition after death
 - His burial after death
- 4) **Abraham's Son Isaac blessed by God** – a place where God's presence was known to by

TEXT: Genesis 25:19-34

TITLE: *DESPISING THE PROMISES OF GOD –
WHAT A DEAL . . . WHAT A STEAL!*

BIG IDEA:

**SHORT-SIGHTED CARNAL VALUE SYSTEM DESPISES GOD’S BLESSING –
[JACOB SUPPLANTS ESAU AS THE PRIMARY LINE THRU ISAAC]**

INTRODUCTION:

This passage should cause us to examine our own value system. What do we consider important? How much faith do we place in the promises of God and His kingdom agenda? Are we truly living in light of eternity with a long term perspective or are we driven to satisfy the lusts of the flesh and seek instant gratification at the expense of spiritual loss?

Hughes: The moral lessons that are here do not come from observing the moral virtues of Jacob or Esau, but from their faults. Jacob and Esau together dramatize the human predicament. Both the elect and non-elect are hopelessly self-centered and incapable by themselves of doing consistent good. Jacob is a scheming, Machiavellian figure, and Esau is a free spirit who lives for his appetites.

**SHORT-SIGHTED CARNAL VALUE SYSTEM DESPISES GOD’S BLESSING –
[JACOB SUPPLANTS ESAU AS THE PRIMARY LINE THRU ISAAC]**

(:19a) TOLEDOT BREAK

“Now these are the records of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son:”

I. (:19B-21) CONCEPTION OF JACOB AND ESAU – ANSWER TO ISAAC’S PRAYER

A. (:19b) Isaac’s Father - Abraham

“Abraham became the father of Isaac;”

B. (:20) Isaac’s Wife - Rebekah from the Homeland

“and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife.”

C. (:21) Isaac’s Offspring – Rebekah’s Conception as Answered Prayer

“And Isaac prayed to the LORD on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.”

Wife was barren for 20 years before she conceived; was becoming a crisis situation; 24:60 – her expectation upon marrying Isaac was that she would have a long line of offspring

Parunak: Clearly, Isaac is in the background in this story; he serves only as a bridge between Abraham and Jacob.

II. (:22-26) BIRTH OF JACOB – SECOND IN BIRTH ORDER BUT FIRST IN PREEMINENCE

A. (:22-23) Prophecy of Jacob’s Preeminence From the Womb

1. (:22) Problem Pregnancy

“But the children struggled together within her; and she said, ‘If it is so, why then am I this way?’ So she went to inquire of the LORD.”

Parunak: Moses informs us that in fact the children were wrestling even in the womb, setting the stage for a recurring theme of Jacob’s life, that of struggle.

Hughes: The Hebrew graphically says, “The children smashed themselves inside her.” She felt as if her womb had become a battlefield. . . There was mayhem in her womb!

2. (:23) Perplexing Prophecy

“And the LORD said to her, ‘Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples shall be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger.’”

Parunak: “Nation” indicates political structure, while “people” indicates culture and similar characteristics, the people as an organic unity. Both in their manner and in their national identity, the descendants of these two children will differ widely.

It is important to understand that this oracle is not simply predicting what will come to pass, but is revealing the action of God’s sovereign election, as explained by **Rom. 9:10-13**. It reveals God’s love for Jacob and hatred for Esau (**Mal 1:2-5**), a difference that is explicitly said to stem from the purpose of God and not from the works of the two men. The next several verses reinforce this point that the difference defies human explanation, as summarized in **1 Cor 1:26**: *“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.”*

B. (:24-26) Prefiguring of Jacob’s Preeminence at Birth

1. (:24) Reality of Twins

“When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.”

2. (:25) Redness of Esau

“Now the first came forth red, all over like a hairy garment; and they named him Esau.”

Constable: Hairiness seems to have been a mark of incivility in the ancient world, indicative of an animal-like nature.

3. (:26a) Resilience of Jacob

“And afterward his brother came forth with his hand holding on to Esau's heel, so his

name was called Jacob;”

Parunak:

- The etymology of **Esau** is not clear, but from the context, it must mean “hairy,” just as **Edom**, his other name, means “red.” His very appearance suggests a wild person, a man of passion.
- The full form of **Jacob**’s name is likely “Yaqob-El,” “God will guard.” The verbal form means “hold” in the sense of “guard, protect” in all the cognates, but in Jacob’s case the meaning shifts to a negative one; he is the “grasper,” born grasping Esau’s heel and continuing through life to seek the preeminence over him

Heel-grabber; Overreacher

4. (:26b) Record of the Important Birth

“and Isaac was sixty years old when she gave birth to them.”

III. (:27-34) CUNNING OF JACOB IN SUPPLANTING CARELESS ESAU AND ACQUIRING THE BIRTHRIGHT

A. (:27-28) Contrast Between Esau and Jacob in Aptitudes and Attractions

1. (:27) Different Aptitudes – Aggressive vs. Peaceful

“When the boys grew up, Esau became a skillful hunter, a man of the field; but Jacob was a peaceful man, living in tents.”

Nimrod only other one with this designation as a skillful hunter; so description has some negative undertones

Borgman: *man of the field* – unsophisticated, unrefined person

2. (:28) Different Attractions – Daddy’s Boy vs. Mommy’s Boy

“Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.”

Parental favoritism

Borgman: no explicit reason given for Rebekah’s love for Jacob – probably because of God’s divine choice of Jacob revealed in divine oracle given to her while twins were still in her womb; Jacob will end up having his favorite son as well

B. (:29-34) Contrast Between Cunning of Jacob vs. Carelessness of Esau

1. (:29-30) Setting for the Deal – Vulnerability of Esau

a. (:29) Hungry

“And when Jacob had cooked stew, Esau came in from the field and he was famished;”

A stew without any meat; a vegetarian dish; lentil stew

Borgman: Esau hunted all day and caught nothing

- b. (:30) Helpless – but Demanding
“and Esau said to Jacob, ‘Please let me have a swallow of that red stuff there, for I am famished.’ Therefore his name was called Edom.”

Borgman: This rendering is far too polite; “Now, let me gulp down some of that red stuff” – not just a little polite swallow; he wants the stew and he wants it now

2. (:31-34a) Substance of the Deal – Cunning of Jacob vs. Carelessness of Esau

- a. (:31) Selling at an Outrageous Price
“But Jacob said, ‘First sell me your birthright.’”

Borgman: double inheritance and headship of family when father dies; in this case the heir of the covenant promises; Jacob sees an opportunity here; a deceitful character

- b. (:32) Stating the Value Proposition from an Irrational Perspective
“And Esau said, ‘Behold, I am about to die; so of what use then is the birthright to me?’”
- c. (:33) Swearing to Bind the Deal
“And Jacob said, ‘First swear to me’; so he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.”
- d. (:34a) Sealing the Deal
“Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew; and he ate and drank, and rose and went on his way.”

Borgman: Staccato statements; you can hear Esau gulping and slurping down his lentil soup; no manners; over in a hurry; absolutely indifferent to what had just happened

3. (:34b) Significance of the Deal – Huge Long Term Consequences
“Thus Esau despised his birthright.”

Huge summary statement and interpretation of the significance of what just took place – seems on the surface like just a simple satisfying of intense hunger ... but in the course of God’s kingdom purposes, Esau’s short-sighted decision had long term consequences.

SHORT-SIGHTED DESPERATION DESPISES GOD’S BLESSING

Parunak: The birthright must be distinguished from the blessing of ch. 27.

- “*Birthright*” bekorah is literally “first-born-ness.” This status conveyed on the holder a double portion of the inheritance and the position of being the family’s head in the next

generation. Given the promise of seed and blessing granted to Abraham, this status would have a special, spiritual meaning.

• “*Blessing*” berakah is the father’s prayer for God’s bounty to a son. It would naturally encompass the benefits of the birthright, but as the example of Jacob’s blessing on the sons of Joseph shows (48:14), it is ultimately guided by parental discretion rather than birth order.

The author of Hebrews has this verse in mind in **Heb 12:16** when he cites Esau as an example of a “*profane person*” because “for one morsel of meat [he] sold his birthright.” “Profane” is the opposite of “holy.” It describes someone or something that is common rather than set apart. As firstborn, priest and bearer of the Messianic blessing, Esau would have been holy, but this was inconsistent with his fundamental character, and so he casts away the privilege.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Examine your value system. Where are you undervaluing the promises of God and His kingdom agenda?
- 2) As parents, how can we guard against showing parental favoritism to our children?
- 3) What does this passage teach about the sovereignty of God in election?
- 4) How did Esau put himself beyond the point of repentance?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: Trading Your Soul ... For What??
Living for instant gratification will rob you of spiritual blessing.

1. You can lose great blessings if you do not appreciate them.
2. Small choices can have drastic consequences.
3. It’s easy to mistake as essential that which really is not.
4. It’s easy to grab for the right things for the wrong reasons and in the wrong way.

As we face the New Year, ask yourself, “What am I living for?” If I’m living for good feelings in the short run, I’m missing God’s purpose for my life. I’m selling my spiritual birthright for a mess of pottage.

Bob Deffinbaugh: Like Isaac, the world in which we live prefers the Esaus and dislikes the Jacobs. The models which the media places before us are not the Jacobs, but the Esaus, the “macho men,” the tough guys. The world says to us, “You only go around once, so you’d better grab all the gusto you can get.” They have taken the words out of Esau’s mouth. They wish us to forget the future, to trade off our eternal destiny for a beer or for our belly or for some short-lived physical pleasure. If it feels good, do it. If it tastes good, eat it. Don’t believe it.

Parunak:

20-26, Birth of Jacob and Esau

The section is chiasmically structured, centered on the oracle in 22b-23 (Fokkelman):

Chronological Notice	
20 And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padanaram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.	and Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.
Barrenness and Birth	
21 And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she was barren: and the LORD was intreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived.	24 And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb.
22 And the children struggled together within her;	25 And the first came out red, all over like an hairy garment; and they called his name Esau. ²⁶ And after that came his brother out, and his hand took hold on Esau's heel; and his name was called Jacob:
The Oracle	
and she said, <i>If it be so, why am I thus?</i> And she went to enquire of the LORD.	23 And the LORD said unto her, Two nations <i>are</i> in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and <i>the one</i> people shall be stronger than <i>the other</i> people; and the elder shall serve the younger.

29-34, Esau Sells his Birthright

Another chiasm (Fokkelman):

29 And Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint:	thus Esau despised his birthright. and rose up, and went his way:
30 And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.	34 Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink,
31 And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright.	33 And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.
32 And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?	

Hughes: Thomas Carlyle, the great man of letters, had this to say of Esau:

He is the kind of man of whom we are in the habit of charitably saying that he is nobody's enemy but his own. But, in truth, he is God's enemy, because he wastes the splendid manhood which God has given him. Passionate, impatient, impulsive, incapable of looking before him, refusing to estimate the worth of anything which does not immediately appeal to his sense, preferring the animal over the spiritual, he is rightly called a "*profane person*."

At the same time cool, calculating Jacob invites a flood of negatives – rascal, opportunist, cheating, ambitious, self-seeking, self-serving, grasping, scheming, heartless, exploitative – singularly unattractive.

Brian Borgman: Esau Despised the Birthright

Two boys raised in same tent – end up going in 2 very different directions;

Had privilege of knowing Abraham until they were 15 years old;

Esau a little more likeable than Jacob

Jacob was well-cultured, quiet, sophisticated, refined; living in tents rather than sleeping under the stars; lived life of a shepherd

Jacob saw the significance of the birthright; put the right value on it;

Esau has no concept of what is truly valuable; lives just for the moment

Worse than just selling the birthright – he despised the birthright

- Tragic consequences of parental favoritism
- What is your value system and are you oriented towards the future and long term outlook?
- Jacob will need to be broken in order to be used by God
- Real point of the story is Esau – summed up in last line; no commentary on Jacob's actions here; careless and thoughtless and indifferent to promises of God; driven by his appetite; immediate gratification was the idol of his heart; a *profane and godless person*
- Application to children of believing parents – God has blessed you – what do you value?

Thomas Constable: "How often do we put the question to ourselves, "What is my mess of pottage?" It is important to verbalize the question. We are in constant danger of being tempted to give up something very precious in order to indulge a sudden strong desire. The desire may involve greedy eating and drinking, lusting after money or material things, letting loose our anger in abandonment of reason, succumbing to depression without check, cursing God in despair or disappointment without even thinking of the trap Satan set for Job and is setting for us, giving in to a sweeping sexual desire without waiting for the right framework. The mess of pottage that is dangerous to you and to me is any temptation to gratify the "feelings" of the immediate moment in a way that shows we "despise" the promises of the living God for our future." [Note: **Edith Schaeffer**, "What Is My Mess of Pottage?" *Christianity Today* (March 14, 1975), p50.]

Bruce Goettsche:

Esau has a choice: should he take the food and give up the birthright, or should he hold on to this most valuable possession and go and try to find food somewhere else? Esau chooses to live for the moment and swears that the birthright now belongs to Jacob. Esau gives up all these benefits for a bowl of stew! Certainly Esau wasn't thinking clearly. Surely he didn't realize the value of

what had been promised him.

We shake our heads at his short-sightedness but . . .but haven't we been known to do the same things?

- When we choose the pleasures of passion over the purity of marriage
- When we choose the applause of our friends rather than stand true for the Lord
- When we choose what is easy over what is right
- When we indulge our appetite for more stuff over the commands of financial responsibility
- When we choose the extra time to sleep over worship or our daily time with God
- When we chose to fill our minds with garbage rather than devote our minds to the Lord
- When we choose to hoard what we have rather than to reach out to the needy

Esau had to choose between living for the moment and living for eternity. That same choice faces each of us. Every day we must choose between temporary pleasures and holiness before the Lord. Esau reminds us to keep our focus.

TEXT: Genesis 26:1-35

TITLE: *STANDING ON THE PROMISES OF GOD –
BLESSING AND PROTECTION FROM THE GOD WHO IS WITH US*

BIG IDEA:

**GOD REAFFIRMS HIS COVENANT PROMISES TO ENCOURAGE PERSEVERANCE
IN TIMES OF TRIAL SINCE HE IS WITH US TO BLESS AND PROTECT**

INTRODUCTION:

Passage begins and ends with an account of tremendous trials and pressure faced by Isaac and Rebekah. **Verse 1** speaks of a severe famine in the land and **verses 34-35** close with the grief experienced on account of Esau taking wives from the tribe of the Hittites. These types of trials can easily erode faith in the promises of God and cause us to lose sight of the hope of His high calling.

W. H. Griffith Thomas: Although Isaac lived the longest of all the patriarchs [180 years – 5 years more than Abraham] less is recorded of him than of the others. This is the only chapter exclusively devoted to his life. His was a quiet, peaceful, normal life.

S. Lewis Johnson: His actions in this chapter closely parallel those of his father Abraham. For example, he has to contend with the famine in the land just as his father did, he has to take a trip down into the land of the Philistines just as his father did, he has to deal with the king of the Philistines whose name was Abimelech, that was a dynastic title and so he had to contend with Abimelech just as Abraham had to contend with Abimelech. And then of course he has the same experience of lying about his wife. Abraham lied about Sarah twice, and even though Isaac must have known about this for the traditions were handed down, still he lies about Rebekah.

Hughes: Structure: three parallel declarations of God’s presence at the beginning, middle, and end of the account.

- The first was **future**: “*Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you*” (v. 3).
- The second was **present**: “*Fear not, for I am with you*” (v. 24).
- And the third was **past**, as the pagan king Abimelech observed, “*We plainly see that the Lord has been with you*” (v. 28).

How Isaac related to and appropriated the reality of God’s presence had everything to do with how he lived. And so it is with us.

Text centers around **3 Instances of God Reaffirming His Covenant Promises** – in 3 different **geographical areas** – all emphasizing the **Presence of God** bringing **blessing** and **protection** to His chosen people

**GOD REAFFIRMS HIS COVENANT PROMISES TO ENCOURAGE PERSEVERANCE
IN TIMES OF TRIAL SINCE HE IS WITH US TO BLESS AND PROTECT**

(:1a) OPENING TRIAL – FAMINE IN THE LAND

“Now there was a famine in the land, besides the previous famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham.”

Very threatening to someone who was trying not just to personally survive, but sustain his wealth that consisted in feeding his vast livestock and extended household.

I. (:1b-17) FIRST INSTANCE OF GOD REAFFIRMING HIS COVENANT PROMISES IN TIMES OF TRIAL IN LAND OF GERAR BY PROSPERING ISAAC

A. (:1-6) Direction to Live in Gerar

Chiastic structure

1. (:1) At Risk in Gerar

“So Isaac went to Gerar, to Abimelech king of the Philistines.”

Sounds like Isaac was on a journey that he ultimately intended would lead him to refuge in Egypt – certainly not following the will of God in response to this trial in his life.

Gerar about 10 miles south of Gaza

Parunak: Isaac’s choice of Gerar as a refuge reminds us of Abraham’s covenant with Abimelech in **21:22ff.** (“Abimelech” is probably a throne name, like “Pharaoh,” and may not be the same individual with whom Abraham dealt.) -- since this is some 80 years later

2. (:2) Charge to Obey the Lord’s Direction

“And the LORD appeared to him and said, ‘Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you.’”

Gracious intervention on the part of the Lord; did not just let him wander astray

Hughes: Isaac was called to reside as an alien, devoid of legal status and totally dependent on the goodwill of the pagan community.

3. (:3-4) Reaffirming Abrahamic Covenant Promises and the Favorable Presence of God

“Sojourn in this land

and I will be with you and bless you, for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands,

and I will establish the oath which I swore to your father Abraham.

And I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven,

and will give your descendants all these lands;

and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;”

Key section = at the heart of the chiastic structure because it is the main thrust of the passage

Parunak: “I will be with you” –

1. It often encourages God’s people in times of difficulty . . .
2. It is ultimately messianic. Messiah’s name is “Immanu-el,” God with us. This name was initially given when Judah was threatened by a powerful military coalition of Syria and Israel, **Isa 7**. The Lord’s departing promise was, “*Lo, I am with you always,*” **Matt. 28:20**.

Hughes: Recognizing God’s presence crushes the temptation to compromise. God’s presence puts our fears to flight. It instills confidence and steel. It protects us and our loved ones. It

upholds the name of God.

4. (:5) Reminder of Abraham's Obedience

"because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws."

Leupold: In order to make prominent the thought that Abraham conscientiously did all that God asked, the various forms of divine commandments are enumerated; sometimes, of course, a divine word would fall under several of these categories.

- They are a "charge" or "observance" if they are to be observed (*mishmereth* from *shamar*)
- They are "commandments" (*mitswoth*) when regarded from the angle of having been divinely commanded.
- They are "statutes" (*chuqqoth*) when thought of as immutable,
- And "laws" (*toroth*) insofar as they involve divine instruction or teaching.

MacArthur: God confirmed the Abrahamic Covenant with Isaac, stressing the same 3 elements as before: land, see, and blessing. He appended specific honorable mention of Abraham's obedience in response to all of God's words. . . Although Abraham was commended for his deeds, the Abrahamic Covenant was an unconditional covenant grounded in God's sovereign will (cf. **Lv 26:44,45**).

5. (:6) At Peace in Gerar

"So Isaac lived in Gerar."

Parunak: So God encourages Isaac to remain in the land with the assurance of his Presence and his Blessing. There will be trying times, but only under God's personal supervision and care, and with his creative power always ready to intervene. Thus Isaac, like us, is assured that "all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purposes" (**Rom 8**).

B. (:7-11) Deception Regarding His Relationship to Rebekah

1. (:7) Deception of His Father Abraham Repeated

"When the men of the place asked about his wife, he said, 'She is my sister,' for he was afraid to say, 'my wife,' thinking, 'the men of the place might kill me on account of Rebekah, for she is beautiful.'"

Not surprising when children fall into the same patterns of sin as their parents

Leupold: Sin is not logical

But disappointing failure of faith on the part of Isaac right after the affirming protection and blessing promised by his Covenant-keeping God

2. (:8) Deception Exposed

"And it came about, when he had been there a long time, that Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out through a window, and saw, and behold, Isaac was caressing his wife Rebekah."

S. Lewis Johnson: Abimelech looked down through a window. You could see him peeking down through the lattice. And there he saw Isaac caressing his wife, Rebekah. Now, too old to know what he was doing, of course. The Authorized Version says he was “sporting with” his wife. Now, Isaac’s name means “laughter” by the way, and the word translated here “sporting” or translated “caressing” is from the same root. So, it is almost as if Isaac, whose name means “laughter” was taking playful merry liberties with Rebekah. And he was doing some things that when Abimelech looked down, he said, “Ah! She is not his sister!”

3. (:9-10) Deception Rebuked

“Then Abimelech called Isaac and said, ‘Behold, certainly she is your wife! How then did you say, ‘She is my sister ’?’ And Isaac said to him, ‘Because I said, ‘Lest I die on account of her.’ And Abimelech said, ‘What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.’”

4. (:11) Deception Overturned -- Providential Protection

“So Abimelech charged all the people, saying, ‘He who touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.’”

C. (:12-17) Dismissal to the Valley of Gerar

1. (:12-14a) Prosperity by the Blessing of God

“Now Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And the LORD blessed him, and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy; for he had possessions of flocks and herds and a great household,”

2. (:14b-15) Problem Due to Envy Leading to Strife

a. Envy

“so that the Philistines envied him.”

b. Strife

“Now all the wells which his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines stopped up by filling them with earth.”

3. (:16-17) Providential Redirection

a. (:16) Dismissal

“Then Abimelech said to Isaac, ‘Go away from us, for you are too powerful for us.’”

Hughes: Abimelech’s command that Isaac go away may have been motivated not only by his fear of Isaac’s sudden power, but also by the realization that he could not protect him.

b. (:17) Departure

“And Isaac departed from there and camped in the valley of Gerar, and settled there.”

II. (:18-25) SECOND INSTANCE OF GOD REAFFIRMING HIS COVENANT PROMISES IN TIMES OF TRIAL IN VALLEY OF GERAR – POSSESSING WELLS AT REHOBOTH AND BEERSHEBA

A. (:18-22) Resettling -- Digging Series of Wells

1. (:18) Redigging Abraham's Wells

“Then Isaac dug again the wells of water which had been dug in the days of his father Abraham, for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the same names which his father had given them.”

Not easy to dig wells in that culture

Constable: His ability to dig wells indicates both his wealth and his intention to establish permanent residence in the land.

Deffinbaugh: Digging a well was considered tantamount to a claim of ownership of the land on which it was located. It enabled a man to dwell there and to sustain herds. Rather than recognize this claim, the Philistines sought to wipe it out by filling up the wells dug by Abraham. Their desire to overthrow all claim on their land was so intense that they would rather fill in a well, an asset of great value in such an arid land, than to allow this claim to remain unchallenged.

2. (:19-20) Digging Well of Esek

“But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of flowing water, the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with the herdsmen of Isaac, saying, ‘The water is ours!’ So he named the well Esek, because they contended with him.

3. (:21) Digging Well of Sitnah

“Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over it too, so he named it Sitnah.”

4. (:22) Digging Well of Rehoboth

“And he moved away from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he named it Rehoboth, for he said, ‘At last the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.’”

Hughes: The astonishing thing here is that Isaac kept finding water in time of famine! Clearly, God was with him and was blessing him. And now Isaac had Rehoboth – room to expand and rest and worship.

Parunak: —Finally, he is able to dig a well without opposition. He recognizes this freedom as a blessing from the Lord, and an assurance of future provision:

• *“For now the LORD hath made room for us.”* This is the first instance in Scripture of a common idiom for the Lord’s blessing, the notion of being unconstrained and in a large place. Though he has labored hard for this well, his focus is on the divine blessing that it represents, both past and future.

• “*We shall be fruitful in the land.*” Ever since Genesis 1, “fruitfulness” has been the heart of God’s blessing: to Adam and Eve (**1:28**), Noah (**9:1**), Abraham (**17:6**), Ishmael (**17:20**). From this it appears that Jacob and Esau are not yet born; he is still waiting in faith for the promised seed.

Application: Isaac’s behavior during this period shows three commendable qualities.

1. He perseveres in the face of discouragement. Having set his hand to the plow, he does not turn back (**Luke 9:62**)
2. He does not strive, but repeatedly turns the other cheek, manifesting the attitude commended by the Lord in **Matt 5:38-42**. Far from being reserved for the Millennium (Scofield), these high standards characterize God’s people in every age when they trust in him.
3. He claims no credit for his ultimate success, but recognizes that it is due to God’s grace.

Scott Grant: Literally, they find “*living water*,” [water coming from a spring] which hints that these were spiritual people who were looking for more than water for the body. The Lord calls himself “*the fountain of living waters*” (**Jeremiah 2:13**). Also, once again, Isaac encounters opposition because of his success. The herdsmen of Gerar claim ownership of the water and quarrel with Isaac’s herdsmen. Isaac’s people dig another well, and a quarrel ensues once again. It isn’t until he moves away from the herdsmen and digs a third well that he encounters no opposition. He gives the first two wells names that commemorate the conflicts.

B. (:23-24) Reaffirmation -- Reaffirming Abrahamic Covenant Promises and the Favorable Presence of God

“Then he went up from there to Beersheba. 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 the sake of My servant Abraham.’”

Deffinbaugh: I have come to understand **verses 23-25** as the key to the interpretation of **chapter 26**. Here a very strange thing happens. Up to this time Isaac’s decision as to where he should stay was based upon the finding of abundant water and the absence of hostilities. But now, having dug a well that was uncontested, we would have expected Isaac to dwell there. Instead we are told that he moved on to Beersheba, with no reason stated for this move: “*Then he went up from there to Beersheba*” (**verse 23**).

I believe that a significant change has occurred in Isaac’s thinking. Circumstances had previously shaped most of his decisions, but now something deeper and more noble seems to be giving direction in his life. Beersheba was the first place that Abraham had gone with Isaac after they came down from the “sacrifice” on Mount Moriah (**Genesis 22:19**). Isaac knew that God had promised to give him the land promised to his father Abraham (**26:3-5**). I believe he had finally come to see that through all the opposition over the wells he had dug, God had been guiding him back to the land of promise, back to those places where Abraham had walked in fellowship with God. Personally, I believe that Isaac went up to Beersheba because he sensed on a spiritual level that this was where God wanted him to be. If God had previously been “driving” Isaac through opposition, now Isaac was willing to be led.

The decision was shown to be the right one, for God immediately spoke words of reassurance.

C. (:25) Response: 4 Key Ingredients of Spiritual Vitality

1. Praise / Worship / Consecration

“So he built an altar there,”

(12:7, 8; 13:4, 18; 22:9; cf. 21:33)

2. Proclamation / Prayer / Dependence

“and called upon the name of the LORD,”

3. Pilgrim Mentality / Dwelling in Peace and Rest

“and pitched his tent there;”

4. Prosperity / Spiritual Life and Vitality

“and there Isaac's servants dug a well.”

III. (:26-33) THIRD INSTANCE OF GOD REAFFIRMING HIS COVENANT PROMISES IN TIMES OF TRIAL VIA TESTIMONY OF ABIMELECH LEADING TO MUTUAL PEACE PACT AND PROSPERITY IN BEERSHEBA

A. (:26-31) Peace Pact with Abimelech

1. (:26-27) Initiation of the Peace Pact

a. (:26) Impressive Initiation

“Then Abimelech came to him from Gerar with his adviser Ahuzzath, and Phicol the commander of his army.”

Quite the powerful entourage approaching Isaac

b. (:27) Surprising Initiation

“And Isaac said to them, ‘Why have you come to me, since you hate me, and have sent me away from you?’”

2. (:28-29) Invitation to the Peace Pact

a. (:28a) Supernatural Insight Regarding the Favorable Presence of God

“And they said, ‘We see plainly that the LORD has been with you;’”

b. (:28b-29a) Substance of the Peace Pact

“so we said, ‘Let there now be an oath between us, even between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you, that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good, and have sent you away in peace.’”

c. (:29b) Summary Testimony Regarding God’s Blessing on Isaac

“You are now the blessed of the LORD.”

Parunak: This declaration of God’s blessing by a king outside the official line of promise is parallel to Melchizedek’s blessing of Abraham in **ch. 14**, and continues to emphasize the parallel between Abraham and his son.

3. (:30-31) Institution of the Peace Pact

a. (:30) Celebration of the Peace Pact

“Then he made them a feast, and they ate and drank.”

b. (:31) Cementing the Peace Pact

*“And in the morning they arose early and exchanged oaths;
then Isaac sent them away and they departed from him in peace.”*

B. (:32-33) Prosperity at Beersheba

1. (:32) Blessing of God

“Now it came about on the same day, that Isaac's servants came in and told him about the well which they had dug, and said to him, ‘We have found water.’”

2. (:33) Binding Oath

“So he called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.”

“well of the oath”

(:34-35) CLOSING TRIAL – FAMILY HEARTACHE

“And when Esau was forty years old he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; and they brought grief to Isaac and Rebekah.”

S. Lewis Johnson: Esau neither desired the blessing of God nor did he dread the curse of God. It illustrates again the sovereignty of the grace of God. There was a family in Lyons in France that had two children, two men, two boys. One of them was named John. From his earliest days, he was studious, thoughtful, reverent. And later at the age of 27, he wrote the first edition of a book that became one of the world’s greatest books and certainly one of the greatest in the Western world, affecting our Western civilization probably more than any other one volume. It was entitled *‘The Institutes of the Christian Religion’*. When he died in Geneva in 1564, he bequeathed to the Western world some of the great principles by which we live today. He had another brother. His name was Charles. Charles was different from John. He pursued a course of profligacy and dissipation, lived a life as worthless and infamous as his brother’s life was noble and glorious. How do you explain the difference between the two men? A Presbyterian minister said, “You explain the difference in choice.” But how do you explain the choice? How do you explain the choice by which John Calvin became the man that he did, and Charles Calvin became the man that he became? You explain the choice of the sovereign mercy of God. That is the way John explained it. That is the way Paul explains it. That is the way Malachi explains it. That is the way Moses explained it. *“Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated.”* It is the sovereignty of the

grace of God. But it is justified and men are responsible and Esau is responsible and evidences his own failure by the kind of life that he lived.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What sins have you seen that have persisted as generational sins in your family?
- 2) What does it mean to you that Jesus has promised “*I am with you always*”?
- 3) When or How have the promises of God fortified you with grit and determination and perseverance?
- 4) What is the spiritual significance of the wells of water which God provided to sustain Isaac and his household?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: Moses has introduced the struggle between Jacob and Esau over the birthright, a struggle that culminates in the theft of the blessing in **ch. 27**. Intervening between these two episodes, the present chapter serves two functions, each rebuking one of the sons.

1. In rebuke of Esau, It shows what it means to be the chosen patriarch. It is to “*walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham*” and enjoy the blessing that God gave him. Here we see the similarity between Isaac and Abraham, particularly with regard to the blessings that God gave him. This is what Esau is throwing away. Particularly since this this appears to be a flash-back, Esau may be presumed to know this history.

2. In rebuke of Jacob, it shows how Isaac imitates Abraham’s handling of strife by turning the other cheek. Abraham did this with respect to Lot; Isaac does it with respect to the contention over wells.

W. H. Griffith Thomas: Spirit of Meekness --

It is noteworthy that all through his life Isaac’s temperament was of a passive rather than of an active nature. During his childhood he was subject to the insults of Ishmael, in his manhood he was taken to Moriah and bound there for sacrifice, and a wife was chosen for him by his father. He accepted the rebuke of Abimelech with meekness, he and his servants yielded to the Philistines about the well, and in later life we can see the same spirit of passive yielding in his relations with Rebekah and his two sons. And yet in spite of all this meekness the Philistines testified to him as a man of power and might, and begged that he would not do them any harm. What a testimony this is to the spirit of true gentleness and meekness. The world thinks ver little of meekness, but it is one of the prime graces of Christianity.

S. Lewis Johnson: 3 Lessons from this chapter:

- One is, how believers meet difficulties in their daily lives, and Isaac gives us some good instruction concerning that.

- We also have an illustration of the sovereignty of the grace of God; even after he lies, God blesses him richly. One might have expected some disciplinary experiences on the part of Isaac, but he does not seem to have any. God pours out tremendous physical and material blessings upon this man, even though he has lied so abysmally about his wife, Rebekah. It is an illustration of the sovereignty of the grace of God in his dealings with men.
- And I think also one of the great lessons of the chapter is the wisdom of meekness, manifested in the life of Isaac. He was a meek man. In this, he was like our Lord.

S. Lewis Johnson: In the final analysis, of course, he stands as a beautiful example of Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6 where Paul writes, “Being confident of this very thing, that He that hath begun a work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” It is one of the great promises of the word of God. Now those who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ will be sanctified for God loves His saints and works toward their ultimate sanctification. We may make it difficult for Him, but the sovereignty of grace shall ultimately triumph.

Scott Grant: Isaac’s interaction with Abimelech shows up Jacob for his treatment of Esau in **Genesis 25:27-34**. When Esau came in from the field, Jacob bargained for his birthright and offered him lentil stew. When Abimelech comes to Isaac, Isaac enters into a covenant with him and makes him a feast. Esau defiantly “ate and drank, and rose and went on his way.” Abimelech “ate and drank” as well but lingered over the feast and “arose” only when it was morning.

Earlier, Abimelech, feeling threatened, told Isaac, “Go away from us, for you are too powerful for us.” That uneasy parting is now replaced by a parting of peace when Isaac sends Abimelech away. In modern parlance, this parting brings closure. This story is sandwiched between two stories that end in the uneasy parting of Jacob and Esau (Genesis 25:34, 27:41-28:5), but it raises hope that reconciliation is possible for the two brothers and that, perhaps, one day they will meet and part on better terms. . .

From the perspective of this passage, famine, failure and conflict are designed by God to shape our faith and bring us to the open spaces where we can make a feast for the people of our land. We start out searching for water for our souls; we find the fountain of living waters; and we make a feast for our neighbors. We start out in famine and end up making a feast.

TEXT: Genesis 27:1-46

TITLE: *STEALING THE BLESSING*

BIG IDEA:

GOD CAN ADVANCE HIS KINGDOM PROGRAM DESPITE SELFISH AGENDAS

INTRODUCTION:

Why do people do what they do? Natural depravity teaches us that we live in a fallen world with a sin nature that clings to us until we are finally transformed and glorified by the grace of God. So it should be no surprise that our motivations are tainted and often even driven by selfishness. Our intent should be to live to promote God's kingdom purposes and see that He is glorified in all that we say and do. But the sad reality is that selfish agendas determine much of our decision making. As we pursue our own ambitions and prosperity apart from dependence upon God, we find that the end does not justify the means. Apart from righteousness, we will sow sour consequences from our sinful behavior.

Yet God is still in control and working out His sovereign determinations. History is ultimately "His story" and we cannot knock His plans off track. Though we prove faithless at times, He always demonstrates His faithfulness. The covenant promises are under His control and outworking.

Leupold: This chapter offers one of the most singular instances of God's overruling providence controlling the affairs of sinful men and so disposing of them that the interests of God's kingdom are safeguarded. . . This chapter portrays an entire family attempting to carry out their responsibilities by their physical senses, without faith.

Hughes: Everyone in the family sought the blessings of God without bending the knee to God. This little family was fraught with ambition, jealousy, envy, lying, deceit, coveting, malice, manipulation, stubbornness, and stupidity.

GOD CAN ADVANCE HIS KINGDOM PROGRAM DESPITE SELFISH AGENDAS

I. (:1-29) SELFISH AGENDA INVOLVES SCHEMING AND DECEPTION TO SUBVERT THE PLANS OF OTHERS

A. (:1-4) Isaac's Intentions = to Bless Esau

"Now it came about, when Isaac was old, and his eyes were too dim to see, that he called his older son Esau and said to him, 'My son.' And he said to him, 'Here I am.' And Isaac said, 'Behold now, I am old and I do not know the day of my death. Now then, please take your gear, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field and hunt game for me; and prepare a savory dish for me such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, so that my soul may bless you before I die.'"

Parunak: Seventeen years pass after Esau's marriage, seventeen years in which Isaac and Rebekah mourn their son's choice of spouses (**26:35**). It ought to be clear to him that Esau is no fit vehicle for the patriarchal blessing. In addition, he must have known of the promise God made to Rebekah (**25:23**) that "*the elder shall serve the younger.*" In spite of that, when Isaac thinks that the time has come for him to die, he attempts to deliver the blessing to Esau, and not to

Jacob. . .

his motive is wrong: he views offering the blessing as a way to gain yet another bowl of Esau's stew. He is willing to trade the blessing, properly belonging to Jacob, to Esau in exchange for food, just as Esau was willing to exchange the birthright, properly his own, to Jacob in exchange for food. The same weakness we have seen in the son is here evident in the father. . .

Isaac's sin is that he views the blessing as his personal possession, to dispense how he will, rather than seeing it as a trust from God for which he is the steward, and which he must discharge according to God's command. Here is an important difference between the spiritual and the carnal Christian. Both recognize God as the source of their blessings, but one feels that now they are his absolutely to dispose of as he pleases, while the other recognizes that they are held in trust and under divine authority.

Steven Cole: This is a premeditated plot on Isaac's part to overthrow the revealed purpose of God. Sadly, Isaac's reasons were based totally on the flesh: He had a taste for Esau's game (25:28; 27:3-4). Here, on what Isaac thought was his deathbed, he can only think of indulging himself once more with his favorite meal prepared by his favorite son. He was gratifying his sensual desires in opposition to God's plan. It's a sorry picture. . .

Isaac wanted his way, not God's way. He liked Esau and his game over Jacob. No matter that Esau was a godless man, that he had despised his birthright, that he had married Canaanite wives. Isaac liked him, so he planned to give everything to Esau, as is clear from the mistaken blessing on Jacob (27:28--29, 37-38).

MacArthur: Ignoring the words of God to Rebekah (25:23), forgetting Esau's bartered birthright (25:33), and overlooking Esau's grievous marriages (26:35), Isaac was still intent on treating Esau as the eldest and granting him the blessing of birthright, and so arranged for his favorite meal before bestowing final fatherly blessing on his favorite son.

B. (:5-17) Rebekah's Scheming = to Steal the Blessing for Jacob

1. (:5-10) Instructions to Jacob

"And Rebekah was listening while Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game to bring home, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, 'Behold, I heard your father speak to your brother Esau, saying, 'Bring me some game and prepare a savory dish for me, that I may eat, and bless you in the presence of the LORD before my death.' "Now therefore, my son, listen to me as I command you. Go now to the flock and bring me two choice kids from there, that I may prepare them as a savory dish for your father, such as he loves. Then you shall bring it to your father, that he may eat, so that he may bless you before his death.'"

Steven Cole: Rebekah wanted God's choice (Jacob), but for selfish reasons. He was her favorite. He was her pawn in her power struggle against her husband. So even though on the surface she could claim, "I just want God's will," the claim was a pious fraud. Rebekah wanted her way. She was willing to deceive her blind husband and to draw her son into deception to gain her goal.

2. (:11-14) Reservations of Jacob

a. (:11-12) Reservations Offered

“And Jacob answered his mother Rebekah, ‘Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man and I am a smooth man. Perhaps my father will feel me, then I shall be as a deceiver in his sight; and I shall bring upon myself a curse and not a blessing.’”

Parunak: Literally, “a mocker.” Jacob fully recognizes how disrespectful it is to take advantage of his father’s blindness and to subvert his declared purpose. The only other use of the verb in the OT is in **2 Chron 36:16**, where it describes how Israel mocked God’s messengers until he sent them into captivity in Babylon. The chronicler may in fact have **Gen 27** in mind; Jacob also is exiled as a result of his mockery.

Steven Cole: Clearly, Jacob is not a spiritually-minded man. He does not fear God or His moral law; he only fears that the scheme might not work and he might get cursed instead of blessed. He wanted the wealth and advantage which went along with the blessing. Like Rebekah, Jacob was seeking his own way under the guise of seeking God’s way.

b. (:13-14) Reservations Dismissed

“But his mother said to him, ‘Your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me.’ So he went and got them, and brought them to his mother; and his mother made savory food such as his father loved.”

3. (:15-17) Preparations for Deception

“Then Rebekah took the best garments of Esau her elder son, which were with her in the house, and put them on Jacob her younger son. And she put the skins of the kids on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. She also gave the savory food and the bread, which she had made, to her son Jacob.”

Deffinbaugh: What a scene that must have been. Jacob was all decked out in his brother’s clothes, probably three sizes too large for him. And to top it all off, he had the skins of goats wrapped around his arms and neck.

C. (:18-20) Jacob’s Deception

1. (:18-19) Presentation to His Father

“Then he came to his father and said, ‘My father.’ And he said, ‘Here I am. Who are you, my son?’ And Jacob said to his father, ‘I am Esau your first-born; I have done as you told me. Get up, please, sit and eat of my game, that you may bless me.’”

2. (:20) Argument Based on the Providence of God

“And Isaac said to his son, ‘How is it that you have it so quickly, my son?’ And he said, ‘Because the LORD your God caused it to happen to me.’”

Parunak: Application: Jacob’s sin is deception, pure and simple. He does not care that among

the six things that the Lord hates are a lying tongue, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren (**Prov 6:17,19**).

MacArthur: Although Jacob received Isaac's blessing that day, the deceit caused severe consequences:

- 1) He never saw his mother after that;
- 2) Esau wanted him dead;
- 3) Laban, his uncle, deceived him;
- 4) his family life was full of conflict; and
- 5) He was exiled for years from his family.

By the promise of God he would have received the birthright (25:23). He didn't need to scheme this deception with his mother.

D. (:21-27) Isaac's Gullibility Despite Attempts at Verification – Using All His Senses

1. (:21-23) Attempt #1 – Voice and Touch (of the Hands)

“Then Isaac said to Jacob, ‘Please come close, that I may feel you, my son, whether you are really my son Esau or not.’ So Jacob came close to Isaac his father, and he felt him and said, ‘The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau.’ And he did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him,”

2. (:24-25) Attempt #2 – Taste -- Venison Recipe

“And he said, ‘Are you really my son Esau?’ And he said, ‘I am.’ So he said, ‘Bring it to me, and I will eat of my son's game, that I may bless you.’ And he brought it to him, and he ate; he also brought him wine and he drank.”

3. (:26-27) Attempt #3 -- Smell

“Then his father Isaac said to him, ‘Please come close and kiss me, my son.’ So he came close and kissed him; and when he smelled the smell of his garments, he blessed him and said, ‘See, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field which the LORD has blessed;”

E. (:28-29) Isaac's Unintended Blessing on Jacob

1. Prosperity

*“Now may God give you of the dew of heaven,
And of the fatness of the earth, And an abundance of grain and new wine;”*

Hughes: *Dew* is a favorite Hebrew metaphor for God's goodness in providing abundance and invigoration. Dew has always provided the main source of water during the rainless summer months when the water-laden air of the Mediterranean is condensed by the cool night temperatures to a life-giving mist.

2. Power

*“May peoples serve you,
And nations bow down to you;”*

3. Preeminence

*“Be master of your brothers,
And may your mother's sons bow down to you.”*

4. Protection

*“Cursed be those who curse you,
And blessed be those who bless you.”*

II. (:30-46) SELFISH AGENDA INVOLVES FAMILY DYSFUNCTION

A. (:30-31) Esau's Expectations

“Now it came about, as soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, and Jacob had hardly gone out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting. Then he also made savory food, and brought it to his father; and he said to his father, ‘Let my father arise, and eat of his son's game, that you may bless me.’”

B. (:32-40) Esau's Limited Blessing

1. (:32-37) Stolen Blessing Unmasked

“And Isaac his father said to him, ‘Who are you?’ And he said, ‘I am your son, your first-born, Esau.’ Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, ‘Who was he then that hunted game and brought it to me, so that I ate of all of it before you came, and blessed him? Yes, and he shall be blessed.’ When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, ‘Bless me, even me also, O my father!’ And he said, ‘Your brother came deceitfully, and has taken away your blessing.’ Then he said, ‘Is he not rightly named Jacob, for he has supplanted me these two times? He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing.’ And he said, ‘Have you not reserved a blessing for me?’ But Isaac answered and said to Esau, ‘Behold, I have made him your master, and all his relatives I have given to him as servants; and with grain and new wine I have sustained him. Now as for you then, what can I do, my son?’”

Parunak: This resolution suggests that at this point, Isaac begins to put it all together. His purpose was thwarted, but the divine purpose was not. Isaac neither can nor will seek to turn back what has happened. Thus *“by faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau,”* **Heb 11:20**. In both paragraphs, Isaac ends up blessing Jacob— in the first mistakenly, but here deliberately. Thus the blessing is ratified. This is confirmed by the fact that when Isaac later sends Jacob away to Haran, there is not the least hint of reproof for what he has done in taking the blessing.

Deffinbaugh: I do not think that we can say Isaac gave the first blessing (to Jacob) in faith. Isaac was attempting to undermine God's choice of Jacob. That can hardly be an act of faith. I think Isaac's faith is evident when his devious plan is exposed and providentially overruled. It is then

that Isaac pronounces the “blessing” on Esau in **27:39-40**, which subjects Esau to his younger brother. It is only then that Isaac blesses Jacob by pronouncing upon him the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant. By faith Isaac finally pronounces blessings in accord with God’s revealed word.

2. **(:38-40) Secondary Blessing**

“And Esau said to his father, ‘Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.’ So Esau lifted his voice and wept. Then Isaac his father answered and said to him, ‘Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling, And away from the dew of heaven from above. And by your sword you shall live, And your brother you shall serve; But it shall come about when you become restless, That you shall break his yoke from your neck.’”

Constable: The mountains of Edom are some of the most desolate and barren of any on earth today. They stand to the southeast of the Dead Sea. Esau’s descendants would subsist by hunting people, just as Esau had subsisted by hunting game.

The Edomites served, revolted from, and were conquered by the Israelites repeatedly during their history. Saul defeated them after they enjoyed a long period of independence (**1 Samuel 14:47**). Then David made them his vassals (**2 Samuel 8:14**). They tried to revolt under Solomon but were unsuccessful (**1 Kings 9:14ff.**). The Edomites were subject to Judah until King Joram’s reign when they rebelled successfully. In Amaziah’s reign Judah again subjugated them (**2 Kings 14:7**). They finally achieved permanent freedom from Judah during Ahaz’s reign (**2 Kings 16:6**). John Hyrcanus conquered Edom about 129 B.C, forced the Edomites to submit to circumcision, and incorporated them into the Jewish nation. Later through Antipater and Herod they established the Idumean dynasty over Judah that lasted until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D 70. The writing prophets sometimes used the Edomites as the epitome of Israel’s enemies.

C. (:41) Esau’s Grudge Against Jacob

“So Esau bore a grudge against Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him; and Esau said to himself, ‘The days of mourning for my father are near; then I will kill my brother Jacob.’”

III. (:42-45) SELFISH AGENDA INVOLVES UNFORESEEN DANGERS -- REBEKAH’S WARNING TO JACOB

A. (:42) Without Submission to God’s Sovereignty There Can Be No Security

“Now when the words of her elder son Esau were reported to Rebekah, she sent and called her younger son Jacob, and said to him, ‘Behold your brother Esau is consoling himself concerning you, by planning to kill you.’”

B. (:43-44) Without Family Love There Can Be No Joy

“Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee to Haran, to my brother Laban! And stay with him a few days, until your brother’s fury subsides, until your brother’s anger against you subsides, and he forgets what you did to him. Then I shall

send and get you from there.”

C. (:45) Without Faith There Can Be No Hope

“Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?”

(:46) EPILOGUE – SELFISH AGENDA PROVES ULTIMATELY UNFULFILLING

“And Rebekah said to Isaac, ‘I am tired of living because of the daughters of Heth; if Jacob takes a wife from the daughters of Heth, like these, from the daughters of the land, what good will my life be to me?’”

Parunak: Application: Our fleshly actions cannot frustrate God’s purposes, but they may bring great grief to ourselves.

Constable: This account is another remarkable demonstration of God’s ability to use the sins of men and women to accomplish His purposes and at the same time punish the sinners for their sins.

Steven Cole: When we seek our own way, we never get what we wanted and we pay a high price.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What do you think were the motivations of Isaac and Rebekah in their respective roles in this drama?
- 2) Even when God thwarts selfish agendas to accomplish His kingdom purposes, how do the consequences of lies and deceit bear out the principle that one sows what he reaps?
- 3) What does this passage teach us about situation ethics or a philosophy that the end justifies the means?
- 4) How does **2 Tim. 2:13** serve to summarize the outworking of God’s sovereignty in this context?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Brian Borgman: Stolen Blessing, Seed Saved

If you think your family has problems! Dysfunctional family

Structure: 6 conversations in the text:

- 1) (:1-4) Isaac and Esau
Isaac’s spiritual blindness – parallel to his physical condition – cannot see the character of Esau or the motives of his own heart

Emphasis on appetites of Isaac

Can't taste that well either – can't tell difference between domestic goat and wild elk

Not everyone who starts out well, finishes well

2) (:5-17) Rebekah and Jacob

Deceit to save the seed; amazing drama; listening like Sarah; gives a series of orders;

Obvious parental favoritism

Her methods are deplorable; deceiving her bling husband

Takes things into her own hand to achieve what she perceives to be a good end;

Wants to leave nothing to chance or Providence;

3) (:18-29) Isaac and Jacob (pretending to be Esau)

4) (:30-40) Isaac and real Esau

5) (:41-45) Rebekah and Jacob

6) (:46) Rebekah and Isaac

A family conspiring against one another

Isaac attempting to do an end-around God's promises – disregarding word of promise;

God's purposes will stand; even when people don't follow the pathway of faith;

What they gain can never restore what they end up losing;

Isaac and Rebekah will fade from the scene without significance after this scene;

Parunak: The theme of this chapter is Jacob's theft of the blessing, to be distinguished from the birthright at the end of **ch. 25**.

• "*Birthright*" *bekorah* is literally "firstborned-ness." This status conveyed on the holder a double portion of the inheritance and the position of being the family's head in the next generation. Given the promise of seed and blessing granted to Abraham, this status would have a special, spiritual meaning.

• "*Blessing*" *berakah* is the father's prayer for God's bounty to a son. It would naturally encompass the benefits of the birthright, but as the example of Jacob's blessing on the sons of Joseph shows (**48:14**), it is ultimately guided by parental discretion rather than birth order. . .

Esau's attempt to reclaim the blessing after first despising it is an example of the principle presented in **Isa 55:6** ("*Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near*") and **2 Cor 6:2** ("*For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*"). The door of salvation does not stand open forever. There is a day of salvation, an acceptable time. Those who spurn God at such a time may not have another chance. **Prov 1:20-31; Psa 2**.

Steven Cole: It is presented as a drama with four characters.

- First (**27:1-4**), Isaac comes on the stage with his selfish desire, based on his appetite, to give the blessing to Esau, who goes off to comply with Isaac's plan.
- In scene two (**27:5-17**), Rebekah, who was eavesdropping, hatches her plot to deceive Isaac and get the blessing for Jacob.
- In the third scene (**27:18-29**), Jacob successfully carries out his mother's scheme.
- In the fourth scene (**27:30-40**), Isaac and Esau discover they have been deceived. Isaac can only give a lesser blessing to Esau.
- In the conclusion (**27:41-46**), we see the consequences: Esau plans to kill Jacob, while

Rebekah plots how to divert that crisis.

Each of the characters illustrates the theme: Each seeks his or her own way; each is frustrated in not getting what he sought; and each pays a high price.

The drama is marked by some undercurrents which run through the chapter. The first is **haste or urgency**. Isaac seems to be near death's door when he summons Esau to his bedside. Actually, Isaac, who was 137, lived 43 more years. But you get the feeling that he has one foot in the grave and the other on a banana peel . . .

A second undercurrent which runs through the drama is **deception or conspiracy**. In the famous words of **Sir Walter Scott**, "Oh, what a tangled web we weave, When first we practice to deceive."

A third undercurrent is **mistrust**. You can't carry on secrets and manipulative plots in a family without eroding trust. Isaac didn't trust Rebekah or Jacob or he would have included them in the plan to give away his blessing. Rebekah didn't trust Isaac or she wouldn't have gone to such elaborate lengths to deceive him. Jacob knew that his father wouldn't trust him, as seen in his comment to his mother, "*Perhaps my father will feel me, then I shall be as a deceiver [mockery] in his sight; ...*" (**27:12**). Neither Jacob nor Esau trusted each other. It was a family riddled with mistrust because it operated on the basis of deception and secrecy instead of honesty and openness. . .

Let me draw **four concluding lessons** from this drama:

- (1) If we sow to the flesh, we'll reap from the flesh
- (2) You can't thwart the ultimate purpose of God, so why not work with Him, not against Him?
- (3) Godly ends do not justify wrong means.
- (4) The way to find your life is to lose it for Christ's sake

Many Christian counselors are telling hurting people, "Assert yourself! Stand up for your rights! Don't be codependent! You've got a right to some happiness in life, so go for it!" But God's Word is clear: If you seek your own way, you won't get what you want and you'll pay a high price in family conflict. If you'll die to your way and seek God's way, He will give you the desires of your heart. You've got to decide which will be your theme song: "I did it my way," or, "I did it God's way?"

Bruce Goettsche: The idea of "the end justifying the means" is simply a smokescreen to keep from admitting our sin. And if we won't admit our sin we can't know the freedom of His forgiveness.

- we rationalize immorality with "but we really love one another"
- we rationalize our materialism with "we just want our kids to have the best"
- we justify our hatred by saying "someone needs to stand up to that person"
- we justify our lies with "I was trying to protect them"
- we excuse our absence in worship with "Sunday is our family day"
- we excuse our pride by calling it "positive self-esteem"

- we feed our minds with immorality and godlessness and excuse it with "It's entertainment"
- we tear people down and say, "I was just having fun"

TEXT: Genesis 28:1-22

TITLE: OVERWHELMED BY GOD'S GRACIOUS BLESSING

BIG IDEA:

THE SPECTACULAR PROMISES OF SOVEREIGN GRACE CONSTITUTE A DIVINE BLESSING THAT CANNOT BE DUPLICATED BY FLESHLY EFFORTS AND EVOKE A RESPONSE OF CONSECRATED DEVOTION

INTRODUCTION:

This event that climaxes in the famous dream of the ladder to heaven may very well have been the point of conversion for sinful Jacob. In the previous chapter, his besetting sins of lying and deceit were much in evidence. Surely this encounter with God's sovereign grace must have overwhelmed Jacob as he reflected on God's decision to set His love on him and confirm the Abrahamic promises to him as opposed to his brother Esau. The spectacular promises communicated in such dramatic fashion serve as a model for Jesus who presented Himself to Nathanael (**John 1:51**) as the ultimate revelation of God and the only way to access the true God of heaven.

The fleshly attempts of Esau to try to worm his way into the primary blessing of his father Isaac remind us of the futility of seeking God's favor apart from the working of His sovereign grace. Copy-cat spirituality will fail miserably every time.

But Jacob is surprised on his journey back to his family relatives (on his mission of obedience to obtain a suitable bride) by the intervention of God who wants to cement a faith relationship with His chosen child of promise. The response of Jacob in consecrated devotion should be duplicated in the lives of all of God's children as they as well are overwhelmed by God's gracious blessings.

THE SPECTACULAR PROMISES OF SOVEREIGN GRACE CONSTITUTE A DIVINE BLESSING THAT CANNOT BE DUPLICATED BY FLESHLY EFFORTS AND EVOKE A RESPONSE OF CONSECRATED DEVOTION

I. (:1-9) BLESSING ON JACOB VIA GOD'S GRACE CONTRASTED WITH FLESHLY EFFORTS OF ESAU

A. (:1-5) Jacob Receives the Blessing of His Father as the Seed of Promise

1. (:1-2) Blessing of a Wife

"So Isaac called Jacob and blessed him and charged him, and said to him, 'You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel your mother's father; and from there take to yourself a wife from the daughters of Laban your mother's brother.'"

The blessing is coupled with a charge – this is the divine pattern
God's sovereignty – the blessing comes by way of grace ... yet that does not remove human responsibility – we are still charged with obedience

This journey was going to require effort and courage on the part of Jacob
Instructions are very specific

2. (:3-4) Blessing of Posterity

a. (:3) Patterned After Creation Blessing – Resulting in Plentiful Seed

“And may God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples.”

MacArthur: Significantly, *El Shaddai* was the name Isaac chose to employ when blessing Jacob. It was the name of sovereign power with which God had identified Himself to Abraham in covenant reaffirmation (**17:1**) which must have been an encouraging factor to both him and his son.

This is our prayer as we start a new church – it all hinges on the blessing of God Almighty and flows out from there to impact the lives of others; eventually the impact reaches *“a company of peoples”*

b. (:4) Perfected After Abrahamic Blessing – Rooted in the Promised Land

“May He also give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your descendants with you; that you may possess the land of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham.”

God has never forgotten His land promise; His people did not begin with full possession; the land was actually full of enemies and God’s elect are described as *sojourners*; but the nation of Israel will one day fully possess the land where the law of God will be the law of the land.

3. (:5) Blessing of Family

“Then Isaac sent Jacob away, and he went to Paddan-aram to Laban, son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, the mother of Jacob and Esau.”

Instant and complete obedience is always the key

B. (:6-9) Esau Seeks Blessing According to the Scheming of the Flesh

1. (:6-7) Cunning Scheming Always Looks to Gain An Edge

“Now Esau saw that Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him away to Paddan-aram, to take to himself a wife from there, and that when he blessed him he charged him, saying, ‘You shall not take a wife from the daughters of Canaan,’ and that Jacob had obeyed his father and his mother and had gone to Paddan-aram.”

Hughes: Parenthetically, the account tells us that Esau saw all of this . . . and that when Esau perceived that his Hittite wives were displeasing to his father, he too decided to marry a cousin, a daughter of Isaac’s half-brother Ishmael. Unspiritual, immoral Esau was slow to connect the dots. Esau was so clueless that he thought imitating Jacob’s marriage might curry his father’s blessing. Instead it demonstrated that he had no idea at all as to what God was about.

W. H. Griffith Thomas: Esau is one of those who . . . tries to do what God’s people do in the vain hope that somehow or other it will be pleasing to God (**Dods**, *Genesis*, in loc.). He will not do precisely what God requires, but something like it. He will not entirely give up the world and put God first in his life, but he will try to meet some of God’s wishes by a little alteration in his conduct. Instead of renouncing sin he will cover it with the glory of small virtues; but it is one

thing to conform to the outward practices of God's people; it is quite another to be thoroughly and truly godly at heart.

2. (:8-9) Copy-Cat Spirituality Fails Miserably Every Time

“So Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan displeased his father Isaac; and Esau went to Ishmael, and married, besides the wives that he had, Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, Abraham's son, the sister of Nebaioth.”

II. (:10-22) BLESSING ON JACOB (REINFORCING THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT) COMMUNICATED BY DIVINE VISITATION AND REVELATION

A. (:10-15) Jacob's Dream

1. (:10-11) Setting for the Dream – Sleeping on a Stone

“Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. And he came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head, and lay down in that place.”

Parunak: This is a trip of 470 miles as the crow flies, and much longer by foot. We hear nothing of the details of the journey, except this one episode. From Beersheba to Bethel is at least a four-days trip (over 80 km).

12:8; 13:3 -- The name “*Bethel*” became attached to the city by the Israelites, following Jacob's use of it for a location outside the town where God had met with him and previously with Abraham.

So the stage is set. He “*lighted upon the place.*” Evening just happens to overtake him as he is near the place where Abraham sacrificed. His own cultural background leads him to camp in the country rather than lodging in the city. It looks perfectly **accidental**, but **God has led him there** for an encounter that will change his life.

Lonely night:

- Esau could be trailing him
- Leaving his comfort zone behind
- Not knowing what lay ahead in his future

2. (:12) Symbolism of the Dream – Angels on a Heavenly Ladder

“And he had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.”

Gen. 11 – Tower of Babel represents man's attempts to reach into heaven and glorify himself; here we have God reaching down to man and glorifying Himself

John 1:51 quotes this passage – remember, angels serve as God's messengers

MacArthur: Jesus' point to Nathaniel was that just like Jacob experienced supernatural or heaven-sent revelation, Nathanael and the other disciples would experience supernatural communication confirming who Jesus was. Moreover, the term “*Son of Man*” replaced the ladder in Jacob's dream, signifying that Jesus was the means of access between God and man. . . The expression occurs 13 times [in John] and is most commonly associated with the themes of

crucifixion and suffering (3:14; 8:28) and revelation (6:27, 53) but also with eschatological authority (5:27, 9:30).

3. (:13-15) Spectacular Promises = the Substance of the Dream

a. (:13a) Relationship Promise

“And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, ‘I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac;’”

b. (:13b) Land Promise

“the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants.”

c. (:14) Seed Promise

“Your descendants shall also be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

d. (:15) Relationship Promise – Fourfold:

i. Abiding Presence

“And behold, I am with you,”

ii. Assured Protection

“and will keep you wherever you go,”

iii. Assured Guidance and Provision

“and will bring you back to this land;”

iv. Abiding Fulfillment

“for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.”

B. (:16-17) Jacob’s Dread

1. (:16) Awareness of the Presence of the Lord

“Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.’”

2. (:17) Afraid of His Intimate Access to God

“And he was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’”

C. (:18-22) Jacob's Devotion – Expressed in 3 Concrete Ways

1. (:18) Monument of Remembrance

“So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar, and poured oil on its top.”

2. (:19) Change of Identity

“And he called the name of that place Bethel; however, previously the name of the city had been Luz.”

3. (:20-22) Vow of Consecration

“Then Jacob made a vow, saying,”

a. Conditions – Fourfold:

i. Abiding Presence

“If God will be with me”

Tone is more like “*Since*” God has already committed to do the following . . .
There is a Greek construction that would signify that ...

ii. Assured Protection

“and will keep me on this journey that I take,”

iii. Assured Guidance and Provision

“and will give me food to eat and garments to wear,”

iv. Abiding Fulfillment

“and I return to my father's house in safety,”

b. Commitment

i. Expressed in Loyalty -- **Togetherness**

“then the LORD will be my God.”

ii. Expressed in Liturgy = **Temple Worship**

“And this stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house;”

iii. Expressed in Liberal Giving = **Tithing**

“and of all that Thou dost give me I will surely give a tenth to Thee.”

CONCLUSION:

What is our response to being overwhelmed by God's Sovereign Grace?
What is our response to being the recipient of God's Spectacular Promises?

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where has God demonstrated to us the futility of our own fleshly efforts?
- 2) What is the significance to us today of the gracious promises contained in the Abrahamic Covenant?
- 3) What are the practical applications of the symbolism of this heavenly ladder?
- 4) How do we respond to God's Sovereign Grace and the communication of His Spectacular Promises?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hughes: The reality is that there is a ladder that extends between Heaven and earth for us, and the one who controls that ladder from top to bottom is the Lord Himself. Astonishingly, he sends his angels to us as ministering spirits (cf. **Hebrews 1:14**). He directs our lives. He finds us in our solitary desolations and ministers to us.

Why? Because he is the God of grace. And he is not done with us. Truly, he will not be done with us in this life. We need to take these stupendous truths to heart. Our inner eye must perpetually behold the vision of the angel-freighted ladder superintended by the awesome Son of Man, who directs Heaven's traffic for our sanctification and his glory.

Dr. Mark Allison – Life of Jacob – **Recipient of Grace**

Rom. 8:30 – De Haan – these 4 phrases parallel lives of 4 patriarchs:

- Abraham predestined
- Isaac – calling of God
- Jacob – his sins and shortcomings revealed --- God had to justify him
- Joseph – glorified

These 4 phrases true of each of God's children;

What happened to each of us in salvation was God sovereignly seeking and saving us by His grace

Jacob called the supplanter; deceiver; liar; cheat up to this point
Here you have a meeting with God and great grace is demonstrated;
Possible he was converted at this point;
We must have the grace of God in our life to truly be blessed;
Grace is God's favor that we have not earned;

I. Jacob Received Saving Grace

Received a dream about salvation; was fleeing from his own family because of his sins; but God does not deal with him according to His sins; Jacob did not deserve this revelation from God; every knowledge of salvation you have you did not deserve;

Divine revelation vs. access to heaven – God showed him this ladder – symbolizes Christ Himself; **John 1:51** – the Word of God, the divine communicator; the Way to God; He is the ladder; only one way to God

II. Jacob Received Sovereign Grace

Lord chose Jacob over Esau to continue the promises made to Abraham; Future of nation of Israel will be glorious; Jacob did not win this promise by his lies and deceit; he did not constrain this promise out of God; he is surprised by this revelation; he goes to sleep with his head on a rock for a pillar and God awakens and communicates to him; God made this choice to exalt Jacob over Esau before they were even born;

Gen. 25:23 – Mal. 1:2 – Rom. 9:10ff

Spurgeon on this passage: deeper depths than we can plumb on this subject of God's Election and human responsibility

- The fact exists that God chose to love Jacob over Esau and this must be consistent with His character of love and goodness and justice
- The problem is you are asking only 1 question – should be asking 2 questions
 - o How could God love Jacob? Didn't deserve God's grace – Sovereign Grace
 - o How could God hate Esau? Condemned by his character and works – he was a sinner; refused to repent

We don't know who the elect are so we proclaim the gospel to all

III. Jacob Received Sanctifying Grace – set apart in a special way

Responded to grace by following the Lord even though his faith was not very strong;

David Thompson: Genesis 28

Failure should not bury us; it should be our teacher; In our relationship to the Lord, failure is a critical factor to spiritual success; cf. moments when Paul, Peter, David, Moses, Abraham failed. What do you do in the aftermath of sinful failures? Get your focus back on the Lord.

Jacob did some bizarre things in Chap. 27. Now he jumps back into his character of faithfulness.

4 Narrative Responses:

- 1) **(:1-5) Obedient response to Isaac** – he had lied and deceived his father; now he is called back into his father's presence; charged with returning to Laban's family to find a wife; went in the precise direction his father commanded; now back on track and God will bless him; when we have blown it God can still bless us in His grace; get back on track
- 2) **(:6-9) Esau's humanistic response** – operated by his own whims rather than the will of God; marrying Canaanite women had been a disgrace; now he comes up with another plan: marrying into Ishmael's family; came up with his own scheme; trying to manipulate the favor of Isaac so that he too will be blessed by God; not submitting to any authority; will miss God's blessing; God will never enter into a relationship with God on our terms; it must be on His terms
- 3) **(:10-15) Divine Appearance to Jacob** – things start happening when Jacob starts moving in the right direction; this ladder is more like a massive highway; God is with Jacob and will fulfill all the Abrahamic promises through Jacob and his seed; will not only be successful in

finding a wife but will produce the seed that will lead to the ultimate seed of the Messiah; what a thrilling moment for Jacob; You can cope with just about any difficulty if you have such promises from God; very rare when a person actually sees an angel and is aware of it; times in our life when heaven was looking out for us and protecting us

John 1:51 – Jesus says, I am the ladder, the link to a holy God;

4) (:16-22) **Jacob's Humble Response to God** – new dawning day of blessing comes;

TEXT: Genesis 29:1-30

TITLE: *WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND*

BIG IDEA:

SOMETIMES GOD'S PROVIDENCE TEACHES US PAINFUL LESSONS THROUGH THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

INTRODUCTION:

You have all heard of the **school of hard knocks** – those painful experiences that God's providence brings into our life to hack off our rough edges and transform our inner character. Jacob is coming off a mountaintop spiritual experience where God has revealed Himself in a special way and reinforced the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant. God has been promised to be with Jacob and bless him and his offspring in abundant fashion. You might expect that Jacob's life would now be a smooth path of upward spiritual growth as he lives out the faith of his spiritual fathers – Abraham and Isaac.

But instead, we find that Jacob seems to give no attention at all to seeking God's will in prayer or depending on Him in faith. As you read through this episode the lack of mention of God should be alarming – especially in contrast with the parallel episode of Abraham's servant seeking a bride for Isaac in **chap. 24**. Jacob still has not owned up to his fundamental sin issues of selfishly seeking his own agenda via deceit and lies and manipulation – both in his relationship with his older brother Esau and his aged father Isaac. He has serious character flaws that God must expose and address. As is typically the case, God works by His foundational harvest principle: whatever a man sows -- that shall he also reap. It should not be surprising to see the schemer out-schemed; the deceiver caught in deception; the master manipulator finding his match when it comes to exploitation and manipulation. Jacob enters into the school of hard knocks and will spend 20 years learning some very painful lessons.

SOMETIMES GOD'S PROVIDENCE TEACHES US PAINFUL LESSONS THROUGH THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

What did each person want in this scenario and what did they get?

- What did Jacob want? Rachel for his beloved bride – making decisions according to the flesh
- What did Laban want? To marry off both of his daughters into good situations – Operating as a scheming, unscrupulous scoundrel
- What did Rachel want? A husband that loved her and offspring
- What did Leah want? A husband that loved her and offspring
- What did God want to serve His kingdom purposes??? Priestly and Kingly line to fulfil promises of Abrahamic Covenant; wanted to change Jacob's heart to live by faith

Is this story primarily about **Rachel** or about **Leah**?? Note that God takes up for the unloved wife and uses her to produce the key offspring that will lead to the priestly and kingly lines that advance God's Kingdom Purposes.

Maybe God has you enrolled in the school of hard knocks in some fashion??

I. (:1-8) THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS IS ADMINISTERED BY GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL DIRECTION

A. (:1-3) Providence Leads to the Well of Opportunity

1. (:1) Journey Into the Unknown

“Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the sons of the east.”

“*lifted up his feet*” – only place that this unique idiom occurs in the OT; after the encouragement of the vision of the ladder and the reinforcement of God’s promised blessing, Jacob was able to set off on his mission with renewed enthusiasm and confidence; new bounce in his step

Someplace in the vicinity of Haran – Jacob was not exactly sure of his location;

Keith Krell: Jacob is traveling to Haran, 400 miles away from Bethel. This is a major journey for him, that didn’t happen overnight.

Look at how Jacob was sent off on his own without any camels loaded with gifts (in contrast to mission of Abraham’s servant in **chap. 24**)

2. (:2a) Vision of the Well of Opportunity

“And he looked, and saw a well in the field, and behold, three flocks of sheep were lying there beside it, for from that well they watered the flocks.”

Well was an important meeting place

This was a good place for Jacob to check his GPS bearings – how close was he to his intended destination?

Curious sight to him: Why weren’t the sheep grazing in the middle of the day?

3. (:2b-3) Obstacle that Gives One Pause

“Now the stone on the mouth of the well was large. When all the flocks were gathered there, they would then roll the stone from the mouth of the well, and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well.”

Emphasis on the size of the stone covering the well – would not usually be removed by just one shepherd

Why was the well covered?

MacArthur: Perhaps due to the fact that this well of precious stored water could evaporate rapidly in the sun, or be filled with blowing dust, or used indiscriminately, it had been covered and its use regulated.

Don’t want anything to fall into the well and pollute the water;

Also makes it difficult for just one person to access the water – although Jacob did – displaying almost superhuman strength that was remarkable

Why did they wait until all the flocks had arrived before opening up the well?

Parunak: There may be a custom of fairness. If water is scarce, it might be considered selfish for

one shepherd to water his flock and perhaps deplete the supply before the others have arrived.

Seems like the owner of the well controlled the distribution of the water – that was the significance of the arrival of Rachel since Laban must have owned the well

B. (:4-6a) Providence Confirms the Lord is Leading -- Series of 3 Confirming Questions

1. (:4) Region – Narrowing Focus to Haran

a. Question 1

“And Jacob said to them, ‘My brothers, where are you from?’”

b. Answer 1

“And they said, ‘We are from Haran.’”

2. (:5) Relationships – Networking to Connect with Laban

a. Question 2

“And he said to them, ‘Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?’”

Actually the grandson of Nahor

b. Answer 2

“And they said, ‘We know him.’”

Pretty short answers; does not look like these shepherds are bonding with this stranger who is making so many inquiries

3. (:6a) Report – Noting his overall condition and level of well-being

a. Question 3

“And he said to them, ‘Is it well with him?’”

Not only interested in his physical health but his overall well-being and prosperity

b. Answer 3

“And they said, ‘It is well.’”

C. (:6b) Providence Creates a Divine Appointment

“and behold, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep.”

Now they add an important unsolicited tidbit of information

Name means “*ewe lamb*” – play on words – here the shepherdess is coming with her sheep

D. (:7-8) Providence Resists the Inflated Ego of Human Wisdom and Self Importance

1. (:7) Commands -- to take control of the situation

“And he said, ‘Behold, it is still high day; it is not time for the livestock to be gathered. Water the sheep, and go, pasture them.’”

Very intrusive for Jacob to insert himself here and boss around these shepherds – insinuating that they are lazy and shirking their responsibilities

What was Jacob’s motivation here? Some have suggested that he wanted to be able to meet with Rachel without being observed by these other shepherds

2. (:8) Cannots – You don’t understand the situation

“But they said, ‘We cannot, until all the flocks are gathered, and they roll the stone from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep.’”

They were not intimidated by Jacob’s aggressive, bossy behavior; they stand their ground and make a case for the legitimacy of their delay in watering their flocks

Deffinbaugh: A well was a valuable resource, much as an oil well would be today. As such, it had to belong to somebody, and that person would prescribe how and when the well was to be used, and probably at what price. The agreement between the well owner and the shepherds seems to be that the well could be used once a day. The shepherds must first be gathered at the well with their flocks. Then the owner or his hired servants (“*they*,” **verse 8**) would roll the large stone away and the sheep could be watered, perhaps in the order that the flocks arrived. This would explain why the shepherds and their flocks were there so early. In this way, what was most profitable (this is what Jacob’s question was getting at) was not practical. The owner’s stipulations must be adhered to.

II. (:9-14) THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS MIGHT PRESENT ITSELF AS A BED OF ROSES

A. (:9) Dream Situation

“While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep, for she was a shepherdess.”

Only time in Scriptures we see a female identified as a shepherdess;
She must have been pretty resourceful or she would have been taken advantage of in such an isolated responsibility

B. (:10) Opportunity to Show Off

“And it came about, when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother, that Jacob went up, and rolled the stone from the mouth of the well, and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.”

Hughes: The text has made it clear that removing the stone from the well was a communal task performed by the gathered shepherds, because of the stone’s large size (**vv. 2, 3**). But in a burst of emotion Jacob strode up and wrenched it away single-handedly (indeed, he was from the same gene pool as Esau). Jacob was the man!

Keith Krell: Isn’t it amazing how strong a guy can be when he wants to impress a woman? This task should have taken several men but once Jacob sees Rachel coming with her flock of sheep he single-handedly rolls back the stone.⁵ He wants her to know how wonderful he is. What a dashing, strong, helpful man he is—when Rachel is watching! He removes the stone before he greets her, although it would have been normal to greet someone before you do anything else.

But Jacob was pretending he was involved in rolling away the stone before she arrived! He then even feeds Rachel's sheep. All I have to say is, "Jake, you're a sly ole' dog!" . . .

Jacob has not even introduced himself to Rachel – he first wants to show that he is the man!

C. (:11-12) Excited About the Prospects

1. (:11) Emotional Reaction

"Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted his voice and wept."

Again, a very aggressive action on the part of Jacob – followed by passionate display of emotion; he is excited about how God's Providence has arranged such a divine appointment

2. (:12) Excitement Mounts

"And Jacob told Rachel that he was a relative of her father and that he was Rebekah's son, and she ran and told her father."

Looks like everything is falling into place; things could not be going better
Rachel responds with a similar level of excitement

D. (:13-14) Reception as a Valued Family Member

1. (:13a) Positive Reception

"So it came about, when Laban heard the news of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house."

Perhaps Laban was surprised to find that Jacob did not come bearing a large collection of gifts along with an expensive dowry payment; yet he graciously receives him into his house

2. (:13b) Prepared Report

"Then he related to Laban all these things."

Laban must have been disappointed to discover that Jacob came to him impoverished rather than laden with expensive gifts. But he saw the opportunity to exploit his physical prowess and work ethic to cause him to be productive in his household. He also must have understood that Jacob was in line to inherit a great fortune.

3. (:14a) Preferential Relationship

"And Laban said to him, 'Surely you are my bone and my flesh.'"

Laban recognizes the validity of Jacob's family credentials after hearing the story of his background and his mission to find a bride

4. (:14b) Prolonged Repast

"And he stayed with him a month."

It had been a long journey; Jacob was content to rest up before addressing his need for a bride and his desire to return to Canaan

Hughes: This third patriarch needed some substance. He needed some trimming. He needed a compassionate spirit. He needed to experience some pain. He needed to learn humility. He needed some added dimensions to his character. He needed to grow in faith. He needed to stop trusting in himself.

III. (:15-29) THE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS CAN BITE WITH A VENGEANCE

A. (:15-20) Contracted Service for Rachel – 7 Years of Indentured Servitude

1. (:15) Initiation of the Contract -- Sounds Like Fair Treatment

“Then Laban said to Jacob, ‘Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?’”

But we know from later in the text that Laban is going to renege on his contracted agreement multiple times so that Jacob is going to be extremely frustrated in working for him (**31:7**); ironic that the cheater was now going to experience what it was like to be cheated and defrauded. What goes around comes around!

2. (:16-17) Heart of the Contract = Jacob’s Desire for Rachel

This was not primarily about just earning money – it was earning money for the purpose of providing a suitable dowry payment for a bride

a. (:16) Difference in Age Order

“Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.”

Hughes: The *older-younger* sibling conflict introduced here is ominous, conjuring up the misery between Jacob and Esau. Jacob’s past was catching up with him, and it would do so with a vengeance.

b. (:17) Difference in Outward Beauty and Temperament

“And Leah’s eyes were weak, but Rachel was beautiful of form and face.”

Alford: *dull*, without brilliancy and freshness. In the East the clear expressive lustrous eye is accounted the chief feature in female beauty. It was compared to the eyes of the gazelle: see **1 Sam. xvi. 12**. On the contrary, Rachel’s beauty was complete: she was beautiful in form and beautiful in look, both in figure and in face.

Deffinbaugh: If we are to take the word *rak*, which is rendered “*weak*” in **29:17**, in its normal sense, then, we cannot think in terms of defect but in terms of delicacy. In contrast with Rachel, who may have had fire or a sparkle in her eyes, Leah had **gentle eyes**. . . In connection with the word *rak*, I would conclude that the disposition of Leah was one of **gentleness and tenderness**, while Rachel seems to have had a more **fiery and aggressive temperament**. Regardless of whether or not my conclusions are accepted, the idea of defect in Leah is highly suspect and without precedent in the scriptural use of these terms. [Yet look at the contrast presented in the next phrase which speaks of beauty rather than aggressive temperament.]

There seems to be, then, a significant contrast here between Rachel and Rebekah. Rebekah was selected for Isaac by Abraham’s servant on the basis of divine guidance and because of personal

qualities which assured him that she would be a fine wife for Isaac. Rachel, on the other hand, was selected by Jacob for himself, but without any mention of her personal qualities, only a description of her beauty. Rebekah's beauty was an additional plus, an unexpected fringe benefit; Rachel's beauty was the essence of her selection. The red warning lights should already be flashing in our minds.

3. (:18-19) Terms of the Contract – Dowry Payment for Rachel as Jacob's Bride
 - a. (:18) Terms Proposed
“Now Jacob loved Rachel, so he said, ‘I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel.’”

Parunak: Jacob's proposal shows how taken he is with Rachel.

- **Deut 22:29** sets the maximum bride price at 50 shekels.
- Casual labors in Babylon received between 6 and 12 shekels a year (Driver and Miles, in Wenham).
- So Jacob's offer is worth between 42 and 84 shekels, a very handsome offer.

- b. (:19) Terms Accepted
“And Laban said, ‘It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man; stay with me.’”

4. (:20) Fulfillment of the Contract
“So Jacob served seven years for Rachel and they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her.”

B. (:21-26) Conniving Substitution of Leah

1. (:21) Demanding What is Owed
“Then Jacob said to Laban, ‘Give me my wife, for my time is completed, that I may go in to her.’”
2. (:22-24) Delivery of the Bride
 - a. (:22) Feast
“And Laban gathered all the men of the place, and made a feast.”

Parunak: The party is described as a “*feast*,” Heb. *mishteh*. The term is a general one for a banquet, but etymologically means “a drinking party,” and no doubt the wine Laban served helped further his deception, as he substitutes bleary-eyed Leah for beautifully Rachel.

- b. (:23) Consummation
“Now it came about in the evening that he took his daughter Leah, and brought her to him; and Jacob went in to her.”
 - c. (:24) Maid
“Laban also gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid.”

3. (:25-26) Deception Exposed in the Morning

a. (:25) Outrage

“So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, ‘What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?’”

Jacob here gets a taste of his own medicine;
The deceiver finds out how it feels to be the one deceived.

b. (:26) Rationalization

“But Laban said, ‘It is not the practice in our place, to marry off the younger before the first-born.’”

C. (:27-29) Consummated Service for Rachel – Additional Burdensome 7 Years

1. (:27) Feast

“Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years.”

Parunak: “*Leah’s week*” (vv. 27, 28) refers to the week of the wedding feast. Jacob did not have to wait another seven years for Rachel; he got her a week later, and then labored for seven more years to pay off the debt.

2. (:28) Consummation

“And Jacob did so and completed her week, and he gave him his daughter Rachel as his wife.”

So Jacob got 2 brides a week apart – created quite a rivalry situation

3. (:29) Maid

“Laban also gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as her maid.”

(:30) CLOSING SUMMARY

A. (:30a) Preferential Love

“So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah,”

B. (:30b) Painful Labor

“and he served with Laban for another seven years.”

Parunak: Laban certainly has outsmarted Jacob—but what a scoundrel he is. How inconsiderate of Leah’s feelings to use her in this way. She is foisted on a husband who does not love her, and then supplanted with a rival immediately after her honeymoon. Perhaps Jacob needs to see this ugly face of the flesh in order to realize the sinfulness of his own past actions. It is all part of God’s gracious process to purge him of the flesh and make him a man of faith.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When has God taken you through the school of hard knocks? What lessons did you learn?
- 2) When have we felt that God's timetable was way too slow for our liking?
- 3) How has God challenged you in ways that remind you of your own sinfulness and previous failures?
- 4) What types of strife and tension have you seen when favoritism is exercised towards one person or group?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Keith Krell: What Goes Around Comes Around

After many days of traveling, Jacob arrives in Haran. He plans to stay there for a few months, find a wife, and then return home to Beersheba. Little does he know that Haran is going to be his home for 20 long years, or that what awaits him is hard times in Haran. .

Knowing a sucker when he's got one on the line, in **29:27**, Laban moves in for the kill. *"Complete the week of this one, [Leah] and we will give you the other [Rachel] also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years."* Laban offers to let Jacob marry Rachel as well, but with one tiny condition: He must serve Laban for another seven years. That's 14 years altogether! Uncle Laban is going to change Jacob's life forever. Up until this point, Jacob has lived by his wits. He has survived by relying on his native intelligence and his shrewd ability to take care of himself in any situation. True, things haven't always worked out for him, but even when things have gone bad, Jacob has somehow managed to land on his feet. Like a cat with nine lives, Jacob has been getting into and out of tough spots all his life. Sometimes he's left the playing field with a black eye, but no matter, at least he always walks off under his own power.

All of that is about to change because in Uncle Laban, Jacob is finally going to meet his match. Jacob has lived as a penny-ante con man, pulling the wool over his brother's eyes, and deceiving his father with that ridiculous goatskin routine. Kid stuff, you might say. But, unfortunately, Jacob has been playing in the Little League. When he meets Laban, he is joining the NFL of con men. Laban is about to take Jacob to the cleaners. And there's nothing Jacob can do about it. In the providence of God, Jacob is about to be enrolled in the oldest school known to man—the School of Hard Knocks. And Uncle Laban is about to give his nephew, Jacob, 20 years of free post-graduate education.

God trains Jacob by allowing him to meet his own sins in someone else. Soon he will know what Esau felt when he was tricked out of something that was precious to him. It is almost a case of "an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth." Jacob is being made to see just how despicable his tricky

ways are. It is all a part of the training in his life. If Jacob hadn't stolen Esau's blessing and had patiently waited for God's intervention and timing, he would have had the financial resources to acquire Rachel immediately, rather than having to invest 14 years of his life, laboring for Rachel's hand in marriage. Lesson: Taking short cuts and failing to trust God is costly! It can often cost years of a person's life. What a heavy price sin requires!

Parallels

- As Jacob had deceived Isaac by taking advantage of his inability to see, due to poor eyesight, so Laban deceived Jacob by taking advantage of his inability to see in the dark tent.
- Earlier, Jacob had deceptively pretended to be the older brother, and now Laban tricked him by replacing the younger with the older sister. Leah deceived Jacob as Jacob had deceived Isaac.
- Jacob was behaving like his parents, who each favored one son above the other, by favoring one of his wives above the other. In both cases, serious family problems followed.
- Esau was forced to live with the results of Jacob's deception; now Jacob is forced to live with the results of Laban's deception.

Why did God take Jacob through this time of testing?

- 1) So That Jacob Would Have Plenty of Time to Think About the Way He Had Lived.
- 2) So That God Could Humble Jacob at the Point of His Perceived Strength.
- 3) So That Godly Character Would be Developed Through Unjust Treatment.
- 4) So That His Plans For the Future Might Be Worked Out Through Human Weakness.

Deffinbaugh: Applications:

1) THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

it does seem that this 14-year delay was unnecessary and purely the result of sin. What a price to pay!

2) THE GRACE OF GOD

God did not bring these events to pass to punish Jacob but to instruct him. . .

it was Leah, not Rachel, who became the mother of Judah, who was to be the heir through whom the Messiah would come (cf. **49:8-12**). Also it was Levi, a son of Leah, who provided the priestly line in later years. It seems noteworthy that both Leah and her handmaid had at least twice the number of children as compared to Rachel and her maid (cf. **29:31-30:24; 46:15, 18, 22, 25**). The firstborn was always to have a double portion; and so it would seem Leah did, so far as children are concerned.

One final factor remains which evidences the superiority of Leah to Rachel. Rachel dies at an early age, yet she was the younger sister. When she died, she was buried on the way to Bethlehem (**35:19**). Yet when Leah died later, she was buried with Jacob in the cave at Machpelah (**49:31**). Leah was not a blight to Jacob but a blessing.

3) GUIDANCE

How different was the process by which Isaac obtained Rebekah as a wife from that means through which Jacob acquired Rachel. Isaac was subject to his father, and it was through the wisdom of his father and his servant, through the financial means of Abraham, and through

prayer that she was obtained. Jacob went off on his own with none of his father's resources. He chose the woman with the greatest beauty and bargained with Laban for her.

To me there is no doubt but what Jacob was guided more by his hormones than any other factor. He did not pray about this matter, so far as we are told. He did not give any consideration to matters of character. He did not seek counsel. In fact, he sought to overturn the customs of the day and the preferences of Laban.

We live in a very romantically-oriented day. We find ourselves cheering for Rachel and booing Leah. God seems to have been on the other side. What is romantic is not always right—often it is wrong

4) BEAUTY

Our ultimate worth is that estimation which comes from God. God was not impressed with Rachel's good looks. After all, He gave that to her in the first place. God looked upon the heart and blessed Leah. Her worth, while never fully realized by her husband, was great in the eyes of God.

Steven Cole: Jacob commits himself to seven years of work for Laban without asking the Lord's will. He commits himself to marry Rachel without seeking God's guidance on that most important decision. He accepts a polygamous situation without getting God's approval. Later, he takes his wives' handmaids, as Abraham had taken Hagar, without a prayer. Yet in spite of Jacob's spiritual immaturity and self-directed life, God graciously gave him the woman he loved, blessed him with 12 sons and some daughters (46:7), blessed him financially in spite of Laban's tricks, and returned him safely to the land of Canaan, where his brother received him without a trace of revenge. That's God's grace!

David Thompson:

The Golden Rule – do unto others what you would have them do to you

Cf. Pharaoh – tried to kill first born of Hebrews; his first born was killed;

People reap what they sow;

Jacob had deceptively tricked Isaac and Esau – now Laban will out-wit him and rob him of a bunch of years;

God disciplining Jacob for his deception in the context of his covenantal relationship; he should have asked for forgiveness and made things right

I. (:1-14) Success that God Gives to His People in Aftermath of Failure

Jacob on the move because:

- Esau seeking to harm him – even kill him
- Needs to find a wife from his father's family – needs wife for promise of progeny

Tremendous promise of God's presence and provision in chap. 28

Did not try to resolve things with his father and brother;

Moving out with a new gusto – God will have to teach him a lesson

Conversion should lead to consecration;

A. (:2-12) Action at the Well

You don't tamper with someone else's well; you needed permission from owner to take water;

You get in line; you wait for family member of owner to come; then you roll away the rock and water your flock

Waiting for Rachel since her father is the one who owns the well

Look at all the action that happens at this well; what is the significance? This will be a place where a lot of things will be revealed

Usually took more than one guy to roll away the stone; burst of emotion and strength; tremendous manly power

Proved that he was Laban's relative – cocky move

NT application – Jesus is true living well – source of life and refreshment

B. (:12) Response of Rachel

Not a typical day for a shepherdess; Jacob very emotional at this meeting;

C. (:13-14) Response of Laban

Welcomes Jacob into his home and honors him; Jacob thinking life is good; but God about to discipline him;

II. (:15-29) Discipline God Gives to His People Who Have Failed

How fitting! **31:7** – changed Jacob's wages 10 times to try to diminish his wages; deceitful, manipulative trickster; God will use Laban to teach Jacob lesson of discipline

Problem: no job; no income; etc. – no dowry to get a bride

30-40 shekels = avg dowry price; avg annual salary for shepherd = 10 shekels; quite a commitment to earn enough for a dowry

Willing to work 7 years = double the going rate; very honorable intentions on Jacob's part;

Bride veiled at wedding feast; it was dark; drank wine; lay with wrong girl

Jacob had dressed himself to look as much as possible like Esau;

God puts difficult people in our lives to teach us a lesson; look to our past and see where we have mistreated others

Lessons to Learn:

- God will bless, guide, protect and prosper His children despite their failures ... but He will permit negatives to come into our life to reform us
- God will see to it that we reap what we sow if we don't set things right; right now God is involved in disciplining His own people; not the world
- God might not discipline one immediately but in His timeframe; base your decisions on the Bible
- God will see that his discipline activity takes on same pattern as the sin that we failed to resolve
- If you remain faithful in time of discipline; God will bless you greatly
- God's disciplinary action has a beginning and ending

Brian Borgman: Painful Providence

Where the passage falls is significant – right after **Gen. 28** = mountaintop spiritual experience; then Jacob tumbles headlong into valley of reality

Same old sins still hanging around his neck;

God took 20 years to build Jacob's character thru a series of painful events;

The swindler will be swindled; taken advantage of; deceived;

Sanctification is a slow process; hardness of our hearts;

I. One day – Jacob Meets Rachel and Uncle Laban

In the bible; heading east is never good;

Meeting of divine providence; God brings Rachel right along – she is a knock-out; a beautiful girl and lots of sheep – win-win for Jacob

Was this excuse for laziness for waiting for all shepherds to get there to move the stone?

They are shirkers; the power of love – Jacob showing off – no wimp
Knows nothing about Rachel – yet he falls in love; no prayer on his part like in incident with servant and Rebekah evaluating her character;
Jacob going along in his own strength ... but under the invisible hand of providence;
Overflowing with joy; weird behavior; did not even introduce himself before kissing her;
Laban meets Jacob; his reaction: “No camels, but I bet this guy can work”

II. 14 Years – Contractual arrangement for Bride

No sparkle in Leah’s eyes; not a striking beauty; no pizzazz
Rachel: beautiful figure and lovely face with sparkle in her eyes;
Why did Isaac send Jacob with no dowry for bride price? Sends him out penniless;
Marking off 7 years of calendars in anticipation of wedding day;
Sense of urgency – Come on now; give me my wife; holds a drinking feast; Laban fixes the veil to disguise Leah’s identity (like Rebekah putting goatskin on Jacob)
How was Rachel kept quiet?? Probably locked up in storage room
Zilpah = “trouble”
“What have you done to me?” – seems incredibly hypocritical
Laban: our family has standards; this is how we do things; sounds indignant; appeals to first-born status – why didn’t you say something earlier?
Love utterly undermines a person’s ability to negotiate
Leah is the unloved one; just used by her father; unloved by Jacob – happiest week of her life is just a countdown for her new husband to marry her sister according to orchestration of her father;
He loved Rachel “rather” than Leah – not just more than Leah
Does not say that these 7 years were like a few days
Making just a small pittance; sharing a tent with 2 women
Jacob’s past catches up with him; deceiver is deceived; reaps what he has sown

Application:

- Laban is despicable character – brings Jacob into his home but never into his heart; treats him as indentured servant; becomes Pharaoh to Jacob; just uses people; unscrupulous creep
- Rachel and Leah enter into adversarial struggle similar to Jacob and Esau
- Jacob reaping what he sowed
- Jacob never mentions God – very unlike Abraham’s servant – doesn’t pray, worship, give thanks, etc. – just stumbling through providence; did not live his life in light of blessing at Bethel
- Favoritism will lead to problems within his family going forward; tension; conflict
- Irony of God’s Providence – not a happy story even though 2 weddings; still see God’s hand at work – long view more important; Leah would give birth to Levi (priestly line) and Judah (kingly line); God brings the Savior of the world thru the line of the unloved woman; this text should disturb us – not just because of sordid details – but because Jacob is operating by the flesh – don’t want to be like Jacob but often we are – God never forgot Jacob; Jacob being chipped away at by painful providence because he does belong to God; God’s people often live as if God is not there; but God will not be marginalized; It’s all about God; overall 20 years under oppressive tyranny of Laban because God loved Jacob; the Bethels in life are few; the wilderness years are many; need our faith activated in daily grind of life; how often during the week does our faith actually matter or make a difference??

TEXT: Genesis 30:25-43

TITLE: PROSPERITY GOSPEL – IN THE MIDST OF SIN AND SUFFERING

BIG IDEA:

DESPITE OUR FAITH FAILURES AND SINFUL MANIPULATIONS, GOD BRINGS GUARANTEED PROSPERITY TO HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION:

We need to begin this section at the end – at **vs. 43** where we discover that God has abundantly prospered Jacob. That is quite surprising, given that Jacob came to Laban’s household with nothing but the clothes on his back and ended up serving at least 14 years of indentured servanthood just to obtain the wife of his dreams, Rachel.

Remember God’s promises to bless Jacob (a continuation of the Abrahamic Covenant): with **a people, prosperity, and a place**. The previous section discussed the offspring of Jacob; now he realizes that he needs to be taking steps to pursue God’s promises regarding **prosperity** and the **Promised Land**. So he must depart from Laban’s service and return to Canaan.

This is very different from the **Prosperity Gospel** that false teachers propagate today – preaching that God’s intention for His people is to “name it and claim it” – to live a life of wealth, health and uninterrupted happiness. [Brian Borgman does a good job with this theme.]

I. (:25-36) PROSPERITY PLAN -- EXTENDED SERVICE OF JACOB NEGOTIATED

In our culture we have access to **financial planners** who can lay out the steps to take to pursue prosperity and a secure future. In this text we find that God acts as the financial planner for Jacob. God has a master plan by which He intends to prosper Jacob. It is not a plan that Jacob would have chosen for himself. It is not a plan that is easy or comfortable. But it is a plan that is going to work.

A. (:25-30) Desire of Jacob to Return Home vs. Desire of Laban to Receive More Service

1. (:25-26) Demand to Be Released to Return Home

a. (:25a) Timing of the Demand

“Now it came about when Rachel had borne Joseph,”

b. (:25b) Destination of the Demand

“that Jacob said to Laban, ‘Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my own country.’”

Look how long Jacob hung in there – working for Laban under trying circumstances. We are too quick to bail on our job situation, on relationships, on our local church when we are going thru hard times. We can learn a lot about perseverance from the example of Jacob. Trust that God’s sovereignty and providence can knock some of the rough edges off us and refine us thru the process.

c. (:26a) Impact of the Demand

“Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let

me depart;”

Interesting – Jacob is prepared to leave empty-handed – with only his family. Instead, he will end up turning the tables on Laban (who is always trying to feather his own nest) and will plunder Laban’s flocks and wealth. This is a foreshadowing of how the Israelites will plunder Egypt in the Exodus.

d. (:26b) Basis for the Demand = Faithful Service

“for you yourself know my service which I have rendered you.”

Parunak: —There is evidence that Jacob has actually worked much longer than the 7 additional years originally agreed upon. The period is more likely on the order of 27 years after the wedding. It is difficult to fit the births of six of Leah’s children, together with a period of barrenness, into 7 years. Jacob’s case is that he has more than satisfied Laban’s expectations.

2. (:27-28) Delay in Releasing Jacob and His Household to Return Home

a. (:27a) Appeal for the Delay

“But Laban said to him, ‘If now it pleases you, stay with me;’”

b. (:27b) Motivation for the Delay

“I have divined that the LORD has blessed me on your account.”

God can bless unsaved individuals thru their association with believers. Look at Paul’s counsel for believers not to flee a mixed marriage but seek to have an impact on their spouse (**1 Cor. 7:12-14**).

Parunak: The verb *“I have learned by experience”* actually means, everywhere in the OT, *“I have divined, I have used enchantments.”* This is actually quite credible, since he later is concerned over the theft of his household gods (31:30). . . What we see is syncretism in Laban’s beliefs. He is willing to acknowledge Jacob’s God, whom he even names as *“the Lord,”* but only as part of a broader system over which he (Laban) has influence by divination.

Hughes: Laban was not a man of faith. But he readily discerned and admitted that his blessing was because of association with Jacob. Did this make him hungry for God? Sadly, no. Laban’s only desire was for the prosperity of association.

c. (:28) Contract Defining the Terms of the Delay

“And he continued, ‘Name me your wages, and I will give it.’”

Scott Grant: Laban says *“Name your wages, and I will give it.”* When he first met Jacob, Laban said, *“Tell me, what shall your wages be?”* (**Genesis 29:15**). At that time, Jacob named Rachel, but Laban substituted Leah. Knowing that Jacob could never forget that exchange, Laban this time adds the words *“and I will give it.”*

3. (:29-30) Deduction Justifying the Release to Return Home — 3 Key Reasons:

a. (:29) I Did You Right

“But he said to him, ‘You yourself know how I have served you and how your cattle have fared with me.’”

Jacob was a hard worker and faithful steward
Jacob was a skilled keeper of flocks

- b. (:30a) The Lord Prospered You Because of Me
*“For you had little before I came, and it has increased to a multitude;
and the LORD has blessed you wherever I turned.”*

J Ligon Duncan: He clearly credits the Lord with blessing Laban. This is an important recognition on Jacob's part. It shows us that he realizes the ultimate source of blessing. Remember that when a few years from now this man will be wrestling with the Lord himself, craving what? The blessing of the Lord. It's beginning to dawn on Jacob how important the blessing of the Lord is. He once cheated in order to get a blessing from his father. More and more he's recognizing the importance of a blessing of the Lord. Jacob doesn't want to be in the position of being a wage earner at the hands of Laban, not only for economic reasons, but for theological reasons.

- c. (:30b) I Need to Focus on Providing for My Household
“But now, when shall I provide for my own household also?”

He had four wives, eleven sons and a daughter. He had servants and dwellings to maintain.

B. (:31-34) Dialogue Over the Terms of Extended Service

1. (:31a) Let's Make a Deal Proposes Laban
“So he said, ‘What shall I give you?’”

Name your price

Blank check approach to negotiations; this is how much Laban valued the service of Jacob

2. (:31b-32) Livestock Acquisition Will Be Jacob's Compensation

“And Jacob said, ‘You shall not give me anything. If you will do this one thing for me, I will again pasture and keep your flock: let me pass through your entire flock today, removing from there every speckled and spotted sheep, and every black one among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and such shall be my wages.’”

Seems to Laban like a great deal; look at how the schemers continue to try to outwit one another
Should be about **15-20% of the flock**

Parunak: We know from Mesopotamian records of the time that a reasonable wage for a shepherd was 20% of the increase of the flock, but Jacob takes a different tack. He proposes to take distinctively marked animals as his hire. Sheep are generally white, and goats are generally black; any mottled animals will be his.

Keith Krell: Jacob selected the spotted and speckled because of the Lord's instruction (**31:10**). Furthermore, Jacob's dream from God ensured him that the Lord would protect him from the dishonesty of Laban. This was a fine act of faith on Jacob's part. He cast himself wholly upon

God's mercy.

3. (:33) Legal Ownership Will Not Be Disputed

“So my honesty will answer for me later, when you come concerning my wages. Every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats and black among the lambs, if found with me, will be considered stolen.”

Ownership will be a black and white, open and shut issue; no room for confusion
Laban will not be able to change the terms of the deal and Jacob will not be able to leave with any more than is rightfully his

4. (:34) Laban Agrees to the Deal

“And Laban said, ‘Good, let it be according to your word.’”

C. (:35-36) Details Surrounding Jacob's Extended Service

1. (:35) Differentiating the Herd – Accomplished by Laban = Clean Starting Point

“So he removed on that day the striped and spotted male goats and all the speckled and spotted female goats, everyone with white in it, and all the black ones among the sheep, and gave them into the care of his sons.”

Jacob had proclaimed that he would superintend this process of cutting out his portion of the flock; but Laban steps in and takes the initiative – the schemer cannot trust another schemer.

Guzik: Jacob would care for the large flock of his father-in-law Laban, made up of solid-colored animals. Jacob received any speckled or spotted offspring of this flock.

Peter Pett: Throughout the narrative five different words are used to designate the features that distinguished what belonged to Jacob (speckled, spotted, striped, ringstraked, grised and so on). These were no doubt technical terms clearly recognisable to shepherds in the area who would know exactly what was indicated.

2. (:36a) Distancing Himself from Jacob – Accomplished by Laban = Clear Distinction

“And he put a distance of three days' journey between himself and Jacob,”

3. (:36b) Doing the Work – Accomplished by Jacob = Care of the Good Shepherd

“and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.”

J. Ligon Duncan: Laban does three things to protect his own interest:

- The first thing that he does is he does the culling himself.
- The second thing he does is he puts his own sons in charge of the flocks.
- He puts a great distance between his flocks and Jacob's. Laban thinks that Jacob's strategy is going to be to interbreed those speckled and spotted mongrel animals with his non-mongrel animals in order to make more speckled and spotted animals.

II. (:37-43) PROSPERITY PROCESS -- EXTRAORDINARY PATTERN OF

REPRODUCTION GREATLY INCREASED JACOB'S FLOCKS

A. (:37-39) Superstitious Methodology

1. (:37-38a) Prepared Mating

“Then Jacob took fresh rods of poplar and almond and plane trees, and peeled white stripes in them, exposing the white which was in the rods. And he set the rods which he had peeled in front of the flocks in the gutters, even in the watering troughs, where the flocks came to drink;”

Hughes: If Jacob was operating on largely superstitious beliefs (which is the likely view), we must keep in mind that the Bible is not teaching that animals are influenced by prenatal stimuli. It merely records that Jacob held the superstition along with general Mesopotamian culture. Jacob's peeled rods, the, are similar to Rachel's mandrakes. The mandrakes did not produce fertility, and neither did Jacob's rods. The Scriptures are explicit that God opened Rachel's womb (cf. **30:22**). And they are also explicit that God intervened and gave the livestock to Jacob (**31:9**). Therefore, however it happened and however informed Jacob was, God did it!

Keith Krell: Interestingly, the Hebrew words for “poplar” and “white” are puns on the name Laban, which means “white.” Jacob is practicing some “white magic” (pardon the pun), but it all comes from the Lord.

2. (:38b-39a) Providential Mating

*“and they mated when they came to drink.
So the flocks mated by the rods,”*

3. (:39b) Productive Mating

“and the flocks brought forth striped, speckled, and spotted.”

B. (:40-42) Selective Breeding

1. (:40) Purposeful Tactics

“And Jacob separated the lambs, and made the flocks face toward the striped and all the black in the flock of Laban; and he put his own herds apart, and did not put them with Laban's flock.”

2. (:41-42) Producing Strong vs. Weak

“Moreover, it came about whenever the stronger of the flock were mating, that Jacob would place the rods in the sight of the flock in the gutters, so that they might mate by the rods; but when the flock was feeble, he did not put them in; so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's.”

Parunak: This trick has two parts.

1. He believes that impressions on the animals at the time of conception will affect the offspring, so he exposes them to splotchy things: peeled sticks (**37**), and animals already born that were mottled (**40**), in an effort to increase the incidence of strangely-colored animals.

2. He employs this ruse only when the stronger animals mate (41-42), thus leading to more robust animals for himself.

The second part of his trick is sound animal husbandry, but the first part has puzzled readers, especially in the light of modern genetics. Jacob's long experience as a shepherd must have suggested to him that this trick would help increase the proportion of spotted animals born.

A number of explanations have been proposed. The most persuasive combines two observations.

1. Extracts of these particular plants were used in antiquity as aphrodisiacs. By placing the peeled branches in the water, he may have stimulated the animals to breed. This is reinforced by the Hebrew of v.39, which says that the animals "came into heat" when they drank.
2. The more vigorous animals would have been the heterozygous ones, the ones carrying the recessive genes that resulted in mixed coloration. By preferentially breeding these animals, he would increase the expression of these recessive qualities.

The important point is that Jacob is trying to tilt the odds in his favor. In fact, the text doesn't say that the trick worked. It simply states (v.39) that the animals conceived (or "came into heat") before the rods, and that they brought forth multicolored offspring, but it doesn't make the causal connection. In the next chapter, God reveals to Jacob that the cause of his growing wealth is not his rod trick, but God's sovereign provision for him. . .

C. (:43) Surprising Prosperity

"So the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks and female and male servants and camels and donkeys."

Scott Grant: This turnaround is reminiscent of the cheer heard at Northwestern University football games years ago. Northwestern was the perennial doormat of the Big 10. How do you cheer for a team like that? The Northwestern fans began cheering this way when the other team scored: "That's all right, that's OK; they're going to work for us some day." Jacob was Laban's doormat, but now he has turned the tables on him.

J. Ligon Duncan: Now camels weren't domesticated in the second millennium. That means there weren't many of them around in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob's day. So saying that you had camels, was like saying you had a fleet a Cadillac in your driveway. If you had camels, you were wealthy.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do you evaluate your own work ethic based on the lessons you can learn from Jacob?
- 2) In what ways has the Lord abundantly prospered you?
- 3) How much is Jacob trusting in God to prosper him vs. how much is he trusting in his own scheming?

4) Do you have any examples of where God turns the tables on worldly schemes?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Keith Krell: Turning the Tables

Unlike today, Jacob could not simply pack his bags and leave. The authority structure in this Eastern, extended family was far more complex and restrictive—as it is even today, some places in the Eastern culture. There was a shared ownership even of Jacob’s wives and children. To leave without his father-in-law’s permission and blessing could lead to outright war within the family clan. . .

J. Ligon Duncan: The Prosperity of Jacob

Protestant work ethic: Jacob has learned two secrets of God's plan for work. God calls us to work hard because we work for Him, not ultimately for our employer. And God calls us to credit Him for any prosperity that we might receive from that work. Listen to what Calvin says about this: “The use of this passage in teaching the doctrine of work is two-fold. First, whatever I attempt or to whatever work I apply my hands, it is my duty to desire God to bless my labor, that it may not be vain and fruitless. So Calvin says the first duty we have is to ask God to bless the work that we're doing.

Then he goes on to say, then if I have obtained anything, my second duty is to ascribe the praise to God; without whose blessing men in vain rise up early, fatigue themselves the whole day, take late rests, eat the bread of carefulness and taste water with their sorrow.” Calvin says two things you have to do: You have to seek the blessing of God in your work, and then when He blesses you, you have to give Him the praise. That's the beginning isn't it of the protestant work ethic right there. And you see it illustrated in the life of Jacob.

It's so funny that a few moments ago Laban recognized that the Lord had blessed him because of Jacob. Now, however, he thinks the only way that Jacob can be prospered is by **cheating**. And so he takes every action possible to keep Jacob from being able to do well. Because he thinks that the only way that Jacob can do well is if he violates the proposal.

Dr. Al Mohler:

Parallelisms in the lives of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) – lines of God’s sovereign blessing:

- waiting for the promised seed
- women and wells
- wealth – in the OT often a sign of God’s favor – points to a role in God’s covenant;

Jacob defines his household over against Laban’s household

Trickery upon trickery upon trickery

It worked because it was God’s plan for Jacob’s flocks to increase in this way;

Brian Borgman: Goats, Gimmicks and Grace

How do you preach a text like this?

[Allen Ross: “The unit is difficult to develop for exposition ...”]

This will be a blessing that comes from the promises of God; but also comes through conflict, through hardship and that comes even in spite of the sins of Jacob. That has been God’s way with the patriarchs all along. They failed in big ways; but God ends up fulfilling His Word and bringing blessing. Jacob is growing as a believer but still has a long way to go ... as we do.

vv. 25-26 – Jacob requests release from Laban

[Waltke: “Laban is one of the most despicable characters in all of the OT.”]

The son born to my beloved one Rachel = Joseph is probably the promised seed -- reasons Jacob – so he thinks it must be time to return to the land

My time of indentured servitude to you is up; my debt has been paid; it is time for me to go;

vv. 27-28 – Laban makes Jacob an offer he could definitely refuse

fat chance that he has found “favor in Jacob’s eyes”; Jacob must have despised Laban; Laban wants to keep his money-making machine in his camp; what a schmoozer – throws in some theological references; Laban is a huckster – didn’t go out and use practice of divination; here’s a religious person, I will use religious language – but soon exposed as not knowing anything spiritual; using the language to try to sweet talk Jacob; speaks better than he knows; actually unwittingly confirmed the faithfulness of God’s promises

“Name your wages ...” – I’ve heard this before thinks Jacob; he doesn’t trust Laban;

Jacob lures Laban into a plan to defeat this schemer

Vs. 29-34 – you didn’t have to divine this; it is obvious; you know my service and productivity; Jacob acknowledges God’s blessing in his life;

Laban is desperately trying to hang on to Jacob

“*you will not give me anything*” – cf. Abraham’s response to King of Salem in **Gen. 14**

These color patterns are rare and would not come close to 20% of the flock (normal compensation); so Jacob is appealing to Laban’s greed (rather than sense of fair wages);

No way Laban could say, “You cooked the books and took advantage of me”;

Looks like a bonehead deal; Laban accepts the offer – trying not to appear like he scored a coup;

Turning somersaults on the inside;

“I’m giving you the family deal”

vv. 35-36 – Laban starts the deal by cheating Jacob

Attempts to ensure the continuation of the flock that would end up not exhibiting the colors contracted for by Jacob;

“Has not your father changed my wages these 10 times?”

vv. 37-40 – Producing animals that meet the standard so they become his flock; then cross breeding so he gets the stronger animals;

Superstition dealing with visual impressions while mating; (cf. mandrakes – cultural superstition); looks like this process works just like it looked like the mandrakes worked;

Ultimately he credited God with the prosperity of his herds – even though means were suspect

Patriarchal Pattern:

- God gives a promise of blessing
- Patriarch believes it

- Patriarch tries to help God accomplish it by questionable means
- God fulfills it despite their sin and failings – not because of what they do

Applications:

- 1) Jacob is a mixture of faith and walking by sight and craftiness; a walking contradiction; God gave him a dream in Gen. 31; when it comes time to bargain with Laban he applies faith based on what God had told him in the dream; when it comes time to act he acts in a combination of faith and superstition – trying to cover all of his bases; manipulation; blessing came thru unpleasant circumstances
- 2) Prosperity gospel – but not name and claim it type; one that comes to fallen people with imperfect or deformed faith or faith on life support; depends on grace of God; not gimmicks of Jacob; prosperity is a spiritual inheritance – all the riches found in Jesus Christ

TEXT: Genesis 29:31-30:24

TITLE: *DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES*

BIG IDEA:

RIVALRY AND STRIFE FESTER WHEN WE PURSUE FLESHLY EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE SELFISH GOALS INSTEAD OF PRAISING GOD FOR HIS GRACIOUS GIFTS

INTRODUCTION:

[OK -- I stole the title – Kurt Trucksess -- www.christ2rculture.com –can't top that]

The place to start in this soap opera tale of two sisters competing for the love and attention of the same husband is with each of their **selfish goals**. Leah struggled with insecurities throughout her life as she was outclassed by her more beautiful and charismatic sister. She longed for love and affection and the bonds of intimacy with Jacob. Rachel longed for children to elevate her status in the household and the community. She responded poorly to both the hand which the Lord had dealt her and to her husband's failure to give her children (as if that was in his control). Where were the godly desires to see God accomplish His kingdom objectives and fulfill His promises to His elect people?

Secondly, we must expose the **fleshly means** by which both Leah and Rachel pursued their goals. We do not see them humbling themselves and coming to God with faithful, persistent prayer in the context of desiring His will. Instead we see them using every scheme and tool at their disposal to try to outdo each other and gain the supremacy.

Pattern: Based on God sovereignly opening and closing the womb

- Conception and Birth
- Commentary
- Naming

What we see as a result = Jealousy, Rivalry and Hostility creating tension in Jacob's household

RIVALRY AND STRIFE FESTER WHEN WE PURSUE FLESHLY EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE SELFISH GOALS INSTEAD OF PRAISING GOD FOR HIS GRACIOUS GIFTS

I. (29:31-35) GOD'S GRACIOUS GIFT -- FOUR SONS BORN TO LEAH – CULMINATING IN PRAISING THE LORD

A. (:31) Opening the Womb

“Now the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, and He opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.”

Parunak: The theme of this paragraph is that the Lord sees and provides for Leah. She is the victim in this whole tragedy, abused by her father and unloved by her husband, but the Lord cares for her. And she reciprocates in faith, shown in the naming of her sons. In three of the four cases she calls God by the covenant name LORD, showing her spiritual sensitivity. We see this also in the series of names, which reflects a noble pilgrimage.

B. (:32-35a) Conceiving Four Sons

1. (:32) Reuben – “*Behold, a Son*”

“And Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, ‘Because the LORD has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me.’”

There is always special significance in the firstborn.

Deffinbaugh: What a pathetic predicament Leah is in. She is married to a man who never wanted her for a wife and who refuses to give her the love she desperately needs. God lovingly reached out to Leah by giving her a much-desired son, Reuben. Reuben means something like “*see, a son*” (cf. margin, NASV). It was a great joy for Leah to be able to provide Jacob with a man child, who would become his heir. This child kindled Leah’s hope of being loved by Jacob, whose love for Rachel was so strong that he hardly acknowledged Leah’s existence. The barrenness of Rachel at least drove Jacob to the tent of Leah to provide himself with sons who would prosper him.

2. (:33) Simeon – “*Obedient; Listening; little hyena*”

“Then she conceived again and bore a son and said, ‘Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also.’ So she named him Simeon.”

3. (:34) Levi – “*Joined, Attached*”

“And she conceived again and bore a son and said, ‘Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons.’ Therefore he was named Levi.

The priestly line --

Deffinbaugh: Two things have changed since the birth of Reuben, the firstborn. First, Leah has now provided Jacob with three sons, not just one. The mere quantity of children she has borne should impress Jacob with her value to him, especially since Rachel had produced none. Second, her hopes have become much more realistic. She no longer aspires to the high level of love which Jacob had for Rachel but merely for the attachment which any man should have for a wife who is so fruitful. If I understand her words correctly, the attachment which Leah desires is not so much that of affection but of obligation. How can Jacob not feel more kindly toward her because of these sons she has given him?

4. (:35a) Judah – “*Praise*”

“And she conceived again and bore a son and said, ‘This time I will praise the LORD.’ Therefore she named him Judah.”

This is the **key phrase** around which this whole text revolves. God has already given her 3 sons but her heart still feels the emptiness of not being Jacob’s preferred wife. She feels unloved and unattached. But now her attitude changes with the birth of Judah. The line of Judah is the one through whom the promised Messiah will come. This opening of the womb and conception by Leah is truly a gracious gift from God. The one who struggles to be loved now enjoys God’s gracious gift. Her response is appropriate – **Praising the Lord.**

God has created His children with the intention that they would enjoy Him and worship Him and praise Him forever – content with His gracious provision for them. How different from the unsettled soul that constantly strives for fulfillment through fleshly means.

C. (:35b) Closing the Womb
“Then she stopped bearing.”

Why doesn't the story stop here? Why aren't we overwhelmed with joy for how God is keeping His Abrahamic and patriarchal promise about the seed that would bring blessing to the world? Instead, we continue on with this wrestling rivalry between the two sister-wives.

Application:

Let's make the focus of our life **praising the Lord** for His goodness, His sovereignty, His provision and most of all His grace and love.

We can learn a lot from the heart burden of Dr. John Piper who continually exhorts God's children to delight in Him.

II. (30:1-8) EFFORTS OF THE FLESH PART 1 -- TWO SONS BORN TO RACHEL'S MAID BILHAH – VINDICATION BUT STILL WRESTLING

A. (:1-2) Jealousy of Barren Rachel – “Ewe”

1. (:1) Demand of Rachel

“Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, ‘Give me children, or else I die.’”

Asking for something Jacob does not have the power to provide

Parunak: Rachel's words show three sins:

- The first sin is jealousy. *“Rachel envied her sister.”* Her eyes are fixed on herself in comparison with her sister, which is a sure recipe for strife. Compare the exhortation of **Phil 2:3-4**; Rachel is looking *“on her own things,”* when she should have rejoiced in her sister's prosperity.
- Her second sin is ascribing to Jacob what really belongs to God alone, the power to grant offspring: *“Give me children.”*
- Her third sin is exaggeration: *“or else I die.”* Being childless is an unfortunate condition, but hardly a fatal one. Compare her complaint here with that of her aunt in **27:46**, *“What good shall my life do me?”* Her exaggeration inflames the argument, and makes it difficult for Jacob to respond in a godly way.

Henry Alford: It is remarkable, that as soon as Rachel had *children* (literally, sons) she did die. It is impossible to read this and not to form an unfavorable estimate of Rachel. There is at the same time an impetuosity and an ungodliness in her speech to her husband.

[I have always found all “Rachels” to be very pleasant people – this introduction of the name proves to be the exception in my experience!]

2. (:2) Defensive Reaction from Jacob

“Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, ‘Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?’”

Why are you blaming me?

Jacob’s response can be contrasted with that of his father Isaac and his care for his wife Rebekah. When Rebekah was barren, Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of Rebekah (**Genesis 25:21**). The Lord answered Isaac’s prayer. Rebekah became pregnant and gave birth to Esau and Jacob. There is no record that Jacob prayed about Rachel’s barren state. Rather, many years later the Bible recorded that God listened to Rachel and opened her womb and she conceived Jacob’s 11th son (**Genesis 30:22 – 24**).

<https://godasagardener.com/2011/04/24/jacob-the-mandrakes/>

B. **(:3-8) Justification Through Offspring Born to Bilhah – “*Bashful*”**

1. (:3-4) Desperate Substitution of Bilhah

“And she said, ‘Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her, that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children.’ So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife, and Jacob went in to her.

Fleshly schemes often lead to plans of **desperation** – just compounding the mess that we make of things

MacArthur: When the surrogate gave birth while actually sitting on the knees of the wife, it symbolized the wife providing a child for her husband.

2. (:5-8) Birth of Two Sons

a. (:5-6) Birth of Dan – “*God is my Judge*”

“And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. Then Rachel said, ‘God has vindicated me, and has indeed heard my voice and has given me a son.’ Therefore she named him Dan.”

b. (:7-8) Birth of Naphtali – “*my Struggle; my Strife*”

“And Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. So Rachel said, ‘With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and I have indeed prevailed.’ And she named him Naphtali.”

Deffinbaugh: Rachel saw herself in a great struggle, not with God, but with her sister. This she described as a wrestling match which she won. Her main interest and concern is that in the birth of this second child she has won out over Leah. How, I am not sure, for how can two adopted sons win out over four of Leah’s sons? Here God is neither mentioned nor praised. Rachel is preoccupied with the contest between herself and Leah, and she claims to have won. At this point in her life Rachel does not strike me as a spiritual woman in humble submission to the will of God.

Application:

We must divorce ourselves from all selfish ambition, rivalry, striving to outdo others and practice contentment with the lot in life that God has cast for us. Let’s become a servant to others and put their interests ahead of our own in the spirit of **Philippians 2**.

III. (30:9-13) EFFORTS OF THE FLESH PART 2 -- TWO SONS BORN TO LEAH'S MAID ZILPAH – HAPPY BUT NOT JOYFUL

A. (:9) **Desperate Substitution of Zilpah** [*“Frailty”*] for Barren Leah – *“Cow or Weary”*
“When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife.”

B. (:10-11) **Birth of Two Sons**

1. (:10-11) **Birth of Gad** – *“Fortune, Luck”*

“And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. Then Leah said, ‘How fortunate!’ So she named him Gad.”

2. (:12-13) **Birth of Asher** – *“Happy, Fortunate, Blessed”*

“And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. Then Leah said, ‘Happy am I! For women will call me happy.’ So she named him Asher.”

Bruce Goettsche: Leah, who should be content with the circumstances is not. She is pulled into the competitive arena. She gives her servant Zilpah to Jacob. Zilpah bore Jacob two children: Gad and Asher. The desire on the part of Leah and Rachel was certainly to win Jacob's love. But realize how foolish this is . . . in a desire to win his love they keep supplying him with other women! The competitive attitude skews our thinking. In our desire to win we lose sight of the goal.

Scott Grant: After the birth of her fourth son, Leah expressed no hope that her childbearing would kindle Jacob's affections. She simply said, *“This time I will praise the Lord.”* With the births of two sons through Zilpah, once again she does not express hope that Jacob will respond. Neither, however, does she praise the Lord. Instead, after the birth of Asher, she says, *“Happy am I! For women will call me happy.”* The reason for her happiness is the disposition of other women toward her. Her orientation shifted from her husband to the Lord, but now it has shifted from the Lord to other women. It appears that she is looking neither for her husband's love nor the Lord's love, but for acknowledgment from other women. She sees herself in competition with a woman, and she looks to other women to vindicate her cause. **Competitiveness has evacuated her life of spiritual content.**

Application:

We cannot base our joy on our reputation in the community. We must discover the secret of the abiding joy which comes by way of the fruit of the Holy Spirit and the temporary happiness that depends on our outward circumstances.

IV. (30:14-15) EFFORTS OF THE FLESH PART 3 – SUPERSTITIOUS RELIANCE ON AN APHRODISIAC = MANDRAKES – NO SONS BORN TO RACHEL – LET'S MAKE A DEAL

A. (:14) Mandrakes Given to Leah by Reuben

“Now in the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, ‘Please give me some of your son's mandrakes.’”

Yellow love apples

Sproul: The mandrake is a Mediterranean plant with blue flowers in the winter and yellow, plum-like fruit in the summer. It has been desired in many cultures because of a belief that it is an aphrodisiac and promotes fertility. These qualities, coupled with the fact it was only rarely found in Paddan-aram where they lived (**Gen. 28:5**), explains why both Leah and Rachel desired the plant. Rachel herself has not borne any children, Leah has become temporarily infertile (**29:31–30:13**), and both are seeking a cure in the mandrake.

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/reubens-mandrakes/>

B. (:15) Mandrakes Contracted for by Rachel from Leah

“But she said to her, ‘Is it a small matter for you to take my husband? And would you take my son’s mandrakes also?’ So Rachel said, ‘Therefore he may lie with you tonight in return for your son’s mandrakes.’”

Deffinbaugh: Knowing what it was that Leah wanted from those mandrakes, Rachel proposed a bargain. Leah needed something to get Jacob interested in her, to get him to want to come into her tent. Since Rachel nearly always was the one with whom Jacob spent the night, she could assure Leah that Jacob would sleep with her this night. Thus, whether Leah was appealing or not, she would get what she wanted: Jacob, alone, for the night. In exchange for this one night, Rachel got the mandrakes, which she hoped would enable her to conceive.

Application:

God delights to give good gifts to His children. He is not someone who can be manipulated with superstitious practices and deal-making.

V. (30:16-24) GOD’S GRACIOUS GIFT TO BOTH LEAH AND RACHEL – THANKFUL BUT STILL NOT CONTENT

A. (:16-20) Birth of Two Sons to Leah

1. (:16) Jacob Fulfills Contractual Obligations

“When Jacob came in from the field in the evening, then Leah went out to meet him and said, ‘You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son’s mandrakes.’ So he lay with her that night.

2. (:17-18) Birth of Issachar – “Hire, Wage, Reward”

“And God gave heed to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. Then Leah said, ‘God has given me my wages, because I gave my maid to my husband.’ So she named him Issachar.”

3. (:19) Birth of Zebulun – “Dwelling”

“And Leah conceived again and bore a sixth son to Jacob. Then Leah said, ‘God has endowed me with a good gift; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons.’ So she named him Zebulun.”

MacArthur: the plaintive cry of one still unloved (cf. **29:31**) as confirmed by Jacob’s frequent absence from her home. She hoped that having 6 children for Jacob would win his permanent residence with her.

B. (:21) Birth of Daughter Dinah [*“Avenge”*] to Leah

“And afterward she bore a daughter and named her Dinah.”

MacArthur: Although not the only daughter to be born to Jacob (cf. **37:35; 46:7**), her name is mentioned in anticipation of the tragedy at Shechem (**chap. 34**).

C. (:22-24) Joseph [*“He will Add”*] Born to Rachel

“Then God remembered Rachel, and God gave heed to her and opened her womb. So she conceived and bore a son and said, ‘God has taken away my reproach.’ And she named him Joseph, saying, ‘May the LORD give me another son.’”

Finally Rachel is blessed by God as well.

You can never have too many sons!

Later God would give her Benjamin – *“Son of the Right Hand”*

Deffinbaugh: It must have been nearly seven years after her marriage to Jacob that Rachel finally bore him a son. There may be significance to this delay. Jacob, due to his deception and deceit, was delayed in the process of getting a wife for himself. Perhaps Rachel was delayed in her attempts to have a child for the same reasons. She, too, was willing to employ questionable methods to obtain a son. Only after all these futile efforts were thwarted and shown to be without result does God open Rachel’s womb, and that may be in answer to her prayers. Rachel is yet to have another child, but he will come at the cost of her own life (**35:16ff.**).

Application:

Godliness with contentment is great gain!

CONCLUSION:

Let’s examine our **goals** to make sure they are in line with Kingdom Objectives and let’s live by **faith** rather than the effort of the flesh.

There is nothing messier than allowing:

RIVALRY AND STRIFE TO FESTER WHILE WE PURSUE FLESHLY EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE SELFISH GOALS INSTEAD OF PRAISING GOD FOR HIS GRACIOUS GIFTS

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Is your life characterized by finding your delight in praising the Lord?
- 2) Where have you taken competition and rivalry too far and exhibited jealousy, etc.?
- 3) What is the difference in your life between happiness and joy?
- 4) How can you tell whether or not you are truly content?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hughes: Twelve sons and one daughter would be born to the four women. Through unloved Leah and her maid Zilpah, eight of the twelve tribes would come. Leah would be the mother of Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. Despised Leah was the hereditary mother of the kingly tribe of Judah and the priestly tribe of Levi. This makes her ultimate offspring Moses, David, and the Lord Jesus Christ! Indeed, God's work goes on and even thrives amidst human failure.

Parunak:

Jacob's Children in Haran, Genesis 29-30

Ref	Intervention	Conception and Birth	Vertical Comment	Horizontal Comment	Name
29:31	And when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren.	³² And Leah conceived, and bare a son,	for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction;	now therefore my husband will love me.	(3) and she called his name Reuben:
29:33		And she conceived again, and bare a son;	and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also:	(I was hated)	and she called his name Simeon.
29:34		And she conceived again, and bare a son;		³⁴ and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons:	therefore was his name called Levi.
35		And she conceived again, and bare a son:	³⁵ and she said, Now will I praise the LORD:		therefore she called his name Judah;
30:1	And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, ... she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her.	And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son.	⁶ And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son:		therefore called she his name Dan.
30:7		And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son.	(wrestlings of God)	⁸ And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed:	and she called his name Naphtali.
30:9	⁹ When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife.	¹⁰ And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son. ¹¹		And Leah said, A troop cometh:	and she called his name Gad.
30:12		And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a second son.		¹³ And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed:	and she called his name Asher.
30:17	And God hearkened unto Leah,	and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son.	¹⁸ And Leah said, God hath given me my hire,	because I have given my maiden to my husband:	and she called his name Issachar.
30:19		¹⁹ And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son.	²⁰ And Leah said, God hath endued me with a good dowry;	now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons:	and she called his name Zebulun.
30:21		²¹ And afterwards she bare a daughter,			and called her name Dinah.
30:22	And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb.	²³ And she conceived, and bare a son;	and said, God hath taken away my reproach: ... and said, The LORD shall add to me another son.		(4) ²⁴ And she called his name Joseph;

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Steven Cole: While it's a bleak picture, the theme of God's grace runs through it as a strong undercurrent. Jacob wasn't living in submission to the Lord at this time. His wives were thoroughly self-centered. And yet God blessed Jacob with eleven sons and one daughter (the twelfth son is born later), forming the basis for the nation which numbered over two million in Moses' day. Perhaps Moses included this story to humble the nation by showing them that God's blessing on them was totally due to His grace, not to anything in them or their forefathers.

Robert Deffinbaugh: The Battle of the Brides

As we approach this passage, let us be aware of the fact that Moses has not arranged the events

chronologically but **topically**. With only a little simple mathematics we can quickly discern that too many children are born in these verses to have been born one after the other. There must be some overlap in the births. By arranging the births as he has, Moses enables us to feel more intensely the **division** and **competition** between Leah and Rachel. We read these verses like someone watching a tennis match, we look first at the one contestant, then at the other, and so on. That is just the way this account is written so that we might be able to identify with these two women, both of whom desperately want to be assured of Jacob's love and affection. . .

A distinct cultural turnover in values has occurred since that day as well. Women of that era tended to determine their value on the basis of how many children they could produce for their husbands. This seems to underlie the words of Leah: "*Happy am I! For women will call me happy ...*" (**Genesis 30:13**).

Nowadays, women consider children a burden rather than a blessing. Children are considered a hindrance to fulfillment rather than its means. Consequently, birth control devices are thought to be the key to freedom, and abortion is a necessity for a woman's happiness.

I would like to suggest that life's meaning should not be equated with either. Rachel and Leah were both in error by making a good gift from God (children) the ultimate touchstone of fulfillment and happiness. Leah could tell you that this did not prove out. So, today, a career will not bring a woman (or a man) fulfillment either. Leah was far closer to the truth at the time of Judah's birth, for then she looked to God for her worth, meaning, and approval rather than to any man, including her husband. The worship of God is man's highest and most noble end. Neither children nor careers will replace it. The biblical position seems to be that mothers who raise their children to be faithful worshippers of God have fulfilled their calling in life (cf. **I Timothy 2:15**).

Brian Sandifer:

Despite Israel's dysfunctional beginnings, the LORD continues to work through his people's messiness, foolishness and sin—humbling them to prompt their trust in him, and thus providing for their deepest needs: divine favor for the unloved and removal of reproach for the ashamed. . .

God hears, listens, and takes action for the unloved and ashamed. God demonstrates he is especially concerned to lift up the neglected who are members of the covenant. When Leah named her fourth son Judah, literally, "Praise," she chose to trust the LORD with her desire to be loved. The LORD ultimately gave Leah half of Jacob's sons, including the priestly line of Levi and the messianic line of Judah.

TEXT: Genesis 31:1-55

TITLE: RETURN TO THE PROMISED LAND

BIG IDEA:

GOD CALLS HIS REDEEMED PEOPLE TO RETURN TO THEIR PROMISED HOME

INTRODUCTION:

Hughes: Looking forward, Jacob's exodus from Mesopotamia provides a prophetic outline of Israel's exodus from Egypt. Here Jacob's large family flees from Laban; here a multitude of his descendants will flee Pharaoh. Here his family plunders Laban; there they will plunder Pharaoh and his people. Here Laban is forced to let Jacob's family go; there Pharaoh will be forced to let Jacob's descendants go. And all of this is prophetic of the glorious exodus that believers would find in Christ, the ultimate Israel, who plundered the power of evil and led them out of bondage to Satan.

The driving point of the narrative of Jacob's escape here in Genesis 31 is that **God did it all** – through his multiple interventions and constant protection. God would later do exactly the same in Moses' escape from Egypt. And so it now is in the ultimate exodus in Christ. All glory goes to God. . .

For any who have eyes to see, here is the work of an awesome, sovereign God who works amidst the compost of human sin to do his will. Amidst the swirl of deception and intrigue he birthed a people who would become the twelve tribes of Israel. God took a poor man who had been repeatedly enslaved and exploited and made him rich. And now God led him in a glorious exodus as a prelude to his return to the land of promise. Such an awesome God!

GOD CALLS HIS REDEEMED PEOPLE TO RETURN TO THEIR PROMISED HOME

I. (:1-21) COMMAND TO RETURN HOME – GOD REDEEMS HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

Calls them out of the world to be a peculiar people of His own possession

- compare past example – calling of Abraham out of Ur
- compare future example – calling of nation of Israel out of bondage in Egypt
- compare ultimate example – calling the church in Jesus Christ out of bondage to sin and the world; transformation from darkness to light

A. (:1-13) Rationale – Why Return Home?

1. (:1-2) Bad Vibes = I'm Done Here

a. (:1) Resentment – on the part of Laban's sons

“Now Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, ‘Jacob has taken away all that was our father's, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth.’”

b. (:2) Rankling – on the part of Laban

“And Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not friendly toward him as formerly.”

2. (:3) Bold Command and Reiteration of Covenant Blessing = I'm Called Back Home

“Then the LORD said to Jacob, ‘Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.’”

J. Ligon Duncan: Jacob was enormously prosperous. Is it possible that there's a little comfort here on Jacob's part which has made him a little less anxious to get back home than he appeared to be six years before when he was empty-handed? Could it be that God is giving him a divine shove. Suddenly his brothers-in-law are against him. Suddenly his father-in-law turns antagonistic towards him. Could this be God's own divine push to move Jacob back to the land of Canaan, the land of promise? You know, sometimes the Lord gives us a gracious shove. And I think that's exactly what's happening here. When you get comfortable and you're not where God ultimately wants you to be, you can expect Him to make you uncomfortable so that you will restart the journey towards where He wants you ultimately to be. And I think that's exactly what's happening with Jacob here. With all his problems, he's prosperous, and the Lord needs to remind him again of his need to return home to the promised land.

Shultz: The fact that the Lord speaks to him about returning, could mean that Jacob had settled in Haran and put his roots so deeply, that it needed this divine reminder to make him go back home. It is easy, for us also, to come to a stage of spiritual inertia, where God has to wake us up to make us realize where we are and where we are going.

3. (:4-13) Boasting in the Lord = I Can Justify My Decision to Return Home

a. (:4-5) Favorable Presence of God – Despite Laban's Acrimony

“So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field, and said to them, ‘I see your father's attitude, that it is not friendly toward me as formerly, but the God of my father has been with me.’”

Constable: This is the first time in the narrative that Jacob emerges as a man of public faith. He finally takes the leadership in his home, and his wives, for the first time, follow his lead.

Parunak:

Note the alternation here between descriptions of Laban's perfidy, and Jacob's growing awareness of the Lord's providential care.

I see your father's countenance, that it <i>is</i> not toward me as before;	but the God of my father hath been with me.
⁶ And ye know that with all my power I have served your father. ⁷ And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times;	but God suffered him not to hurt me.
⁸ If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstraked.	⁹ Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given <i>them</i> to me.

b. (:6-9) Faithful Service of Jacob – Blessed by God with Prosperity

“And you know that I have served your father with all my strength. Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, God did not allow him to hurt me. If he spoke thus, 'The speckled shall be

your wages,' then all the flock brought forth speckled; and if he spoke thus, 'The striped shall be your wages,' then all the flock brought forth striped. Thus God has taken away your father's livestock and given them to me."

c. (:10-13) Future Promised Jacob in Promised Land

"And it came about at the time when the flock were mating that I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which were mating were striped, speckled, and mottled. Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, 'Jacob,' and I said, 'Here I am.' And he said, 'Lift up, now, your eyes and see that all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth."

Schultz: The recounting of the dream seems to have the double purpose of impressing upon Lea and Rachel that Jacob had not really been cheating their father and secondly that Jacob was bound by his vow at Bethel to return to Canaan.

Parunak: The interesting thing about the vision is that it attributes the growth of the piebald flock, not to Jacob's rods, but to the identify of the males. Jacob sees them as all white, but the Lord reveals them as really piebald themselves. We would say, he makes their recessive genes visible. . .

He identifies himself as "*the God of Bethel,*" and reminds Jacob of the vow that he made there in **28:20-21**. That vow had the following conditions:

- **If God will be with me.**—In **30:30**, Jacob acknowledge that this has been done, when he says that "*the Lord hath blessed thee at my foot,*" meaning that the Lord's blessings have followed him around.
- **and will keep me in this way that I go.**—This is a prayer for protection in his journey to Haran, and it was fulfilled when he arrived there in **ch. 29**.
- **and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on.**—He has had these minimal requirements met ever since he was in Laban's house. Now the Lord has enriched him far beyond these requirements, by giving him extensive riches of his own.
- **So that I come again to my father's house in peace.**—The last condition is his safe return to Canaan. Clearly, this depends on his making the return trip.

So God's identification of himself as the God of Bethel is his way of calling Jacob to his vow. "You made a vow that was contingent on my protection of you. I have protected you. Now it's time for you to return home."

B. (:14-18) Response – How do different ones respond to God's Call?

1. (:14-16) Response of Rachel and Leah = Insecurities

“And Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, ‘Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father's house? Are we not reckoned by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price. Surely all the wealth which God has taken away from our father belongs to us and our children; now then, do whatever God has said to you.’”

J. Ligon Duncan: they say they feel as if they no longer have an inheritance in their father's house. They feel like they have been totally excluded from their father's plans for future blessing and inheritance. You see the sense of alienation there, but they don't stop. It goes on. Two things they say in **verse 15**.

- They say first, that they feel as if they are strangers to their father. They feel like their father treats them like foreigners. They no longer feel a family relation to him.

- And they go on to say at the end of **verse 15** that they feel as if they have been sold or used by their father for his own benefit, but that he's not concerned for their welfare. In other words, they've fetched their father a handsome dowry, but he's used it all up on himself, and has no view to blessing them in the future after his own death. And so they feel as if they have been used, as if they're chattel.

Hughes: Here for the first time we see Rachel and Leah in agreement. The two sisters, at once victims and victimizers, were in concert.

2. (:17-18) Response of Jacob – Instant Obedience to God's Call

“Then Jacob arose and put his children and his wives upon camels; and he drove away all his livestock and all his property which he had gathered, his acquired livestock which he had gathered in Paddan-aram, to go to the land of Canaan to his father Isaac.”

Jacob immediately purposed to follow thru on the revelation he had received from the angel of the Lord and obey the command to return to the land of Canaan and to his father Isaac.

C. (:19-20) Rogue Behavior – Complications when we devise our own plans

1. (:19) Theft on the Part of Rachel

“When Laban had gone to shear his flock, then Rachel stole the household idols that were her father's.”

J. Ligon Duncan: Household idols were used for a number of things in this culture. They were used to divine, they were used as oracles to determine the future. They were used for worship in the home. They were usually female deities and they were often seen as necessary for the producing of fertility. So Rachel's reasons for stealing the household idols may have been she may have feared that unless the household idols were stolen, her father would be able to track them down. She may have desired to have the household idols in order to cultivate her own fertility. She may have wanted the household items as part of her worship. And we also know that those household idols were often times a sign of a person's right to receive an inheritance. So she may, feeling that her father had stiffed her of her rightful inheritance, have stolen those idols as a way of claiming her right to receive an inheritance.

Constable: These gods were usually small figurines (two to three inches long), sometimes carried on the body as charms, many of which archaeologists have discovered. They may have represented departed ancestors or gods that their makers venerated.

2. (:20) Deception on the Part of Jacob

“And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean, by not telling him that he was fleeing.”

Look how long Jacob had been dwelling with Laban; now he sneaks away without any notice

Parunak: He ought not to have continued his deceptiveness, but rather told his father-in-law of his departure and trusted in the Lord to handle the circumstances.

Steven Cole: For his part, Jacob wasn't honorable in the way he left Laban. He should have politely, but firmly, stated his intentions and followed through, trusting God to protect him. While Rachel stole her father's idols, Jacob stole Laban's heart (literal, **31:20, 26**). Jacob is still the schemer, trying to pull his own strings and get himself out of another tight situation.

Keith Krell: Jacob left without informing Laban. Jacob was doing God's will by returning to the land of promise, but he was not doing it in God's way. He was acting in the flesh rather than being led by the Spirit. We can get so caught up in doing God's will that we forget to ask how we are to do God's will. Our methods must always be consistent with God's Word if our actions are to be honoring to God and rewarded by God (cf. **Heb 11:6**). Jacob was afraid of Laban when he should have been afraid of God. **Proverbs 29:25** says, *“The fear of man brings a snare, but he who trusts in the LORD will be exalted.”* Who are you afraid of today? What circumstances are causing you anxiety? God wants you to release this to Him.

D. (:21) Resolve – What does commitment to God's calling look like?

1. Total Commitment

“So he fled with all that he had;”

2. No Turning Back

“and he arose and crossed the Euphrates River;”

3. Focused on the Final Destination

“and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.”

II. (:22-42) CONFRONTATION WITH LABAN – GOD PROTECTS HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

A. (:22-25) Pursuit by Laban Puts Jacob at Risk

1. (:22-23) Chase Scene

“When it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob had fled, then he took his kinsmen with him, and pursued him a distance of seven days' journey; and he overtook him in the hill country of Gilead.”

Covered about 300 miles

Hughes: Laban’s posse thundered after Jacob with murderous intent. The verbs in **verses 22-25** – “fled,” “pursued,” “overtook,” “pitched tents” – are militaristic. Laban was on the warpath.

2. (:24) Caution Issued by God

“And God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream of the night, and said to him, ‘Be careful that you do not speak to Jacob either good or bad.’”

Parunak: has more of a forensic thrust, where “speak” has the sense of declaring a judgment or taking judicial action

Constable: God revealed Himself to people other than the patriarchs in these days (**Genesis 31:29**; cf. Abimelech in **Genesis 20:3**). Many scholars believe that Job also lived in the patriarchal period.

3. (:25) Catching Him at Gilead

“And Laban caught up with Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsmen camped in the hill country of Gilead.”

B. (:26-42) Prosecution by Laban Countered by Defense of Jacob

1. (:26-30) Interrogation

a. (:26-28a) Accusation -- 2 Questions Exposing Deception

1) (:26) Question #1 = What Have You Done

“Then Laban said to Jacob, ‘What have you done by deceiving me and carrying away my daughters like captives of the sword?’”

2) (:27-28a) Question #2 = Why Did You Do It

“Why did you flee secretly and deceive me, and did not tell me, so that I might have sent you away with joy and with songs, with timbrel and with lyre; and did not allow me to kiss my sons and my daughters?”

b. (:28b) Judgment of Foolishness

“Now you have done foolishly.”

c. (:29) Restriction of Powers

“It is in my power to do you harm, but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, ‘Be careful not to speak either good or bad to Jacob.’”

d. (:30) Explanation – What is Understandable vs. Incomprehensible

1) What is Understandable

“And now you have indeed gone away because you longed greatly for your father's house;”

- 2) What is Incomprehensible
“but why did you steal my gods?”

Pretty powerless gods if they could not protect themselves and were subject to being stolen

2. (:31-35) Investigation

a. (:31-32) Confidence and Naivety

“Then Jacob answered and said to Laban, ‘Because I was afraid, for I said, Lest you would take your daughters from me by force. The one with whom you find your gods shall not live; in the presence of our kinsmen point out what is yours among my belongings and take it for yourself.’ For Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen them.”

b. (:33-35) Search and Concealment

“So Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two maids, but he did not find them. Then he went out of Leah's tent and entered Rachel's tent. Now Rachel had taken the household idols and put them in the camel's saddle, and she sat on them. And Laban felt through all the tent, but did not find them. And she said to her father, ‘Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the manner of women is upon me.’ So he searched, but did not find the household idols.”

Hughes: We must understand that the reason that wildly suspicious Laban never suspected that Rachel was sitting on his household gods is that he could not imagine such a sacrilege. Among the ancients “the way of women” was considered to be a state of impurity and thus contaminating. Rachel’s recline was therefore a calculated act of withering contempt for the gods of Mesopotamia. She treated them as worthless and unclean. In doing this, Rachel foreshadowed the despoiling of Egypt’s gods during the plagues of Egypt. This passage also announces future Israel’s contempt for pagan gods. Very likely Laban’s *terraphim* were among the gods that Israel would bury at Shechem (cf.. 35:14).

3. (:36-42) Indignation and Vindication – 4 Arguments Supporting His Vindication:

a. (:36-37) Argues His Innocence

“Then Jacob became angry and contended with Laban; and Jacob answered and said to Laban, ‘What is my transgression? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? Though you have felt through all my goods, what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my kinsmen and your kinsmen, that they may decide between us two.’”

b. (:38-40) Argues His Faithfulness

“These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten the rams of your flocks. That which was torn of

beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it myself. You required it of my hand whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus I was: by day the heat consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes. These twenty years I have been in your house;”

- c. (:41) Argues His Unjust Treatment at the Hands of Laban
“I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you changed my wages ten times.”

- d. (:42) Argues His Prosperity as a Sign of God’s Providential Blessing
“If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac, had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the toil of my hands, so He rendered judgment last night.”

III. (:43-55) COVENANT OF NON-AGGRESSION – GOD WATCHES OVER HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

A. (:43) Whining of Laban as He Faces His Impotency

“Then Laban answered and said to Jacob, ‘The daughters are my daughters, and the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine. But what can I do this day to these my daughters or to their children whom they have borne?’”

Parunak: Jacob and Laban start out life very much alike. Yet they end in very different states. • Jacob ends up recognizing the Lord as the only sure defense, and trusting in him. • Laban ends up deprived of the wealth that had been his real god. The only difference between them is God’s gracious choice and intervention in Jacob’s life, and the lack of this in Laban’s.

B. (:44-54) Witness of a Non-Aggression Treaty

- 1. (:44) Significance of the Covenant = a Witness
“So now come, let us make a covenant, you and I, and let it be a witness between you and me.”

- 2. (:45-46) Stones Heaped Up as a Pillar
“Then Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. And Jacob said to his kinsmen, ‘Gather stones.’ So they took stones and made a heap, and they ate there by the heap.”

- 3. (:47-53) Swearing to the Covenant
 - a. (:47-49) Witness Heap of Stone Pillar
“Now Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha, but Jacob called it Galeed. And Laban

said, 'This heap is a witness between you and me this day.' Therefore it was named Galeed; and Mizpah, for he said, 'May the LORD watch between you and me when we are absent one from the other.'"

Constable: Jacob and Laban made a parity covenant, set up a stone pillar (Heb. *misbah*, standing stone) to mark the spot, and ate a meal together as part of the rite involved in establishing a covenant (**Genesis 31:44-48**). They may have erected the heap of stones (Heb. *gal*, cairn, **Genesis 31:46**) both as a table for the meal and as a memorial of the event. Standing stones sometimes marked supposed dwelling places of the gods (cf. **Genesis 28:17-18**), and cairns often marked graves (cf. **Joshua 7:26; Joshua 8:29; 2 Samuel 18:17**).

Galeed ("*witness heap*," **Genesis 31:47**) is the name from which Gilead came. Gilead became a common name for this mountainous area east of the Jordan River between the Sea of Galilee (*Cinnereth*, Hebrew for "lyre" denoting the shape of the lake) and the Dead (Salt) Sea (cf. **Genesis 31:21; Genesis 31:23; Genesis 31:25**).

The Song of Solomon -called "*Mizpah* [lit. watchtower] *blessing*" was not really a promise between friends but a warning between antagonists who did not trust each other (**Genesis 31:49**). They called on God to keep each other true to the terms of the covenant they had just made. They could not check on each other themselves.

Hughes: this was the declaration of two men who neither trusted nor liked each other – “Because I don’t trust you out of my sight, may God watch your every move.”

b. (:50) Witness of Treatment by God Who Sees All

“If you mistreat my daughters, or if you take wives besides my daughters, although no man is with us, see, God is witness between you and me.”

c. (:51-52) Witness Pillar Pledging Non-Aggression

“And Laban said to Jacob, ‘Behold this heap and behold the pillar which I have set between you and me. This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass by this heap to you for harm, and you will not pass by this heap and this pillar to me, for harm.’”

d. (:53) Witness Oath

“The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.’ So Jacob swore by the fear of his father Isaac.”

4. (:54) Sacrifice and Feast

“Then Jacob offered a sacrifice on the mountain, and called his kinsmen to the meal; and they ate the meal and spent the night on the mountain.”

C. (:55) Withdrawal of Laban and Removal of the Danger

“And early in the morning Laban arose, and kissed his sons and his daughters and

blessed them. Then Laban departed and returned to his place.”

5 Actions:

- Arose
- Kissed
- Blessed
- Departed
- Returned

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) In following God’s commands and guidance, are we bold enough to be honest and transparent before others or do we cloak our actions in deception and trusting in the flesh?
- 2) What would constitute “household gods” in our situation?
- 3) When have we seen the blessing of the providence of God in our life despite our own failures and inconsistent living?
- 4) What does this passage teach about separation from the world and commitment to follow the calling of God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: I wonder, to which of the three main characters in this story are you most spiritually alike?

Some may be like **Laban:** You’ll use God as long as He helps you prosper, but if He doesn’t seem to be working, you’ll try something else. Self is really your God, and you need to turn from your idolatry and submit to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Some may be like **Rachel:** You may know the true God, but you’re carrying your idols from the old life with you. It’s kind of hard to tell whether you’re in Christ or in the world. You need to make a decisive break with the world and trash the things in your life that you know are not pleasing to God.

Others may be like **Jacob:** You’re seeking to obey God and extricate yourself from the ways of the world. You need to keep growing in the direction of reverencing God as your only Lord, and not go back to the things that formerly enslaved you. At times you’ll feel like you’re between a rock and a hard place in seeking to live separately from the world. But you’ll have the joy of knowing that the God of Jacob is protecting you as you do.

John Shultz: Jacob receives a divine revelation which tells him to return to Canaan, but he had already conceived this plan because of some outside pressure. Both Laban's sons and Laban

himself have changed in their attitude toward Jacob. Jacob has picked up rumors. There is talk going around among Laban's children on account of Jacob's wealth. They suspect foul play. Whether they were informed about the arrangement between Jacob and their father, we do not know. But if they are chips of the old block, the agreement would not have meant much to them. Their conclusion is simply that Jacob has taken over. The atmosphere has become threatening for Jacob. . .

More threatening seems to be Laban's attitude. There probably was never too much love lost between Laban and Jacob. But since Jacob was a shepherd of the first rank Laban acted kindly toward him. Since Jacob was no longer working full time for Laban the incentive for kindness was gone. Laban's sons did probably most of the work in the herd. But most of all: Jacob was doing too well with Laban's cattle. Laban's multiple efforts to change the agreement turned out to be of no avail. I suppose it was true, what Jacob said, that Laban had changed the rules ten times.

Keith Krell: The long and stormy relationship between Laban and Jacob had finally come to an end! This is the last mention of Laban we have in the Bible. Laban is an unfortunate example of a worldly, covetous man—one who knows about the true God. He had seen the reality of God in the life of Jacob, along with the power of God in His blessing and protection of Jacob. He himself had even enjoyed many of the blessings of God, through his relationship to Jacob. In spite of all this, he chose to continue in his idolatry and self-centered, self-absorbed lifestyle. Rather than seeking to follow the truth of God's plan, as witnessed by Jacob, he merely resented and coveted the blessing of God on Jacob. In his vigorous pursuit of worldly success, he lost his family, his wealth, and his hope of eternal life in Christ. He chose poorly.

W. H. Griffith Thomas: Mark carefully the steps by which Jacob was led to return home. They afford a striking lesson on the Divine methods of guidance. First of all a desire to go home sprang up in Jacob's heart. Then circumstances between him and Laban began to make it impossible for him to remain. The nest was being stirred up, and his position rendered intolerable by envy, jealousy, and injustice. And, lastly, came the Divine message of command. Thus inward desire, outward circumstances and the Divine word combined to make the pathway clear. This is ever the way of God's guidance; the conviction of the spirit within, the Word agreeing with it in principle, and then outward circumstances making action possible. When these three agree, we may be sure of right guidance. When the first two alone are clear, the way may be right, but the time is not yet come. When the third only is clear and the two former are not, we may be certain that the way is not right. Only let us be spiritually alert, and then "*the meek will He guide in judgment, the meek will He teach His way.*"

TEXT: Genesis 32:1-32

TITLE: RECONNECTING WITH ESAU – PART 1
WRESTLING WITH GOD

BIG IDEA:

FEARS GIVE WAY TO FAITH IN GOD’S PROMISES WHEN WE ARE BROKEN OF OUR SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND CLING TO GOD ALONE

INTRODUCTION:

We are so filled with pride and self-sufficiency that there must come a point when God breaks us and casts us in complete dependence on His grace and resources. God often uses fear and desperate circumstances to bring us to an end of ourselves. Such was the case here in the life of Jacob. Remember that Jacob was a very powerful figure. Some think of him as the wimp in the kitchen while Esau was out hunting. But we have already seen Jacob flex his muscles to impress Rachel as he rolled the heavy stone away from the well-head. He also was quite the schemer and strategist. He was not afraid to match wits with Laban and more than hold his own. But as he anticipates his coming reunion with his brother Esau, he comes face to face with his fears and vulnerability. This was not a situation that he could handle on his own.

FEARS GIVE WAY TO FAITH IN GOD’S PROMISES WHEN WE ARE BROKEN OF OUR SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND CLING TO GOD ALONE

(:1-2) PRELUDE – CAMPING CLOSE TO GOD

A. (:1) Divine Encounter

“Now as Jacob went on his way, the angels of God met him.”

Had just experienced deliverance from the threat of Laban; now he is about to face an even greater threat with much more uncertainty in the person of Esau and his assembled forces; how will he be received back into the Promised Land?

Very important for God to meet him and encourage him as he takes steps of obedience to return to Canaan

Hughes: Twenty years earlier when he had left Canaan on the run, “*the angels of God*” had met him (cf. **28:12**), and now as he returned to Canaan, “*the angels of God*” (the same designation) again met him. . . a vast throng of angels because elsewhere the phrase describes a large camp (cf. **1 Chronicles 12:22**).

Ligon Duncan: God had given him a word of promise the last time he had seen the angelic visitation. And God is calling on Jacob to be remembered of that word and to focus on that word of promise.

B. (:2) Divine Encouragement

*“And Jacob said when he saw them, ‘This is God’s camp.’
So he named that place Mahanaim.”*

Scott Grant: Jacob camped in this place (**Genesis 31:25**). The appearance of the angels causes

Jacob to conclude that it's not just his camp. It's also God's camp. In **Genesis 28**, he named the place where angels appeared to him Bethel, which means "*House of God*." He names this place Mahanaim, which means "*Two Camps*."

I. (:3-8) FACING FEARS HEAD ON – PREPARING FOR REUNION WITH ESAU

A. (:3-5) Preparation -- Appeal for Favor in the Process of Seeking Reconciliation

1. (:3) Messengers Sent to Esau

"Then Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom."

Ligon Duncan: Geographically speaking, friends, there was absolutely no reason for Jacob to go the way he was going. Mount Seir was in the far south. Bethel was in the north. There was no need for him to go through the land of Esau. And so you need to understand that Jacob's choice to meet his brother, Esau, at this time was a deliberate choice. He knew that their land bordered on one another. Sooner or later there was going to be an encounter with his brother, Esau. And he figured it might as well be sooner. He might as well go ahead and see if he can bury the hatchet with his brother. Jacob feels constrained to encounter his estranged brother now. After all, the meeting is going to come sooner or later.

2. (:4-5) Message Communicated to Esau

"He also commanded them saying, 'Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed until now; and I have oxen and donkeys and flocks and male and female servants; and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find favor in your sight.'"

Parunak: He assumes the subservient position, calling him "*lord*" and himself "*thy servant*," and asking "*that I may find grace in thy sight*," the position of an inferior. He was willing to risk all to win the blessing by which he would be made lord over his brethren (**27:29, 37**), but God has now humbled him to the point that he is willing to subject himself to Esau. He effectively undoes the theft of the blessing that he carried out in **ch. 27**. **Leupold:** "Jacob, well aware of his pre-eminence as rooted in God's blessing, is ready to concede to Esau every outward advantage and honour." When we rest in God's provision, we are freed from human strife.

Even when we face our fears head-on, there is no guarantee that we will experience inner peace and be able to confidently rest in the Lord.

Hughes: Jacob's mention of his oxen, donkeys, flocks, and servants were more than a hint of his willingness to make reparations. Formerly larcenous, Jacob longed to make a generous payback to Esau.

B. (:6) Presumption of Revenge Only Feeds Our Fears

"And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, 'We came to your brother Esau, and furthermore he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him.'"

Need to keep our eyes on the Lord rather than on the perceived threat that seems imminent.

C. (:7-8) Panic -- Afraid of the Outcome and Devising Humanistic Escape Plans

“Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people who were with him, and the flocks and the herds and the camels, into two companies; for he said, ‘If Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the company which is left will escape.’”

Where was Jacob’s confidence in the Word of God and His promised blessing?

Picture of a soul in conflict – “I believe . . . help my unbelief.”

The Lord has to break him of this habit of resorting to his own scheming and humanistic tactics.

**II. (:9-12) FORMULA FOR FIGHTING FEARS –
PETITIONING GOD FOR GRACE AND DELIVERANCE**

A. (:9) I am Following Your Plan

“And Jacob said, ‘O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD, who didst say to me, Return to your country and to your relatives, and I will prosper you,’”

- We should not be afraid if we are in the center of God’s plan for our life;
- We need to draw strength from remembering God’s faithfulness to our forefathers in the faith;
- We need to put our confidence in the commands and promises of God

B. (:10) I Have Experienced Your Grace

“I am unworthy of all the lovingkindness and of all the faithfulness which Thou hast shown to Thy servant; for with my staff only I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two companies.”

- We need to humbly confess our sinfulness and unworthiness;
- We need to remind ourselves of God’s past demonstration of faithfulness;
- We need to take stock of all of God’s many gracious blessings – “*Count Your Blessings*”

C. (:11) I Am Desperate for Your Deliverance

“Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me, the mothers with the children.”

- Cry out to God who is your only refuge
- Acknowledge your legitimate fears
- Show concern for others, not just yourself

D. (:12) I Am Counting On Your Promises

“For Thou didst say, ‘I will surely prosper you, and make your descendants as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’”

Parunak: Jacob no longer takes refuge in his own abilities and cleverness, but rests in the Lord and in his promises.

**III. (:13-21) FACILITATING RECONCILIATION –
PRESENTING PRESENTS TO APPEASE ESAU**

A. (:13a) Spending the Night Making Preparations

“So he spent the night there.”

Inclusio in this section – vs. 13 and vs. 21

Does not sound like a restful, peaceful night.

Needs to learn what it means to *“Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.”*

B. (:13B-15) Selecting the Gifts

“Then he selected from what he had with him a present for his brother Esau: two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milking camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys.”

Parunak: This present consists of 580 animals (each nursing camel would have its young with it), divided into five droves by the class of animal: goats, sheep, camels, cows, and asses. This is a princely gift.

C. (:16-20) Sending the Gifts Forward to Esau

1. (:16) Sending The Gifts in Waves

“And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, ‘Pass on before me, and put a space between droves.’”

2. (:17-18) First Wave of Gifts

“And he commanded the one in front, saying, ‘When my brother Esau meets you and asks you, saying, To whom do you belong, and where are you going, and to whom do these animals in front of you belong? Then you shall say, These belong to your servant Jacob; it is a present sent to my lord Esau. And behold, he also is behind us.’”

3. (:19-20) Subsequent Waves of Gifts

“Then he commanded also the second and the third, and all those who followed the droves, saying, ‘After this manner you shall speak to Esau when you find him; and you shall say, Behold, your servant Jacob also is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goes before me. Then afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me.’”

D. (:21) Spending the Night Concerned About the Outcome

“So the present passed on before him, while he himself spent that night in the camp.”

IV. (:22-30) FIGHTING GOD TO THE POINT OF BROKENNESS AND SUBMISSION -- PREVAILING WITH GOD AND PRESERVED BY GOD

A. (:22-23) No Turning Back

“Now he arose that same night and took his two wives and his two maids and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. And he took them and sent them across the stream. And he sent across whatever he had.”

Parunak: Crossing the Jabbok is a major commitment. A river is a major barrier. He might stay north of it and force Esau to cross it in approaching him, thus using it as a defense. By crossing it himself, he makes retreat almost impossible.

B. (:24-30) No Remnant of Self Sufficiency

1. (:24-25) Pivot Point

“Then Jacob was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. And when he saw that he had not prevailed against him, he touched the socket of his thigh; so the socket of Jacob's thigh was dislocated while he wrestled with him.”

Parunak: With a single touch the mysterious adversary lames Jacob. The hip joint is the pivot of a wrestler's strength. One moment Jacob is holding his own; now he is powerless. The adversary has simply been sparring with him, restraining a far greater power, and now effectively brings the contest to an end. Jacob must now realize that whatever victory he enjoys in this struggle is only by permission of his adversary. For the first time he must confront who it is with whom he wrestles.

Bruce Goettsche: I view this whole experience as somewhat of an object lesson for Jacob and for you and I. Jacob was standing between his past struggle with Laban and the impending struggle with Esau. God comes at this time because he wants Jacob to realize that his real struggle all alone has been with God. . .

2. (:26) Perseverance

*“Then he said, ‘Let me go, for the dawn is breaking.’
But he said, ‘I will not let you go unless you bless me.’”*

Parunak: The Lord has brought him to the point of exhaustion in the exercise of the flesh, then humbled him decisively with a touch to the hip. His pride and self-confidence have been destroyed, as he realizes who it is against whom he has been struggling. In an instant he is overwhelmed with a sense of dependency. Now he holds the angel, not with the grip of a self-confident wrestler, but with the imploring embrace of complete surrender.

3. (:27-28) Prevailing

*“So he said to him, ‘What is your name?’
And he said, ‘Jacob.’”
“And he said, ‘Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel;
for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed.’”*

Bruce Goettsche: God asked Jacob his name not because He didn't know it . . . He wanted to know if Jacob knew it. He wanted to know if Jacob was ready to come to grips with who he really was or whether he was going to continue to fight the Lord.

This is the point everyone needs to arrive at. We need to realize that we are the problem and we need someone to change us. It is then, and only then, that we receive our new name. In Jacob's case he was given the name "Israel" which means "He struggles with God" or "God Prevails". His new name was a reminder of this encounter and the lesson that we need God.

Parunak: The point is that Jacob, the supplanter, needs to expand his understanding of those whom he engages. He has seen himself locked in struggle with Esau and Laban. In fact, it is God who has been struggling with him, to bring him to the end of himself and into submission to his creator. With this realization, he is to change from “he [Jacob] supplants” to “God fights.” The

first name acknowledged his struggle with men, prophetically indicated by grasping his brother's heel in the womb (25:26); the second recalls this wrestling match with the angel of the Lord.

4. (:29-30) Blessing and Preservation

a. (:29) Blessing

*“Then Jacob asked him and said, ‘Please tell me your name.’
But he said, ‘Why is it that you ask my name?’
And he blessed him there.”*

b. (:30) Preservation

“So Jacob named the place Peniel, for he said, ‘I have seen God face to face, yet my life has been preserved.’”

(:31-32) POSTLUDE – STEPPING OUT IN FAITH IN DEPENDENCE ON GOD

A. (:31) Personal Reminder of God's Blessing

*“Now the sun rose upon him just as he crossed over Penuel,
and he was limping on his thigh.”*

B. (:32) Corporate Reminder of God's Blessing

“Therefore, to this day the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is on the socket of the thigh, because he touched the socket of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip.”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can we tell whether we are trusting in our own plans and resources or in God's provision?
- 2) Why didn't Jacob try to avoid Esau and take a different route back to Canaan?
- 3) What is the significance of God renaming Jacob to now be known as Israel?
- 4) What reminders has God given to us to help us to cling to Him alone rather than trust in our own sufficiency?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole:

I. When fear grips you, rely on God's provision, not on your plans.

1. Fear grips us all at times.
2. When fear grips us, our tendency is to rely on our plans.
3. When fear grips us, we must rely on God's provision.

A. GOD'S PROVISION IS COMPLETELY ADEQUATE FOR OUR NEEDS.

B. WE RELY ON GOD'S PROVISION THROUGH BELIEVING PRAYER.

II. God must break us of our self-dependence so that He can bless us as we cling to Him in our brokenness.

1. God must break us of our self-dependence.
 - A. GOD'S BREAKING PROCESS REVEALS TO US THE POWER OF OUR FLESH.
 - B. GOD'S BREAKING PROCESS REVEALS TO US THE POWER OF OUR GOD.
2. God blesses us as we cling to Him in our brokenness.
 - A. WE WON'T CLING TO THE LORD UNTIL WE'RE BROKEN.
 - B. EVEN IN CLINGING, WE'RE PRONE TO USE GOD, NOT TO SUBMIT TO HIM.
 - C. CLINGING TO GOD IN OUR BROKENNESS IS THE KEY TO POWER WITH GOD AND WITH OTHERS.

Andrew Bonar said that in the highlands of Scotland, sheep sometimes wander off among the rocky crags and get trapped on dangerous ledges. Attracted by the sweet grass, they leap down ten or twelve feet to get to it, but they can't get back up. A shepherd will allow the helpless animal to remain there for days until it becomes so weak it's unable to stand up. Finally, he ties a rope around his waist and goes over the edge to the rocky shelf and rescues the one that has strayed. Someone asked Bonar, "Why doesn't the shepherd go down right away?" He replied, "Sheep are so foolish that they would dash right over the precipice and be killed if the herdsman didn't wait until their strength was nearly gone." (In *"Our Daily Bread,"* Winter, 1980.)

Marcus Dods: This struggle had, therefore, immense significance for the history of Jacob. It is, in fact, a concrete representation of the attitude he had maintained towards God throughout his previous history; and it constitutes the turning point at which he assumes a new and satisfactory attitude. Year after year Jacob had still retained confidence in himself; he had never been thoroughly humbled, but had always felt himself able to regain the land he had lost by his sin. And in this struggle he shows this same determination and self-confidence. He wrestles on indomitably. As Kurtz, whom I follow in his interpretation of this incident, says, "All along Jacob's life had been the struggle of a clever and strong, a pertinacious and enduring, a self-confident and self-sufficient person, who was sure of the result only when he helped himself—a contest with God, who wished to break his strength and wisdom, in order to bestow upon him real strength in divine weakness, and real Wisdom in divine folly." All this self-confidence culminates now, and in one final and sensible struggle, his Jacob-nature, his natural propensity to wrest what he desires and win what he aims at, from the most unwilling opponent, does its very utmost and does it in vain. His steady straining, his dexterous feints, his quick gusts of vehement assault, make no impression on this combatant and move him not one foot off his ground. Time after time his crafty nature puts out all its various resources, now letting his grasp relax and feigning defeat, and then with gathered strength hurling himself on the stranger, but all in vain. What Jacob had often surmised during the last twenty years, what had flashed through him like a sudden gleam of light when he found himself married to Leah, that he was in the hands of one against whom it is quite useless to struggle, he now again begins to suspect. And as the first faint dawn appears, and he begins dimly to make out the face, the quiet breathing of which he had felt on his own during the contest, the man with whom he wrestles touches the strongest sinew in Jacob's body, and the muscle on which the wrestler most depends shrivels at the touch and reveals to the falling Jacob how utterly futile had been all his skill and obstinacy, and how quickly the stranger might have thrown and mastered him.

Ligon Duncan:

(:1-23) The Fears of Jacob

- I. God never forgets His promises and indeed often providentially reminds us of them so that we might not forget.
- II. God strengthens our faith, not by removing all danger and pressure, but by sustaining us through it.
- III. Biblical believing prayer pleads God's person and promises.
- IV. God grows Jacob's faith here by exploiting his area of greatest weakness.

(:24-32) A Stormy Walk-Clinging to God

I. God will have our wills purged and redirected to Himself.

But now Jacob wants to be alone, and that is the very moment that God comes to him. Jacob has come to the end of himself. He has no more plans, he has no more strategy, he has no more schemes, he has exhausted his bag of tricks. He's at the end of himself. He's beginning to reflect upon the way that he cheated Esau, the way that he treated his father, the way that he's related to his family. He has come to the end of himself. And it's that very moment God comes to him. We are told in **verse 24** that a man came and wrestled with him. However, that man is identified by God Himself in **verse 28** as God. And Jacob in **verse 30** identifies the person with whom he has wrestled as God. I have wrestled, I have seen the Lord face to face, and yet I have been spared, he says. Furthermore, in the book of Hosea, the prophet Hosea will identify this man as the angel of the Lord. Turn with me to the book of Hosea, chapter 12, and look at verses 2 through 5.

Hosea 12, verses 2 through 5. The prophet says this. *“The Lord also has a dispute with Judea and will punish Jacob according to his ways. He will repay him according to his deeds. In the womb he took his brother by the heel. And in his maturity he contended with God.”* **Verse 4**, very important. “Yes, he wrestled with the angel and prevailed. He wept and sought his favor. He found him at Bethel, and there he spoke with us, even the Lord, the God of hosts; the Lord is His name.” And so Hosea identifies the man who wrestles with Jacob as the angel of the Lord. And as you know, the angel of the Lord is the usual term in the book of Genesis used to represent a physical, visible manifestation of God Himself, and especially to represent a visible, physical manifestation of the Second Person of the trinity.

II. God in His grace cultivates in us a desire for Him alone

TEXT: Genesis 33:1-20

TITLE: RECONCILIATION WITH ESAU – PART 2 – PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE

BIG IDEA:

HOW CAN THE BELIEVING COMMUNITY PEACEFULLY CO-EXIST WITH RELATIVES FROM A WORLDLY VALUE SYSTEM?

INTRODUCTION:

Jacob’s family situation should strike you as messy and complicated. We have been looking in recent chapters at how Jacob was able to untangle himself from being trapped in his wife’s country and household – separated from the Promised Land. His relationship with his father-in-law was characterized by scheming and mistrust on both sides – not a peaceful situation at all. But now Jacob has been reassured by His God of his need to return to the Promised Land with his wives and children and possessions. He has distanced himself from Laban and is headed back to Canaan.

But that does not make for an easy, smooth transition. Jacob still has to deal with his ruptured relationship with his twin brother Esau – who surely resents the unwise relinquishing of his birthright. Jacob was the favorite son of his mother; Esau was the favorite son of his father. So as Jacob heads for home, he is filled with fear and anxiety over what awaits him (a brother who had expressed a desire to kill him) – despite the gracious promises of God. He is still struggling to learn how to walk by faith instead of sight – how to trust in God’s unshakeable promises instead of his own scheming and attempts to control his situation.

HOW CAN THE BELIEVING COMMUNITY PEACEFULLY CO-EXIST WITH RELATIVES FROM A WORLDLY VALUE SYSTEM?

I. (:1-3) PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE CAN BE DICEY BETWEEN THE SPIRITUAL AND THE PROFANE – ESPECIALLY IF YOU ARE NOT FULLY WALKING BY FAITH

A. (:1a) Anticipating Potential Danger

“Then Jacob lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, Esau was coming, and four hundred men with him.”

Hughes: The dread that filled Jacob as he prepared to meet Esau was grounded in the mean facts of the life-altering humiliations that he had dealt his older brother – first, when he conned Esau, who while in a flippant mood sold him his birthright; and, second, when he dressed up as Esau and stole Esau’s blessing from their father Isaac. These humiliating stratagems left Esau uttering, “Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has cheated me these two times. He took away my birthright, and behold, now he has taken away my blessing” (27:36).

B. (:1b-2) Arranging a Protective Buffer for His Family

“So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids.”

1. Maids and Their Children

“And he put the maids and their children in front,”

2. Leah and Her Children
“and Leah and her children next,”

3. Rachel and Joseph
“and Rachel and Joseph last.”

Keith Krell: Jacob has a family-value, depth chart. He divides his children and wives, putting the least favorite in the front so that the more favored can possibly escape the massacre he still fears. Jacob continues to rely on his own wits to get him out of another tight situation. The fact that Jacob made preparation for his encounter with Esau wasn't necessarily wicked. In fact, the Lord will often lead us to do very practical things when we follow Him. But we must take action only after prayer and guidance from the Holy Spirit. This demonstrates our trust in the Lord.

C. (:3) Approaching the Danger Head-On

“But he himself passed on ahead of them and bowed down to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.”

Duncan: The pathway to exaltation is humiliation ... the way up is the way down –

And so after taking appropriate precautions, Jacob himself steps forward to meet the approaching Esau. And when he comes near to him, he prostrates himself seven times. We have tablets from things which were written in the context of this era and this culture in the near east which tell us that this was a standard way that you would have greeted a tribal king. In fact, we probably have fifty examples of this in tablets where over and over those who are greeting a tribal king will bow seven times. And it's almost a standard formula in the way that they greet a superior figure. But it's ironic, isn't it. It's Jacob bowing seven times before Esau who has been prophesied by God to be the lesser of these two brothers. . . Here was a man who needed the divine humbling of the Lord to prepare him for the position of exaltation which God had planned for him, had promised to him through the covenant prophesy, all the way back in Genesis 27.

Keith Krell: By going ahead of his family to meet Esau, Jacob shows the new Israel overcoming the fear that had formerly dominated the old Jacob. A remarkable and important transition is taking place here. Jacob—the self-serving, greedy, self-promoting, self-protective heel-catcher is being transformed by his relationship with God. He is beginning to take responsibility for the consequences of his own sinful past.

II. (:4-11) PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE ACCOMPLISHED BY GOD’S GRACE – NOT FLESHLY SCHEMING

Tension here between trusting in human schemes and divine provision

A. (:4-7) Esau Graciously Embracing Jacob and His Family in Spirit of Forgiveness

1. (:4) Esau Embraces Jacob
“Then Esau ran to meet him and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.”

Parunak: Esau cannot do enough to show his affection toward his brother. Compare Luke 15:20, the return of the prodigal son, where our Lord no doubt has this reunion in mind. Bailey notes on Luke 15 that the old men in Palestinian villages never run. It isn't considered dignified. When the father (or here, Esau) runs, they are opening themselves to ridicule. Esau's running is itself a mark of his emotional welcome for Jacob.

2. (:5-7) Esau Embraces Jacob's Family

"And he lifted his eyes and saw the women and the children, and said, 'Who are these with you?' So he said, 'The children whom God has graciously given your servant.'"

a. The Maids and Their Children

"Then the maids came near with their children, and they bowed down."

b. Leah and Her Children

"And Leah likewise came near with her children, and they bowed down;"

c. Joseph and Rachel

"and afterward Joseph came near with Rachel, and they bowed down."

B. (:8-11) Jacob Graciously Entreating Esau to Receive His Gifts from God's Blessing

1. (:8) Gifts Intended to Forge a Bond of Fellowship

"And he said, 'What do you mean by all this company which I have met?' And he said, 'To find favor in the sight of my lord.'"

2. (:9) Gifts not Necessary

"But Esau said, 'I have plenty, my brother; let what you have be your own.'"

3. (:10-11a) Gifts Appropriate as an Expression of God's Blessing

"And Jacob said, 'No, please, if now I have found favor in your sight, then take my present from my hand, for I see your face as one sees the face of God, and you have received me favorably. Please take my gift which has been brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have plenty.'"

Leupold: What Jacob means is that in the friendliness beaming from Esau's face he saw a reflection of divine favor, because he knew that it was God Himself who had changed Esau's heart to make it friendly. (1 Sam. 29:9; 2 Sam. 14:17)

Duncan: the thing that strikes me in this passage is that Jacob acknowledges God's kind providence to him in every aspect of his life, including the way that Esau received him. Jacob

gives all the tribute to God. This is so different from the Jacob that we know. He gives all the glory to God. He gives all the credit to God. . .

Here again we see the spontaneity of Esau. We're expecting Esau to be angry and then suddenly spontaneous Esau, the same spontaneous Esau who gave up his birthright for a bowl of soup, is now spontaneously overjoyed at this reunion with his brother, Jacob. And I must say that we are reminded in that of the common grace that God sometimes displays in the lives of natural men. .

Do you see what Jacob is saying? He's saying, Esau, you don't know it but the reason you have received me like you have is because my Father ordained that you would receive me like this. Not because of these stupid presents that I sent before me to try and get you to love me. You've received me like this because God has answered my prayers beyond my asking. So just keep everything that I gave. They're presents. Because God has shown me that He is able to give me what I need without my own strategies. And so Jacob is humbled in his response, and he acknowledges that God, not his gifts, gave him Esau's favor.

4. (:11b) Gifts Insisted Upon and Received

“Thus he urged him and he took it.”

Keith Krell: The word translated “gift” (*berakah*) is the word “blessing.” Jacob had stolen Esau’s blessing and birthright (**27:35**) and he understood that for reconciliation to take place, he would need to make restitution for his theft. Esau didn’t want or need the animals; he wanted his brother. But Jacob needed to feel he could restore himself; he needed to feel restitution. Finally, Jacob convinced Esau to accept the gift. Esau took it to allow his brother the opportunity to feel forgiven.

Parunak: At Jacob’s insistence, Esau accepts the gift. By not giving one in return, he acknowledges Jacob’s gift as an apology, and accepts it.

Cole: I think this was a superficial reconciliation at best, because Jacob never verbally confessed the wrongs he had committed against Esau, nor did he ask for forgiveness.

III. (:12-17) PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE DOES NOT HAVE TO UNDERMINE INDEPENDENCE – WHEN YOUR VALUE SYSTEMS ARE NOT COMPATIBLE

A. (:12-14) No Need to Travel Together

1. (:12) Esau’s Offer to Journey Together

“Then Esau said, ‘Let us take our journey and go, and I will go before you.’”

Hughes: With the restitution and reconciliation in effect, Esau’s magnanimity overflowed as he offered to lead Jacob’s clan to his home in Seir. But Seir was outside the Promised Land. God’s word to Jacob at Bethel was that God would bring him back to the land (cf. **28:15**). Moreover, God’s chosen people were to remain separate from those who were not people of faith. The dangers in Esau’s generous offer were therefore substantial.

2. (:13-14) Jacob’s Desire to Make His Own Way

“But he said to him, ‘My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and

herds which are nursing are a care to me. And if they are driven hard one day, all the flocks will die. Please let my lord pass on before his servant; and I will proceed at my leisure, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord at Seir.”

Interesting that he is not going to wind up at Seir – dwelling with Esau; but in Succoth

Duncan: Jacob is wise in avoiding going back to Mt. Seir with his brother, Esau. Even though Esau has been gracious, and in God's mercy there has not been a violent meeting between these two brothers, Jacob is indeed the heir and the head of the covenant. And his job is not to mix and intermingle with this one who has chosen another way. And that would have inevitably happened had he gone back to Mt. Seir and settled there with his elder brother. So Jacob is wise to sidestep that.

H. Griffith Thomas: instead of going after Esau to Seir, which was situated south-east of Peniel, he took his journey in an exactly opposite direction, and went to Succoth, north-west of Peniel. And thus he took the second step backward, deceiving his brother once again. It is surely impossible even to palliate this falsehood. As he had not the courage to give his brother the real reason of his declining the journey together, so also he told an untruth in order to put as much distance as he could between them. We wonder what Esau must have thought when he found Jacob did not arrive.

B. (:15) No Need for Protection to be Provided by Each Other

1. Esau's Offer of Protection

“And Esau said, ‘Please let me leave with you some of the people who are with me.’”

2. Jacob's Confidence

“But he said, ‘What need is there? Let me find favor in the sight of my lord.’”

C. (:16-17) No Need to Live Together

1. (:16) Esau Living in Seir

“So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir.”

2. (:17) Jacob Living in Succoth

“And Jacob journeyed to Succoth; and built for himself a house, and made booths for his livestock, therefore the place is named Succoth.”

Why did he stop short of travelling to Bethel?

IV. (:18-20) PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE CAN RESULT IN COMPROMISED SECURITY, INHERITANCE AND WORSHIP

Things seem to be going well for Jacob on the surface ... but are they??

A. (:18) Compromised Roots -- Secure Encampment in Shechem (which still is not Bethel)

“Now Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem, which is in the land of Canaan, when he came from Paddan-aram, and camped before the city.”

Derek Kidner: Shechem, or Shechem we say from the King James way that it's written, offered Jacob the attractions of a **compromise**. His summons from God was to **Bethel**; but Shechem, about a day's journey short of it, stood attractively at the crossroads of trade. Chapter 34 shows the cost of Jacob settling at Shechem. He paid in rape, treachery and massacre, a chain of evil that proceeded logically enough from the unequal partnership with the Canaanite community there."

Ian Duguid (quoted by **Hughes**): What was Jacob doing settling down at Shechem and raising an altar when he should have been continuing on to Bethel to raise the altar there, where he had first had the dream? Did Jacob think that Shechem was a better site for trade and for his flocks? Perhaps he thought it didn't matter. After all, Bethel was now a mere twenty miles or so away; he could go there whenever it suited him, once he got settled. Why be so precise in these things? Shechem or Bethel – it's really all the same, isn't it? Indeed, it is not. Whatever his motivation, Jacob's compromise and his failure to follow through with complete obedience to what he had vowed would cost him and his family dearly, as we shall see in the following chapter. Almost obedience is never enough. Being in the right ballpark may be sufficient when watching a baseball game, but is not nearly enough when it comes to obeying God. Nothing short of full obedience is required.

A. (:19) Compromised Rights – Buying Land Unnecessarily

“And he bought the piece of land where he had pitched his tent from the hand of the sons of Hamor, Shechem's father, for one hundred pieces of money.”

H. Griffith Thomas: Then, again, he bought some property there, purchasing the land on which his tent was pitched. He was thus actually buying his own promised possessions, the land assured to him by God! Was this necessary? Surely not.

B. (:20) Compromised Reverence -- Compromised Worship

“Then he erected there an altar, and called it El-Elohe-Israel.”

“God, the God of Israel”

Consequences of these steps of incomplete obedience and worldly compromise will be seen in the tragic outcomes described in **Chap. 34**

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can we guard against our natural tendency to try to scheme our way out of difficult situations rather than fully trusting in God?

- 2) Where do you see Jacob relying on the flesh in this passage and where do you see him exercising faith?
- 3) What are the dangers of incomplete obedience or compromise when it comes to fully obeying God's commands?
- 4) What can we learn about reconciliation from this passage ... or about peacefully co-existing with those who do not embrace our Christian worldview?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Keith Krell: Time to Eat Crow

Jacob may have felt safe there, but feared returning to the southern part of Canaan, where his father was, because of continuing fears of Esau, who frequented that region. In spite of Esau's warm greeting, Jacob probably didn't trust him. Those who are treacherous, like Jacob, often think others will be treacherous. But while Jacob was afraid of Esau, he wasn't afraid of staying in Succoth, outside the land, or of buying property in Shechem, where his family would be morally polluted. He was afraid of the wrong things! God had promised to protect Jacob if he obeyed; but Jacob felt he was safer in a place of partial obedience than to risk trusting the Lord by obeying completely. Jacob's gradual transition into Shechem is reminiscent of Lot's ever-closer association with the city of Sodom; first pitching his tent facing Sodom, then moving into Sodom, and finally sitting as an elder in Sodom's gates. And, as we will see in our study of **Genesis 34**, disastrous consequences await Jacob and his family in Succoth for his failure to fully obey the Lord.

Steven Cole: It's not surprising, therefore, that commentators and preachers have some different views of Jacob's actions in this chapter.

Some extol him as a godly man who models how we ought to be reconciled to our enemies and live by faith.

Others chide Jacob as a sorry example of the life of faith, using chapter 34, which shows the results of his actions in **chapter 33**, as their proof. Who is right?

I take the middle ground. I think there are some positive changes in Jacob, but they aren't complete. He's still the same old schemer in many ways, but God is working on him. He's changed as a result of Peniel, but he's still unchanged in many ways. The flesh still dominates much of him, but he's beginning to live by faith.

1. Jacob lived both by the flesh and by faith in his reconciliation with Esau (33:1-16).

As the sun rises on Peniel, Jacob comes limping from his wrestling match with the Lord. He looks up and sees Esau and his 400 men coming toward him in the distance. I wish that Jacob would have said, "Lord, You've crippled me so I'm helpless unless You intervene. You've promised to bless me. I'm trusting You to work." But instead, the old Jacob takes over: He divides his children and wives, putting the least favorite in the front so that the more favored can

possibly escape the massacre he still fears. Jacob is still relying on his own wits to get him out of another tight situation. If his trust had been completely in the Lord, he wouldn't have had to resort to his escape plan.

2. Jacob lived both by the flesh and by faith in his decision to dwell at Succoth and Shechem (33:17-20).

My observation of Christians (including myself) tells me that Jacob was doing what we all do. He was making an attempt to follow the Lord, but at the same time he was not obeying the Lord completely. By calling the altar "*God, the God of Israel*," he was acknowledging his gratitude to God for bringing him safely back to the land. But by not going all the way to Bethel, he was catering to his fleshly fear of Esau. He was the new man, Israel; but he was still the old man, Jacob. We do the same thing. We begin by faith in the Lord, but then live by the flesh.

Hughes: Jacob's new crippling and new name were the keys to a life of true power with man and with God. But almost immediately Jacob began to retreat from his humility and dependence. He lied to his godless, bighearted brother. He tarried in Succoth instead of entering the Promised Land. And then when he did enter, he continued in partial obedience. Jacob's altar in Shechem declared that the mighty God was his God – and he was right. But he built it in the wrong place, testifying that his knee was not bent to El-Elohe-Israel.

Brian Borgman: Jacob and Esau's Reconciliation

Must study this in connection with chap. 32; vertical encounter with God leads immediately into horizontal encounter with Esau; Jacob has no choice but to now face Esau; he has been humbled and now must rectify his past wrongs with his brother; we cannot claim to have a right relationship with God and not care about our relationships with others

1. Jacob is still Jacob – does not do anything perfectly or flawlessly; Esau has been thinking about this day for 20 years;
2. Jacob is actually transformed

Limp is perpetual reminder of how he needs to rely on the Lord;

Because he had seen God face to face, he does not need to fear the face of his brother;

Moving scene of reconciliation – reminds us of Prodigal Son story; they come together and embrace and weep;

Jacob's repentance was real; took the risk to meet with Esau; those who have experienced peace with God through divine forgiveness ought to be willing to take the risk to seek peace with others; we must have a heart of reconciliation towards others; must put away brash words and use wise words

TEXT: Genesis 34:1-31

TITLE: RAPE . . . REVENGE PLOT . . . RETRIBUTION – VENGEANCE BELONGS TO GOD

BIG IDEA:

THERE IS A REASON GOD FORBIDS HUMANS TO EXERCISE VENGEANCE -- VENGEANCE CAN ONLY BE FAIRLY ADMINISTERED BY A HOLY AND JUST GOD

INTRODUCTION:

God has established human government to restrain the outward expression of sin and to punish evil doers. The government struggles with fulfilling this duty in a responsible and fair manner. God has not charged individuals with some type of blanket blank check authority to exercise personal vengeance at whatever level they deem appropriate. In fact, God expressly prohibits such wrathful vengeance – teaching us that Vengeance belongs to the prerogative of God and He will justly repay. There are a number of good reasons why – 3 specific reasons given in this text:

VENGEANCE CAN ONLY BE FAIRLY ADMINISTERED BY A HOLY AND JUST GOD

Definition of Vengeance: punishment inflicted or retribution exacted for an injury or wrong.

Hughes: The cost of Jacob’s turpitude was immense, as chapter 34 records – rape, degeneration, treachery, and genocide. Yet in all of this a fierce grace was at work. In Shechem, in the event we are about to consider, God allowed Jacob to experience the appalling weight of his sinfulness so he would return to his call. Divine grace will triumph despite human sin – fierce, fiery grace.

I. (:1-12) RAPE OF DINAH – BAD THINGS HAPPEN IN BAD SITUATIONS – REASON #1 – HUMANS ARE TAINTED BY SIN AND THEREFORE NOT QUALIFIED TO EXERCISE VENGEANCE

- sin on the part of Jacob via incomplete obedience (as we saw in Chap. 33)
- sins of the father (deceitfulness, scheming, trust in the flesh) – exhibited in next generation
- sin on the part of Jacob via poor parenting
- sin on the part of Dinah via putting herself in compromising situations

(not excusing the actions of Shechem – but showing the disqualification of humans to properly exercise vengeance;
not saying that Jacob and his sons should overlook the rape of Dinah)

A. (:1-2) Shechem Takes Advantage of Dinah

1. (:1) Foolish Vulnerability

“Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land.”

Parunak: Though Jacob probably had more than one daughter (37:35), only one was listed in the birth history, and that because of this episode. We are reminded that she is Leah’s daughter,

because this relation is what motivates Simeon and Levi (her full brothers) in revenging her dishonor.

Leah was not Jacob's beloved wife ... so Dinah was probably not receiving proper parental affection and attention from her father. This made her vulnerable to seek companionship and love and affection outside of parental guidelines.

Krell: Like many teenage daughters down throughout time, it would appear that Dinah went out on the town behind her parents' back.

Parunak: Both verbs suggest defective behavior on Dinah's part.

- *"to see"* recalls the origin of Eve's sin in **3:6**. Curiosity into the ways of the world is likely to draw us into those ways.
 - o Proverbs warns against drunkenness by saying, *"Look not on the wine when it is red,"* **23:31**
 - o Job protests his purity by saying, *"I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?"* **31:1**
 - o This seems to be the point of our Lord's warning in **Matt 6:22**, *"the light of the body is the eye."* The eye guides the body in its actions, and anticipates those actions. If the eye is directed toward evil things, the body will soon be led into evil practices.

"Be careful, little eyes, what you see."

- *"went out"* shows her leaving the protection of her father's encampment. It may have overtones of illicit behavior:
 - o Leah *"went out"* to allure Jacob, **30:16**;
 - o The Law of Hammurabi (1800 BC) condemns a woman who "wishes to go out from" her husband's house (law 141).
 - o The targums translate "cult prostitute" as "one who goes out in the countryside."

More generally, note from **Num 30** that a woman (other than a widow or a divorcee) is always defined with relation either to her husband or her father. Dinah's desire for independence as a single girl is a danger sign, and she in fact falls into difficulty because of it.

2. (:2) Forced Violation

"And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force."

B. (:3-4) Shechem Seeks to Marry Dinah

1. (:3) Emotional Attraction

"And he was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her."

Parunak: The *"daughters of the land"* apparently introduced Dinah to the *"sons of the land."* One of them took a fancy to Dinah. He was the son of a local prince, probably spoiled and accustomed to getting whatever he wanted without question. Note from **20:2** and **26:10** that unattended women were considered to be fair game in this culture.

2. (:4) Energetic Appeal

*“So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying,
‘Get me this young girl for a wife.’”*

C. (:5-7) Reactions to the Defilement of Dinah

1. (:5) Reaction of Jacob – Unexplainable Passivity

*“Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter;
but his sons were with his livestock in the field,
so Jacob kept silent until they came in.”*

Parunak: Jacob is cautious, which is commendable, unless it leads to passivity and indecision, as in Jacob’s case. One would expect him to be angry, as David was at the rape of Tamar (**2 Sam 13:21**, *“But when king David heard of all these things, he was very wroth”*). We are left with the impression that Jacob doesn’t care that much for Dinah.

2. (:6) Reaction of Hamor – Let’s Make a Deal

“Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him.”

3. (:7) Reaction of Jacob’s Sons – Shame and Anger

“Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done.”

D. (:8-12) Hamor and Shechem Propose Marriage

1. (:8-10) Hamor’s Proposal

“But Hamor spoke with them, saying, ‘The soul of my son Shechem longs for your daughter; please give her to him in marriage. And intermarry with us; give your daughters to us, and take our daughters for yourselves. Thus you shall live with us, and the land shall be open before you; live and trade in it, and acquire property in it.’”

Parunak: Not only has Shechem raped Dinah, but she is detained in his house (as we will learn in **v.26**). He is negotiating from a position of unfair strength: “If you want to see your daughter again, you’d better join with us.” His attitude rather seems to be, “I am a great prince; you should be honored at the opportunity to join with my august house.

Krell: Hamor and Shechem both do not offer an apology. Apparently, they assume that the offense is no big deal. After all, this is how Shechemites behave. In essence Hamor says, “No hard feelings. Let’s all get married, and be one, big, happy family.”

Hughes: Hamor’s offer pulsed with economic appeal – property in Canaan, grazing rights, the freedom to travel and dwell anywhere. In sum, Hamor promised what God had promised Israel. Very enticing. A shortcut to the Promised Land!

2. (:11-12) Shechem's Sweetening of the Pot

"Shechem also said to her father and to her brothers, 'If I find favor in your sight, then I will give whatever you say to me. Ask me ever so much bridal payment and gift, and I will give according as you say to me; but give me the girl in marriage.'"

**II. (:13-24) REVENGE PLOT – ROOTED IN THE FAMILY'S BENT TOWARDS DECEIT --
REASON #2 – HUMANS OPERATE FROM IMPURE MOTIVES WITH SCHEMING AND DECEITFUL PLANS**

A. (:13-17) Laying the Trap

1. (:13) Plot Cloaked in Deceit

"But Jacob's sons answered Shechem and his father Hamor, with deceit, and spoke to them, because he had defiled Dinah their sister."

2. (:14) Rejection of Original Marriage Proposal

"And they said to them, 'We cannot do this thing, to give our sister to one who is uncircumcised, for that would be a disgrace to us.'"

3. (:15-16) Counter Proposal

"Only on this condition will we consent to you: if you will become like us, in that every male of you be circumcised, then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters for ourselves, and we will live with you and become one people."

Hughes: The desecration of the covenant sign of circumcision as a means to gain revenge, and the widening of the revenge to the murder and plunder of a town, were immense crimes deserving condemnation.

4. (:17) Consequences of Rejection of Counter Proposal

"But if you will not listen to us to be circumcised, then we will take our daughter and go."

Parunak: This threat would have been costly to carry out, since it would require them to abandon land that Jacob had purchased in the area. It would also have been difficult, since Dinah is at this point in Shechem's house.

B. (:18-24) Springing the Trap

1. (:18-19) Gaining Acceptance for the Proposed Terms

a. Reasonable Proposal

"Now their words seemed reasonable to Hamor and Shechem, Hamor's son."

b. Rash Actions – Judgment Clouded by Lust

"And the young man did not delay to do the thing, because he was delighted with Jacob's daughter."

- c. **Respect Gains Shechem a Hearing**
“Now he was more respected than all the household of his father.”

2. **(:20-23) Embracing the Proposed Terms**

“So Hamor and his son Shechem came to the gate of their city, and spoke to the men of their city, saying, ‘These men are friendly with us; therefore let them live in the land and trade in it, for behold, the land is large enough for them. Let us take their daughters in marriage, and give our daughters to them. Only on this condition will the men consent to us to live with us, to become one people: that every male among us be circumcised as they are circumcised. Will not their livestock and their property and all their animals be ours? Only let us consent to them, and they will live with us.’”

3. **(:24) Implementing the Proposed Terms**

“And all who went out of the gate of his city listened to Hamor and to his son Shechem, and every male was circumcised, all who went out of the gate of his city.”

**III. (:25-31) RETRIBUTION – EXCESSIVE CARNAGE --
REASON #3 – HUMANS CANNOT EXERCISE SELF CONTROL SO THAT THE
PUNISHMENT FITS THE CRIME**

A. (:25-26) Killing Every Male

“Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male. And they killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the edge of the sword, and took Dinah from Shechem's house, and went forth.

B. (:27-29) Looting Possessions and Families

“Jacob's sons came upon the slain and looted the city, because they had defiled their sister. They took their flocks and their herds and their donkeys, and that which was in the city and that which was in the field; and they captured and looted all their wealth and all their little ones and their wives, even all that was in the houses.

C. (:30-31) Justifying the Carnage

1. **(:30) Questioning the Carnage**

“Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, ‘You have brought trouble on me, by making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and my men being few in number, they will gather together against me and attack me and I shall be destroyed, I and my household.’”

Parunak: The larger issues are not his own security, but their abuse of the holy rite of circumcision, the honor of their word, the question of whether they should have agreed to marriage with Shechem at all. These he leaves to the side.

Deffinbaugh: Surely a word of rebuke was in order, but Jacob's words lacked force because his reasons were self-centered and not based upon principle, but only on the interest of self-preservation. They brought trouble to Jacob. They made Jacob look bad. They put his life in danger. He might be attacked and destroyed. Jacob seemed to care only about his safety and saving his own skin.

2. (:31) Defending the Carnage

"But they said, 'Should he treat our sister as a harlot?'"

CONCLUSION: Let's study how God is supremely qualified to exercise vengeance.

- God is not tainted by sin
- God always operates from pure motives
- God makes the punishment fit the crime

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do the actions of Jacob's sons mirror the character weaknesses manifested by their father in his earlier years?
- 2) How seriously do we take the command to be separate from the world and not to be tainted by unwise companionship or a secular value system?
- 3) When is taking revenge on our own initiative appropriate?
- 4) What type of parenting failures are manifested in this section?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: Fatal Attraction

1. Assimilation with the world is a great danger because it is a **subtle danger**.
2. Assimilation with the world is a great danger because it happens in the **course of everyday family life**.

It was terrible revenge. Even though God would later command Israel to wipe out the Canaanites, He had not done that here. There is no way of justifying what they did. The whole incident was like an avalanche which begins with a little stone and ends up burying a whole town. It never would have happened if Dinah had not visited there, which would not have happened if Jacob had not settled there. And it all came about in the course of everyday family life.

3. Assimilation with the world is a great danger because it is an **aggressive danger**.

How do you fight the subtle, yet aggressive danger of assimilation with the world, especially as it seeks to undermine your family life? Here are three commitments that will help:

- First, commit yourself to proper separation.
- Second, commit yourself to proper insulation.
- Third, commit yourself to proper intention, or purpose.

Keith Krell: Chips Off the Old Block

In this passage, we do not see God's name or His influence. This is a passage filled with sin, excess, and godlessness. Yet, this story serves to warn us of the high price of compromise. The tragedies that take place in this chapter are the result of Jacob's failure to be obedient to God's command to return to Bethel (**28:21; 31:3, 13**). That single act of compromise cost his daughter dearly and put the rest of the covenant family of God at risk. What a chilling reminder that half-hearted obedience can be just as deadly as disobedience. . .

Now, where do you suppose these sons learned how to be so deceitful? Deceit has been a problem in the patriarchal family right from the very start. Deceit runs deep in this family, and nobody knows it better than Jacob. And now his sons are just "chips off the old block." . . .

The rape of Dinah was a disgraceful, evil act; but the wholesale murder of the men of Shechem, the looting of the city, and the imprisonment of the women and children of the city was inhumanly excessive. The punishment clearly did not fit the crime. The ancient law of *lex talionis* ("an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth") had been trampled by Simeon and Levi. There had been no equity here, only exponential revenge. Two wrongs never make a right, nor does might make right. . .

His ego has been hurt, and he thinks only of his lowered standing among the local inhabitants. His selfish response is highlighted by his use of "me," or "my," and "I" no less than eight times in the NASB. Never mind the fact that his daughter has been raped, his sons abused the rite of circumcision or breached a contract, or that every male citizen of Shechem has been slaughtered, or that the city itself had been plundered, or that its women and children had been taken captive, or that Jacob's sons had degraded and dehumanized themselves by committing acts of unspeakable wickedness. His concerns are tactical and strategic, rather than ethical.

Thomas Constable:

The significance of this chapter is fourfold at least.

1. It explains why Jacob passed over Simeon and Levi for special blessing.
2. It shows the importance of keeping the chosen seed separate from the Canaanites.
3. It gives a reason for the sanctification of Jacob's household that follows (**Genesis 35:2-4**).
4. It demonstrates the sovereign control of God.

Bob Deffinbaugh: One Step Forward and Three Backward

Jacob becomes forgetful of the divine command and of his own vow to return to Bethel. A false sense of security made Jacob careless in his actions and brought him to a point of very grave danger. This danger was both physical and spiritual. . . Let us seek to learn from the life of Jacob how we can avoid complacency and over-confidence, which can be hazardous to our spiritual health. . .

J. Ligon Duncan: The Vengeance of the Sons of Jacob

- I. Consequences of disobedience. (:1-5)
- II. Hamor's marriage proposal. (:6-19)
- III. The Schechemite response. (:20-31)

Jacob's perspective on this incident apparently changed a little bit when he himself was on the edge of eternity. . . Even in his final words to his sons, as Jacob is preparing to die he says this to Simeon and Levi in **Genesis 49, verses 5-7**: “*Simeon and Levi are brothers. Their swords are implements of violence. Let my soul not enter into their counsel. Let not my glory be united with their assembly, because in their anger, they slew men. And in their self-will they lamed oxen. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce. And their wrath for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel.*” The final words of Jacob to his sons and their tribes, Simeon and Levi.

Hughes: Jacob was pathetic – for what he did not say. He did not condemn the massacre. Neither did he condemn his sons for breaking the law of *lex talionis*. He did not mention that they violated his contract with Shechem. Jacob said nothing about their desecration of Israel’s most precious symbol of faith. And, of course, there was not a word of concern about his just-raped daughter Dinah. Jacob’s only concern was survival – to save his own skin and, by association, that of his family.

TEXT: Genesis 35:1-29

TITLE: WALKING WITH GOD ALONG LIFE'S ROLLER COASTER JOURNEY

BIG IDEA:

PILLARS OF REMEMBRANCE MARK SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES ALONG LIFE'S JOURNEY FOR JACOB

INTRODUCTION:

Every life is marked by a number of significant milestones. Such was the case for Jacob. Some of these milestones were full of joy – others were full of sorrow and part of the tragic consequences of various failures in the life of Jacob. Through it all, Jacob was learning to walk with God along life's varied journeys. The sovereign grace of God reigned supreme in Jacob's experience and sustained him despite his many flaws.

You see a lot of memorials established as memory aids along the journey.

PILLARS OF REMEMBRANCE MARK SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES ALONG LIFE'S JOURNEY FOR JACOB

I. (:1-8) RETURNING HOME -- JOURNEY TO BETHEL / ERECTION OF ALTAR / BURIAL OF DEBORAH – GETTING ON TRACK

A. (:1) Renewed Call of God to Consummate Pilgrimage to Bethel

“Then God said to Jacob, ‘Arise, go up to Bethel, and live there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau.’”

God graciously commands Jacob to pull up roots and complete his calling by going to live in Bethel. It was there that God wanted an altar erected for worship of the one true God.

Hughes: Following his escape from Laban (after 20 years), Jacob willfully spent a decade doing much as he pleased, first dwelling for a time outside the promised land and then, when he did cross over into Canaan, settling in prosperous Shechem instead of traveling the twenty miles further to Bethel.

Parunak: Jacob's response to the slaughter of Shechem was one of fear, **34:30**. He has forgotten God's proven protection from the anger of Esau, and the Lord gently reminds him of this.

Note how the Lord's command puts the finger right on Jacob's weakness. The Lord seldom commands us to do easy things; his commands are intended to purge and instruct us, and they invariably exercise us where we are weakest. After the slaughter of Shechem, Jacob would want to lay low and fortify the encampment, not encounter other cities who might have heard of his violent conduct. But the Lord puts him back on the road.

Deffinbaugh: The tragic and painful events of **chapter 34** greatly improved Jacob's ability to hear and obey God. His daughter had been raped, his sons had put the men of Shechem to death, and it appeared that neither he nor his family could live safely in that region any longer. . . It was only at the point where Jacob sensed great danger and where it seemed impossible to stay in

Shechem that Jacob was willing to listen to the voice of God reminding him of his duty to return to Bethel.

B. (:2-5) Consecration and Journey to Bethel

1. (:2) Purification

“So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, ‘Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your garments;’”

The need for such purification speaks to the spiritual adultery that had compromised the household of Jacob. Assimilation with the world and intermarriage had brought along the temptation to worship foreign gods.

Parunak: Jacob’s command includes two groups: *“his household and all that were with him.”* The second group includes:

- bondservants acquired in Haran (30:43);
- captives from Shechem (34:29).

Parunak: We see here how corruption can creep into even a believing family. Rachel’s theft of the family gods from her father (31:19) has led to a diffusion of idolatry throughout the household, perhaps reinforced by idols that might have been among the spoil from Shechem. Jacob is not ignorant of this (else he could not have given this command). But up to now he has winked at the offense. Now, fearful of the coming journey, he realizes he cannot afford to offend the Lord, and commands his family to prepare.

Parunak: *and be clean.*—Better, *“purify yourselves.”*

Putting away the physical idols is not enough. The worshippers were defiled, and needed to be purified. So we as believers require cleansing from the defilements we encounter in our daily lives. Two NT passages bear on this point.

- **John 13:6-10.** The Lord instructs Peter on the need to wash his feet in order to have fellowship with the Lord.
- **1 John 1:9** describes confession as the means by which we can be cleansed spiritually.

2. (:3) Purpose

“and let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress, and has been with me wherever I have gone.”

As Jacob thinks back through all of the twists and turns of his life to this point, he testifies to the faithfulness of the presence of God to sustain him, despite his multiplied sins and failures.

Keith Krell: Jacob was in constant distress; yet, in each instance, God remained faithful to His promise and delivered him.

3. (:4) Participation

“So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods which they had, and the rings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak which was near Shechem.”

Hughes: The earrings were not everyday jewelry but amulets and talismans engraved with pagan symbols. Most likely the earrings were largely from Shechem's booty. Archaeological digs in other parts of Palestine have yielded crescent-shaped earrings that celebrated the moon god.

Seems strange for Jacob to hide the items rather than destroy them. Was he leaving the path open to perhaps come back at some point and recover these items??

Keith Krell: The oak referred to here seems to have been the oak of Moreh (lit. "teacher") where God had appeared to Abraham shortly after he had entered the land (**12:6**). At the same spot, possibly prompted by Jacob's example, Joshua issued a very similar call to Israel. In **Josh 24:15**, Joshua commanded the people of Israel to "... choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve." Later, in **Josh 24:23**, he said, "...put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel."

4. (:5) Protection

"As they journeyed, there was a great terror upon the cities which were around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob."

It was a step of faith to make themselves vulnerable and set off on such a dangerous journey. But God supernaturally protected them.

C. (:6-7) **Arrival in Bethel and Erection of Altar**

1. (:6) Arrival in Bethel

"So Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him."

Luz – almond tree

W. H. Griffith Thomas: What memories the place must have called up as he reviewed the past with all his varied experiences! And how thankful he must have felt to be at length in the pathway of God's will, and assured of peace, rest, protection, and blessing!

2. (:7a) Erection of Altar

"And he built an altar there,"

Bruce Goettsche: When we want to be centered in our living we need to gain perspective by returning to Bethel, to get rid of the stuff that hinders our walk with God, and then we need to focus on God. And that is really what worship is about. . . . When our spiritual lives begin to feel stale and unfruitful, we need to take a trip back to Bethel.

3. (:7b) Significance of the Name

"and called the place El-bethel, because there God had revealed Himself to him, when he fled from his brother."

Ligon Duncan: "the God of the house of God" - The point of Bethel was not that it was a sacred place that could give Jacob grace. The point was it was the place where the God of Bethel had indeed met with him and shown him grace and faith. It was a place, an instrument in the hands of the gracious God.

D. (:8) Death and Burial of Deborah – Era of Patriarchal Transition

“Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the oak; it was named Allon-bacuth.”

“oak of weeping”

W. H. Griffith Thomas: Faithfulness to God does not exempt us from sorrow.

Parunak: Why does Moses mention her here? The reference emphasizes that Rebekah is not mentioned after **ch. 27**. Her cunning attempt to secure the blessing for her favorite son backfired on her, and she never saw him again after he left for Haran. Her nurse must take her place as the one who welcomes Jacob back to Canaan, and then only with her dying breath.

George Bush: From the respect paid to her memory, we may fairly infer that Deborah was a venerable matron of exemplary piety. If we suppose her to have been fifty years of age when she left Mesopotamia with Rebekah, she could not have been far from a hundred and eighty at this time.

II. (:9-15) REAFFIRMING REVELATION -- BLESSING IN THE PROMISED LAND

A. (:9-13) Promises of God Reaffirmed

1. (:9-10) Blessing in Renaming Jacob Israel

“Then God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and He blessed him. And God said to him, ‘Your name is Jacob; You shall no longer be called Jacob, But Israel shall be your name.’ Thus He called him Israel.”

Ligon Duncan: Now Israel was the name that was to signify all that God had planned in and for Jacob. It was a name that was to separate him from his somewhat shady past. But Jacob didn't live like Israel very often. And it's exceedingly precious, I think, that in His very final meeting God refuses to think of him as Jacob and thinks of him as Israel. . .

This is the end of the days of God's personal manifestations, conversations in the form of a man with the patriarchs. We see a shift in the mode of revelation. What will be the primary mode of revelation in the days of Joseph, the next patriarch? Dreams. And even Moses, God will only show him His back. So we see a shift in the mode of revelation here.

2. (:11-13) Blessing in Reiterating the Covenant Promises

a. Covenant Maker

“God also said to him, ‘I am God Almighty;’”

Parunak: *El Shaddai* is the almighty God, but not in an abstract sense. He deploys this power to bring blessing to his people.

b. Covenant Command

“Be fruitful and multiply;”

c. Covenant Promises

*“A nation and a company of nations shall come from you,
And kings shall come forth from you.
And the land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac, I will give it to you,
And I will give the land to your descendants after you.”*

d. Covenant Conclusion

“Then God went up from him in the place where He had spoken with him.”

Hughes: 4 Parallels to account of God blessing Abraham (**chap. 17**)

- 1) Name change – here, with the change of Jacob’s name to **Israel** (which originally had been done on the other side of the Jordan at Peniel), he was not rehabilitated, confirmed, and validated by God himself in the Promised Land!
- 2) God named as **El Shaddai** (God Almighty) provides the blessing (**17:1**)
- 3) Blessed with **fruitfulness** and with the **land promise**
- 4) Theophany ended as *“God went up from him,”* as He had done with Abraham (**17:22**)

Deffinbaugh: Christians seem to ever be seeking some new and exhilarating experience. They wish to go from one novel experience to another. In the Scriptures, however, I see little of this happening, either to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. What Jacob did at Bethel was hardly novel, and what God said to him at His second appearance was nothing new. That should tell us something. What was really important for Jacob was that he gain a deeper and deeper appreciation of what he had already experienced but not fully grasped. He needed nothing new, but a greater grasp of that which was old.

B. (:14-15) Pillar of Stone for Remembrance

1. (:14a) Erection of Pillar

“And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where He had spoken with him, a pillar of stone,”

2. (:14b) Worship Ceremony

“and he poured out a libation on it; he also poured oil on it.”

3. (:15) Significance of the Name

“So Jacob named the place where God had spoken with him, Bethel.”

III. (:16-20) REJOICING AND MOURNING -- JOURNEY TOWARDS EPHRATH / BIRTH OF BENJAMIN / BURIAL OF RACHEL

A. (:16-17) Pain and Joy of Childbirth

“Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel began to give birth and she suffered severe labor. And it came about when she was in severe labor that the midwife said to her, ‘Do not fear, for now you have another son.’”

Keith Krell: it is important to recognize that Jacob is not disobedient to God in leaving Bethel. God's instructions to go to Bethel and "live there" (35:1) were evidently directions to dwell there while he fulfilled his vow. God did not command permanent residence there.

Jacob moves quickly from one of the most pleasant milestones in his life to one of his most grievous.

B. (:18-20) New Life and Grievous Death

1. (:18) Birth of Benjamin

"And it came about as her soul was departing (for she died), that she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin."

"Son of my sorrow" – changed to "son of the right" = favored side; favored son

S. Lewis Johnson: When you study systematic theology, one of the things that you study is the states of Christ, the state of humiliation, the state of exaltation. These two names, Benoni and Benjamin or Benjamin reflect those two states and the fact that he was born of Rachel, the mother of Israel, reflects again the fact that the Messiah shall come from Israel but he will be a son of suffering as well as a son of exaltation. The one being the outgrowth of the other. So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath that is Jerusalem.

2. (:19) Death and Burial of Rachel

"So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

3. (:20) Memorial to Rachel

"And Jacob set up a pillar over her grave; that is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day."

Deffinbaugh: Significantly, Moses added that this pillar was still standing in his day. While this may mean little to us, I think that it was of great interest to his first readers, the Israelites, who were about to enter into the land of Canaan. It informed these travelers that if they looked for this pillar when they possessed the land they would find it. What a sense of history this pillar must have helped to create. The events of the past were intended to be remembered and commemorated. Visual reminders had a great place in Old Testament times, not to mention the present (cf. **Exodus 13:14ff.; Joshua 4:4-7; I Corinthians 11:26**).

IV. (:21-28) REGROUPING AND TRANSITIONING -- ENCAMPMENT AT EDER / INCEST OF REUBEN / JOURNEY TO HEBRON / BURIAL OF ISAAC

A. (:21) Encampment at Eder

"Then Israel journeyed on and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder."

B. (:22a) Incest of Reuben

"And it came about while Israel was dwelling in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard of it."

Hughes: Reuben's sin had its impetus in Jacob's favoring Rachel's children at the expense of the children of Leah, his unloved wife. We have already seen how Jacob's lack of concern for the honor of their sister Dinah fueled her brothers' anger and homicidal rampage. Here Reuben sensed that with Rachel's death, her servant Bilhah would become Jacob's favorite over his mother Leah. So Reuben seduced her to ensure that she could not rival Leah's position. The result of Reuben's liason with Bilhah was that she was accorded the status of "living widowhood." just as happened to David's concubines when his son Absalom defiled them (**cf. 2 Samuel 15:16; 16:20-23**).

Ligon Duncan: a rationale for why Reuben and Simeon and Levy are displaced in favor of Judah in the headship of the family.

C. (:22b-26) Aside: Twelve Sons of Jacob

"Now there were twelve sons of Jacob—"

Constable: This paragraph is important because it records the entrance of Jacob into his father's inheritance. Jacob presumably visited Isaac in Hebron on various occasions following his return from Paddan-aram. However, on this occasion he moved his family to his father's encampment and evidently remained there as Isaac's heir.

Jacob had left Beersheba with only a staff in his hand. Now he returned with 12 sons, a large household, and much livestock. The most important aspect of God's blessing was his 12 sons, grouped here with their four mothers, through whom God would fulfill His promises to the patriarchs.

Benjamin was not born in Paddan-aram but near Bethlehem (**Genesis 35:16-18**). Therefore the statement that Jacob's 12 sons were born in Paddan-aram (**Genesis 35:26**) must be understood as a general one, possibly a synecdoche.

1. (:23) Sons of Rachel

"the sons of Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin;"

2. (:24) Sons of Bilhah

"and the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maid: Dan and Naphtali;"

3. (:25) Sons of Zilpah

"and the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid: Gad and Asher."

4. (:26) Sons of Leah

"the sons of Leah: Reuben, Jacob's first-born, then Simeon and Levi and Judah and Issachar and Zebulun;"

"These are the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Paddan-aram."

Keith Krell: Jacob had left Beersheba with only a staff in his hand. Now he returned with 12 sons, a large household, and much livestock. Through Jacob's 12 sons God would fulfill His

promises.

D. (:27-29) Journey to Hebron and Burial of Isaac

1. (:27) Arrival at Father's House in Hebron
"And Jacob came to his father Isaac at Mamre of Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron), where Abraham and Isaac had sojourned."

2. (:28) Summary of Isaac's Days
"Now the days of Isaac were one hundred and eighty years."

3. (:29) Death and Burial of Isaac
"And Isaac breathed his last and died, and was gathered to his people, an old man of ripe age; and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him."

Steven Cole: Jacob's final sorrow in this chapter is the death of his aged father, Isaac. A casual reading might make us think that Jacob arrived just before Isaac's death. But from other chronological notices in Genesis, we learn that Jacob lived in Hebron with Isaac about twelve years before Isaac died. But Isaac's death is presented here to wrap up this part of Jacob's history. It was another sorrow for Jacob, as another link with the past was removed.

Constable: The purpose of this notice is not simply to record Isaac's death but rather to show the complete fulfillment of God's promise to Jacob (**Genesis 28:21**). According to Jacob's vow, he had asked that God watch over him during his sojourn and return him safely to the house of his father. Thus, the conclusion of the narrative marks the final fulfillment of these words as Jacob returned to the house of his father, Isaac, before he died.

Keith Krell: The Bible says that when he died he was "*gathered to his people, old and full of years.*" That thought of being "gathered to his people" is an early hint of life after death. This, incidentally, is the last recorded time that Jacob and Esau meet. Many years earlier they had separated because of their father; now they had come together to bury him (**35:27-29**).

Ligon Duncan: he's waited his whole life to assume the headship, the official headship of the covenant, and when the time finally comes the scene shifts from him.

CONCLUSION:

"The steps of a man are established by the LORD; And He delights in his way. When he falls, he shall not be hurled headlong; Because the LORD is the One who holds his hand. I have been young, and now I am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Or his descendants begging bread. All day long he is gracious and lends; And his descendants are a blessing" (Psalm 37:23-26).

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What would returning to Bethel look like in your spiritual journey?
- 2) What are some of the important milestones in your journey with God and how did God manifest His presence to you in those times?
- 3) How have you dealt with the loss of loved ones in your life – a child, a spouse, a parent?
- 4) How has God sustained you through the ups and downs of your life's journeys?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hughes: God had kept His word despite Jacob's self-focused scheming and halfhearted obedience. A constant grace rained upon him – most often as a gentle mist and sometimes as a fierce downpour. Grace had etched and watered his stubborn soul – and now he had grown. But life was passing quickly.

Brian Borgman: 4 Burials and a Birth

Starts off with Jacob sitting in Shechem – not where he was supposed to be – with his family falling apart; wondering what his neighbors are going to do to him after the slaughter of **chap. 34** (depressing chapter). Pondering his own failures; lack of family leadership; failure to protect his daughter;

God comes in mercy to Jacob; not in judgment; helping Jacob return to the place he needed to be; rekindling his faith; brings a closure to past events and provides a bridge to new experiences oriented around the 12 sons of Israel

Vs. 1-15 Back to Bethel

Remember Jacob's vow in **chap. 28**; God commands Jacob to build an altar here; Jacob turns around and commands his household (contrast to his passivity in **chap. 34**); Removal of foreign gods:

- Taken from Laban
- Looted from Shechem

Change of clothes – brothers defiled coming into contact with dead bodies

Scene of repentance – burying the old (idols) and making preparations for the new = **1st burial**

2nd Burial – vv. 5-8; irony of a bunch of shepherds striking terror into the foreign cities – demonstration of God's protection

God of heaven comes down and renews covenant promises at special place – Bethel = house of God; el-Bethel = God of the house of God – the place where Jacob saw God

Book: Polishing God's Monuments

Burial of Deborah – Rebekah's death is not mentioned in Genesis – strange; Deborah with Jacob from the time he was born

Vs. 9 – God appears again – twice in one chapter; God's grace upon grace to Jacob; undeserved; A different appearance from the earlier one; no mention of Jacob's time in Shechem; God

overlooks that timeframe and incident

God is emphasizing the fulfillment of His promises; your time of exile is now over (living under bondage to Laban); you are now back in the land where you belong

Name had been changed back in **chap. 32** from heel-catcher; reinforces name change; echoes

Gen. 17 promises to Abraham;

Jacob in the midst of his failures may have wondered if he was disqualified to receive these promises; new start for Israel

How often do we need to hear the promises of God? We are prone to forget; we need reminders of the gospel every day

Which one of those 12 sons is going to be the conduit for the Son of Promise? We naturally expect the first born = Reuben – not so

Rebuilding the altar he had originally built – contrast to superficial worship at Shechem;

Vv. 16-18 Birth of Benjamin

Jacob had very little to do with the naming of his prior 11 sons; Rachel dies – the love of his life; labored 14 years to marry her; pillar marking her grave = **3rd Burial**

Joseph and Benjamin are the 2 youngest sons and the only sons of Rachel;

Leah becomes the matriarch of the family by default now; what role will her sons play in the development of this nation?

Vs. 22 – Incest of Reuben – not a case of lust or unbridled passion; Bilhah is older woman at this point; was Rachel’s maid – trying to seize his father’s leadership; seeking to usurp Jacob’s role as head of family; (cf. Absalom trying to seize kingdom of his father David); clear act of rebellion; disqualified now from his birthright; Jacob is again silent

Vs. 23 – Judah next in line after first 3 sons listed – all have just committed grievous sins

Vv. 28-29 – 4th Burial – Isaac

Keith Krell: The Way Back Home

Outwardly, we may appear to be walking close to the Lord, but inwardly we have stopped short of whole-hearted devotion to Him. Since every one of us will face times when we have strayed from an intimate and obedient walk with God, Genesis 35 provides us with a map for finding our way back home. . .

in Scripture, washing the body and changing clothes is quite significant. It signifies making a new beginning. Like dirt, sin is defiling and must be washed away (**Ps 51:2, 7; Isa 1:16; 2 Cor 7:1; 1 John 1:9**). Our old garments typify the old life with its failures (**Isa 64:6**), but God in His mercy gives us “*new garments*” so we can make a fresh beginning (**3:21; Exod 19:9-15; Isa 61:10; Zech 3:1-5; Luke 15:22; Eph 4:22-24; Rev 3:18**). For some of us this will mean new behavior. We forsake immorality. For others it will mean a new wardrobe. We stop showing skin. For others it will mean a new attitude, new entertainment, new priorities, etc.

TEXT: Genesis 37:1-36

TITLE: MISTREATED AND CAST ASIDE

BIG IDEA:

THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE

INTRODUCTION:

This account transitions into the **life of Joseph** and his mistreatment at the hands of his brothers. It must be read with several key perspectives in mind:

- The concept of **divine election** where you have Joseph as the seed of promise in contrast to his other brothers
- The **providential hand of God** in growing Israel into a vast nation while in slavery in Egypt – none of which would have occurred apart from how God led Joseph down into Egypt
- The **parallels to the life of Christ** who was the ultimate rejected stone – He came unto His own, and His own not only did not receive Him but cruelly mistreated Him, rejected Him and cast Him aside

THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE

(:1-2A) TRANSITION: FROM JACOB TO JOSHUA

“Now Jacob lived in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan.”

“These are the records of the generations of Jacob.”

Parunak: marks a contrast between Esau’s descendants “*in the land of their possession*” (i.e., Seir, **36:43**) and Jacob “*in the land of Canaan.*”

On a larger scale, **ch. 37** opens the last section of Genesis. The overarching theme of this section is **50:20**, “*ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good.*” We will see much “thinking evil” throughout these chapters, but behind it all is the sovereign Lord, producing good. **Ps76:10**, “*surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.*”

Section is primarily about **Jacob** – even though so much attention is given to Joseph; story of the development of the people of Israel – into a nation; a great nation; a nation that would end up in Egypt

I. (:2b-11) JOSHUA DESPISED BY HIS BROTHERS – SPECIAL ROBE AND SPECIAL REVELATION

A. (:2b-4) FAVORED SON DESPISED BY HIS BROTHERS – SPECIAL ROBE

3 Reasons for Discord:

1. (:2b) Tattling

“Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers

while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father.”

Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher

Ligon Duncan: It shouldn't surprise us that Joseph would bring back a bad report of his brothers. They had already been involved in some significant mischief. Reuben sleeping with his father's concubine. Simeon and Levy slaughtering the Shechemites because of their sister disgrace. These men were rough. They were hard and they were reckless.

Parunak: the Hebrew word *dibbah* has **negative overtones** wherever it is used. It suggests two things: deception, and antagonism toward the person or thing being described. Consider some specific examples.

We see deception in the three uses of the term (**Num 13:32; 14:36, 37**) to describe the report brought by the spies concerning the land of Canaan. Read **13:25-33** to compare the initial report with the slanted version that was given to oppose Caleb's recommendation to go in: From a land “*that floweth with milk and honey*” (v.27), it becomes “*a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof.*” The “evil report” is clearly slanted.

The aspect of antagonism is clear in **Jer 20:10** (“defaming”). He has been imprisoned for predicting the fall of Jerusalem, and his enemies are watching for him to say something so that they can turn him in and “take our revenge on him.” See also **Psa 31:13; Ezek 36:3. Prov 10:18** places the word in the same category with flattery. “*He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool.*” Here *dibbah* “slander” is compared with insincere flattery. The first half of the verse says good things insincerely; similarly, the latter half says bad things without grounds. Both are inaccurate, and both are motivated by deception.

Another way to look at this noun is to review the people who are responsible for producing *dibbah*. They are without exception of ill repute:

- the unbelieving spies in **Num 13-14**
- David's enemies in **Ps 31:14**
- A fool in **Prov 10:18**
- Someone who seeks to shame you in **Prov 25:10**
- Jeremiah's enemies in **20:10**
- Those who mock the land of Israel in **Ezek 36:3**

This is the company to which Joseph belongs by conducting himself in this way.

Moses' use of this word suggests that Joseph is not simply bringing a fair and impartial report of what has happened in the field, but (as siblings so often do) is tattling, carrying tales about his brothers to enhance his own standing in his father's eyes. His behavior falls under the category

of being a “talebearer” or “slanderer” that is forbidden in texts such as **Prov 11:12-13** and **Lev 19:16**.

2. (:3) Favoritism

“Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic.”

Keith Krell: Favoritism has a long history in Jacob’s family (Isaac’s preference for Esau, Rebekah’s for Jacob, and Jacob’s preference for Rachel). In every case it created major problems. Jacob, of all people, should have understood this. His father loved his brother more than him. While Jacob should have been sensitive to favoritism, he repeats the sin of his parents.

3. (:4) Hatred

“And his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms.”

**B. (:5-11) TWO PARALLEL DREAMS -- FUTURE SOVEREIGNTY DESPISED BY HIS BROTHERS --
SPECIAL REVELATION**

1. (:5-8) First Dream

a. (:5) Summary

“Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.”

Parunak: There are two dreams. The first shows Joseph’s superiority over his brothers; the second includes his parents. Joseph explains the first only to his brothers, but includes his father in the explanation of the second, showing that he understands their import.

b. (:6-7) Dream Imagery

“And he said to them, ‘Please listen to this dream which I have had; for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf.’”

Parunak: —He pictures himself working with his brothers, the environment in which they had been abusive to him, and suggests that the time will come when the tables will be turned.

Ligon Duncan: The first dream is interesting isn't it, because it's an agrarian picture. Now these are shepherds. Presumably their main pastime was not reaping a harvest in a field, but shepherding flocks. And yet the dream comes in the form of a harvest picture. Does that foreshadow the future of Joseph? Is God telling us something here that is not at present but will be in the future? I think so because it will be through the harvest of grain that Joseph's name and fortune will be made in Egypt.

c. (:8) Angry Reaction

*“Then his brothers said to him, ‘Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?’
So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.”*

2. (:9-11) Second Dream

a. (:9a) Summary

“Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers,”

b. (:9b) Dream Imagery

“and said, ‘Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.’”

No mistaking what the imagery in this dream means

c. (:10-11) Angry Reaction

“And he related it to his father and to his brothers;

and his father rebuked him and said to him, ‘What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?’”

And his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the saying in mind.”

Parunak: The word “rebuke” is a very strong term, most often applied to God’s rebuke of the wicked, the nations, or the forces of nature (in the OT, the Red Sea, **Ps 106:9**; in the NT, **Matt 8:26**, the Sea of Galilee). The LXX sometimes translates it, “threaten.” It implies strong emotion and authority on the part of the rebuker. . . In most instances of rebukes of this sort, the person being challenged offers an explanation, but Joseph is silent.

Keith Krell: Envy is the root of almost every sin against believers. Whenever it is harbored, there is an end of all peace, rest, and satisfaction. **Proverbs 14:30** says, “A tranquil spirit revives the body, but envy is rottenness to the bones” (cf. **Prov 27:4**; NET;). **James 3:16** tells us, “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.”

II. (:12-17) JOSHUA DISPATCHED TO CHECK ON HIS BROTHERS – PROVIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT

A. (:12-14) Sent on a Mission

“Then his brothers went to pasture their father's flock in Shechem.”

“And Israel said to Joseph, ‘Are not your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them.’ And he said to him, ‘I will go.’ Then he said to him, ‘Go now and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock; and bring word back to me.’”

“So he sent him from the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.”

Ligon Duncan: And I want you to pause there and I want you to see a beautiful truth because God's sovereignty and man's responsibility is a reality in the heart and the life of Joseph. God's choice of him does not lead him to indolence, to indifference, to passivity. He is working to do his father's bidding. He is faithful in the carrying out of his task, even though he knows that God

has made a choice of him. The doctrine of election doesn't lead him to no effort, it leads him to extraordinary effort. It doesn't lead him to a sense of entitlement, it empowers his ethic and that's always how the biblical doctrine of election impacts the heart of a regenerate believer.

Hughes: Hebron was twenty miles south of Jerusalem, and Shechem was thirty miles north of the holy city. So Joseph's brothers were fifty miles north, or approximately five days' journey away. This considerable distance to Shechem, coupled with the recent history of Simeon and Levi's bloody massacre of the Shechemites, was reasonable cause for Jacob's unease.

B. (:15-17) Steered to the Proper Destination

"And a man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field;"

"and the man asked him, 'What are you looking for?' And he said, 'I am looking for my brothers; please tell me where they are pasturing the flock.' Then the man said, 'They have moved from here; for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'"

"So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan."

Providence of God at work – otherwise Joseph would have never found his brothers

III. (:18-24) JOSHUA DISROBED AND CAST INTO A PIT BY HIS BROTHERS – HATED BY HIS BROTHERS

A. (:18-20) The Malicious Plot Against the Dreamer

"When they saw him from a distance and before he came close to them, they plotted against him to put him to death. And they said to one another, 'Here comes this dreamer! Now then, come and let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; and we will say, 'A wild beast devoured him.' Then let us see what will become of his dreams!'"

Parunak: "conspired" -- The word is always negative, and refers to deceptive, knavish behavior. This specific form describes the attitude of the Egyptians toward Israel during their period of enslavement in **Psa 105:25**.

B. (:21-22) The Merciful Rescue Attempted by Reuben

"But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, 'Let us not take his life.' Reuben further said to them, 'Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him'-- that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father."

C. (:23-24) The Malevolent Attack

"So it came about, when Joseph reached his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his tunic, the varicolored tunic that was on him; and they took him and threw him into the pit. Now the pit was empty, without any water in it."

Parunak: This is not a gentle action, but what they would have done with a dead body (v.20). They tossed him in. Used in **Exod 1:22** of throwing babies into the river to drown.

IV. (:25-28) JOSHUA DEPORTED INTO EGYPTIAN SLAVERY BY HIS BROTHERS SOLD FOR SILVER

A. (:25) Seeing an Opportunity

“Then they sat down to eat a meal. And as they raised their eyes and looked, behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites was coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing aromatic gum and balm and myrrh, on their way to bring them down to Egypt.”

Keith Krell: They are ruthless and cold. All they care about is their stomach. The callousness and cruelty of Joseph’s brothers is shocking! There is no sense of guilt, no remorse, not even a loss of appetite. The next time the brothers would eat a meal in Joseph’s presence he would sit at the head table (**43:32-34**). For the next 23 years, Joseph’s cries for mercy would haunt them in their dreams and ring in their ears (see **42:21**).

B. (:26-27) Smelling the Riches

“And Judah said to his brothers, ‘What profit is it for us to kill our brother and cover up his blood? Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites and not lay our hands on him; for he is our brother, our own flesh.’ And his brothers listened to him.”

C. (:28) Shaking Hands on the Deal

“Then some Midianite traders passed by, so they pulled him up and lifted Joseph out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. Thus they brought Joseph into Egypt.”

Keith Krell: The “*twenty shekels of silver*” is also intended to remind us of how Judas sold out Christ for 30 pieces of silver. This is not happenstance. Joseph’s life is designed to point to the life of the Lord Jesus.

V. (:29-36) JACOB DECEIVED BY HIS SONS REGARDING THE FATE OF JOSHUA COUNTED AS DEAD

A. (:29-30) Desperation of Reuben

*“Now Reuben returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit; so he tore his garments.
And he returned to his brothers and said, ‘The boy is not there; as for me, where am I to go?’”*

B. (:31-32) Deceit of Joseph’s Brothers

“So they took Joseph’s tunic, and slaughtered a male goat, and dipped the tunic in the blood; and they sent the varicolored tunic and brought it to their father and said, ‘We found this; please examine it to see whether it is your son’s tunic or not.’”

Parunak: Review the steps of their sin.

- They plan it. Their hatred overwhelms them. This is where the real offense occurs.
- They execute it, with hypocritical rationalizations that it isn’t as bad as it could be.
- They refuse to repent when they have opportunity.

- They cause pain to others in lying to cover up their sin.

C. (:33-35) Dismay of Jacob

“Then he examined it and said, ‘It is my son's tunic. A wild beast has devoured him; Joseph has surely been torn to pieces!’ So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days. Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, ‘Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son.’ So his father wept for him.”

D. (:36) Delivery of Joseph to Potiphar

“Meanwhile, the Midianites sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, the captain of the bodyguard.”

Keith Krell: It was not coincidence that Joseph ended up in the home of one of the most responsible officers of Pharaoh’s administration. Hidden from the logic of man’s limited perspective, God was orchestrating His eternal and divine purposes for the preservation and deliverance of the people of Israel. God takes Joseph to Egypt to make him a great nation. But it would be 23 years of nightmare before Joseph’s dream and God’s ultimate plan for his life finally came to pass.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How have you felt when you were mistreated and rejected?
- 2) When has the Providence of God taken something in your life that seemed unfair and turned it around to work it out for your good?
- 3) What parallels do you see in this story to the life of Christ?
- 4) What divine appointments has the Lord brought across your path recently?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: Extensive analysis of parallels to Luke 2:46-51 of both Joseph and our Lord, it is recorded that he is:

- beloved of his father,
- whom he obeys faithfully,
- the subject of prophecies concerning his role as deliverer,
- the object of his brethren’s hatred and jealousy,
- so that they conspired to destroy him,
- stripped of his clothing

- and sold for silver,
- the object of false accusations,
- condemned along with two criminals,
- yet recognized by his people after they had given him up for dead,
- sent by God to preserve his people.

In both cases:

- The people are sinful. We cannot understand God's dealings with us unless we begin with this fundamental truth, that all have sinned and come short of God's glory. Joseph's brothers sinned in their hatred and jealousy for him. We sin in our selfishness, pride, and seeking to gratify ourselves.

- The solution to this problem is not democratic. It does not arise from within a society by its own progress—sin is too powerful for that to happen. Morally and spiritually, societies degrade. They do not improve. We have seen in each generation of the patriarchs that the faith of the father is not inherited by the children. God must intervene to deliver his people from their sin.

- God delivers his people through one of their own, whom he chooses and sends. He does not send an angel to preach to them, but works through human representatives. In the Old Testament, these were people like Joseph, Moses, the judges, and the prophets. In the New Testament, he sends forth his own son, the Lord Jesus. But he does not send him in angelic form as he did so often in the Old Testament. Rather, he sends him made of a woman, in the likeness of sinful flesh, as a man, to become one of the people whom he will redeem.

- Because of sin, we naturally hate the one whom God sends to save us. We do not want to admit that we are sinful, that we cannot save ourselves. We resent the privileged position of the chosen redeemer, and we persecute him. Yet in spite of our hatred, the savior loves and forgives us.

- Redemption costs something. The redeemer must suffer in order to be able to save. Joseph had to go through slavery and prison to reach the position where he could deliver his family. Our Lord had to carry our sins in his own body on the tree in order to be able to forgive us.

These are universal principles in God's dealings with his people. Sin, the need for a savior, who must be our kinsman, the exchange of hatred for love, and the price that must be paid—all these are integral to how God has set up the world. We will find them reflected wherever in Scripture God delivers his people. The story of Joseph is the first such episode, and thus the parallels between it and the ultimate fulfillment are particularly striking.

Ligon Duncan:

I. (:1-17) How a family becomes a nation

Here in this passage we see a pattern which will continue throughout the Old Testament into the New Testament. God's promised and sent deliverer is rejected by his own kith and kin. And yet in spite of their malice, and in spite of his own weaknesses, God causes his plan of redemption to be advanced under that one who comes as a deliverer.

- A. **God reveals to us the choice of His election: Joseph will succeed his father as patriarch**
- B. **Joseph was also the favorite of his father and this caused tremendous tension in the family.**

- C. **God reveals His plans for Joseph in a dream in order to emphasize that his life's experience is the product of providence.**
- D. **Joseph is revealed as a diligent, hard-working, obedient son, ready to do even unpleasant bidding.**

II. (:18-36) The Lord Meant it for Good

A. (:18-22) The Plot

this passage reminds us of how second causes function in God's providence. In this passage you see two specific second causes. That is, two instruments that God uses in order to accomplish His will. The first instrument of God's purpose is the strife which exists in the family. God's purpose is to bring Israel into Egypt in order to accomplish His design. The first way He does this is in the family strife of Israel. That's the very circumstance, the context in which all these events unfold. The second circumstance which God uses, the second instrument, the second, second cause that God uses is Reuben. He uses Reuben's designs to prevent the immediate death of Joseph.

B. (:23-28) Sold Into Slavery

C. (:29-36) The Cover-Up

Keith Krell: Let me make some suggestions to parents. In order to convey our love to our children: [without showing favoritism]

- We must look for the praiseworthy attributes of our children and then celebrate those traits. In other words, talk about and be proud of who God made them to be and what they do well.
- We must affirm an unconditional love that is not based on whether or not our child “produces.”
- We must be alert to those sensitive areas in our children and be careful not to attack them in those areas when we are angry with them.
- We must strive to be consistent from one child to the next.
- We must present adverse consequences of misbehavior ahead of time and then follow through if tested. (Sometimes the best way to say, “I care” is to discipline...to not discipline is to be seen as not caring.)

Steven Cole: If God is Sovereign, Why am I in the Pits?

God had this whole thing planned years before! Our next study in Genesis 38 will reveal why God wanted to get His people into Egypt: They were becoming thoroughly corrupt in Canaan. To preserve the nation from assimilation with the Canaanites, He put them into Egypt, where they became slaves for 400 years. This solidified them as a people under God and prepared them for conquering Canaan when the time for God’s judgment was ripe. But the point is clear: God was sovereignly orchestrating all these events according to His eternal plan.

“But,” you ask, “doesn’t that make God responsible for man’s sin?” The biblical answer is clearly, “No!” Men are responsible for their sin and yet God uses men and their sin to accomplish His sovereign purpose. **George Bush** (a 19th century commentator, not the former President) describes God’s providence as “that overruling Power which is ‘wonderful in counsel

and mighty in operation’--which controls the free and voluntary action of intelligent creatures, even when prompted by a spirit of malevolence and rebellion, so as to render them subservient to the accomplishment of those very plans which they are intent upon defeating, while the guilt of the agents remains resting upon them in all its unabated aggravations” (Notes on Genesis [Klock & Klock reprint], 2:219).

Since God is sovereign over all, we can trust Him even when things seem to go against us.

1. God is sovereign even when parents are insensitive and foolish.
2. God is sovereign even when teenagers are naive.
3. God is sovereign even when people are hardened in sin.

Hughes: As we have noted, Joseph had ample reason for self-pity, rage, anger with God, and revenge. He had immense reasons to become enslaved to victimhood. He had been relationally crippled by his father’s overweening favoritism. He had suffered from the “yours, mine, ours” relational pathology of polygamy. He had been monstrously abused by his brothers. The scars were there to stay – their homicidal rage, his beating and humiliation, their demeaning piercing epithets, the agonizing trip to Egypt, and his naked humiliation on the slave block in Egypt. What an opportunity for enslavement to victimhood. But there is not a “poor me” hint anywhere in the entire Genesis account of Joseph! And in Egypt his treatment would become even worse. What the writer wants us to see is that though enslaved, *Joseph chose to reject the slavery of self-pity and victimhood. . .*

Here is reality. Real life is unfair. Real life deals out many inequities. Real life is filled with sin and sinners. Real wounds are everywhere. But the transcending eternal reality is that God is all-powerful and that his massive providence is at work in his children’s behalf. Life brims with hope and optimism.

TEXT: Genesis 38:1-30

TITLE: ORIGIN OF PEREZ – ANCESTOR OF DAVID

BIG IDEA:

SINFUL SCENARIOS CAN FULFIL COVENANT COMMITMENTS

INTRODUCTION:

Who cares about the **origin of Perez**? Apparently it is a big deal to God. History in the OT is the recording of “*His Story*” = the characters and events that God deemed significant in His orchestrating of His **kingdom agenda**. A lot of the events in Genesis are all about the providence of God in preserving the Messianic Line that would eventually produce the promised seed of the woman from Genesis 3 – the one that would come to vanquish Satan and redeem the people of God. The stakes are enormous. How will God establish the Messianic line that will flow all the way through King David – the ultimate type of the Righteous King to come?

What type of people does God choose to use in His kingdom program? What does that say for the role that insignificant you or I play in fulfilling God’s purposes today? How does God weave the ordinary details of life into a tapestry of divine purpose and decree? The story of the patriarchs – of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Judah and Joseph – is all about the gracious fulfillment of the promises of God despite the tangled web built by man’s sin and failure. We may be faithless, but God remains faithful. Here we have the dirty laundry of Judah’s family exposed for all to view.

SINFUL SCENARIOS CAN FULFIL COVENANT COMMITMENTS

**I. (:1-11) TAMAR DENIED OFFSPRING (THAT WOULD FULFIL COVENANT COMMITMENT) –
FAMILY PLANNING**

A. (:1-5) Lust of Judah Leads to the Husband for Tamar = Er

1. (:1-2) Canaanite Sex

“And it came about at that time, that Judah departed from his brothers, and visited a certain Adullamite, whose name was Hirah. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was Shua; and he took her and went in to her.”

Judah knew God’s clear prohibition against marrying a Canaanite woman: **Gen. 24:3; 28:1**

At what time? When Jacob thought that Joseph was dead; Judah trying to ease his conscience and put the past behind him

Duncan: Now you’ll recognize the name Adullam, this friend Hirah the Adullamite apparently comes from that area nearby the cave of Adullam. It’s south or southwest of Jerusalem. It’s an area of territory where David will one day hide in a cave. And it’s an area interestingly enough that Judah will be given when the land of Canaan is parceled out.

Parunak: Two things are distinctive about the marriages of the members of the chosen family up

to this point:

- They are initiated with the approval and encouragement of the family.
- They place a premium on marriage to members of the family. . .

Jacob's marriage violates both of these principles.

2. (:3-5) Conception and Birth of 3 Sons

a. (:3) Er

“So she conceived and bore a son and he named him Er.”

b. (:4) Onan

“Then she conceived again and bore a son and named him Onan.”

c. (:5) Shelah

*“And she bore still another son and named him Shelah;
and it was at Chezib that she bore him.”*

B. (:6-11) Loss of Tamar Leads to Isolation and Barrenness

1. (:6-7) Tamar Married and Widowed

a. (:6) Tamar Married

“Now Judah took a wife for Er his first-born, and her name was Tamar.”

b. (:7) Tamar Widowed -- Divine Execution of Er

*“But Er, Judah's first-born, was evil in the sight of the LORD,
so the LORD took his life.”*

Word play – Er means evil;

2. (:8-10) Tamar Violated and Vindicated

a. (:8) Onan Tasked with Impregnating Tamar

*“Then Judah said to Onan, ‘Go in to your brother's wife, and perform
your duty as a brother-in-law to her, and raise up offspring for your
brother.’”*

Parunak: This is the first reference in the Bible to the custom of levirate marriage.

• “Levirate” comes from the Latin word “*levir*,” which means “husband's brother.”

• If a man had no offspring, his brother was expected to take his wife. The first child born to that union would be counted as heir of the original husband, while the later ones would be reckoned descendants of the new husband.

• This custom later becomes part of Israel's law in **Deut 25:5-10**, and is the basis for the history in the book of Ruth.

• The fact that it was legislated indicated that sometimes a man would be reluctant to perform this duty. The closest kinsman in Ruth was afraid that he would “mar [his] inheritance” (**Ruth**

4:6).

b. (:9) Onan Intentionally Denied Tamar His Seed

“And Onan knew that the offspring would not be his; so it came about that when he went in to his brother's wife, he wasted his seed on the ground, in order not to give offspring to his brother.”

Parunak: the whole trend of scripture ought to caution us concerning contraception. Fruitfulness is considered a blessing from the Lord (**Gen 1**), especially in the patriarchal family, whose seed is to bring blessing to all the earth (**12:3**). Barrenness is a great misfortune, sometimes made part of a curse (e.g., **Hos 9:14**). We should think twice before taking action to block what God intends as a blessing.

Bob Deffinbaugh: Many are those who have tried to make this passage the proof text for banning any method of birth control. Because of the strong emotional and moral implications involved here, we must take careful note of what it is that is called evil. I believe that Onan was condemned for three reasons. First, Onan's sexual conduct was “contrary to nature.” While Paul was speaking of homosexuality and perhaps other perversions in **Romans 1:26-27**, what was practiced by Onan was also contrary to nature. It would be difficult, in my estimation, to defend Onan's actions as “natural.”

Second, Onan was disobedient in his actions. His society at least commended the raising of seed to a brother's name, and his father had directly commanded it (**verse 8**). We are led to infer from the story that Judah never knew why children had not been conceived, for only Tamar would have known the cause. From Judah's biased perspective it was Tamar who must be the jinx, and this prompted him to withhold his last son.

Third, Onan sinned because his motivation was evil. Not only did Onan sin against his father and Tamar, but he sinned primarily against his dead brother. Onan put his own personal interests above his brother's inability to continue the family line. In essence, Onan's act was the product of self-seeking at the expense of others. Just as Joseph's brothers had no “brotherly love,” neither did this son of Judah. In this sense he was surely a “son of his father.”

Personally, I think that we do the text an injustice if we conclude that any and every form of birth control is sin on the basis of this passage alone. Birth control in any form would have been evil for Onan, but that is not the same as saying it is wrong in any form for us, for we have not been commanded to raise up seed as he was. Birth control (or any act, for that matter) is evil if it is motivated by self-seeking and if it is clearly an act of disobedience. “*Whatever is not of faith is sin*” (**Romans 14:23**) must be one standard by which we measure our every action. Many, I fear, do prevent the conception of children for purely selfish reasons. Some practice birth control out of a lack of faith, doubting that God will provide materially or emotionally. Since “*children are a gift of the Lord*” (**Psalms 127:3**), I believe that one should carefully consider his real reasons for birth control, but I cannot step beyond this to say that it is always wrong.

c. (:10) Divine Execution of Onan

*“But what he did was displeasing in the sight of the LORD;
so He took his life also.”*

3. (:11) Tamar Denied a Husband and Offspring

“Then Judah said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, ‘Remain a widow in your father’s house until my son Shelah grows up’; for he thought, ‘I am afraid that he too may die like his brothers.’ So Tamar went and lived in her father’s house.”

Hughes: As Bible readers, we know that Judah would become the principal tribe in Israel, the royal tribe through which Israel’s King would come. But at that time the line of Judah faced extinction. Er was dead. Likewise, Onan was no more. And Judah had manipulated Tamar away from Shelah. Of course, with the passing of time and Shelah’s maturity, Tamar came to understand the bitter truth – she had been permanently sidelined. What could she do?

II. (:12-23) TAMAR DECEIVES JUDAH TO GAIN OFFSPRING (THAT WILL FULFIL COVENANT COMMITMENT) -- FAMILY INTRIGUE

A. (:12-14) Preparing the Deception

1. (:12) Worldly Companionship Puts Judah at Risk

“Now after a considerable time Shua’s daughter, the wife of Judah, died; and when the time of mourning was ended, Judah went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.”

2. (:13) Clandestine Intelligence Presents the Opportunity

“And it was told to Tamar, ‘Behold, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep.’”

Bob Deffinbaugh: The moral atmosphere of the annual sheep-shearing might best be understood when compared to a contemporary television commercial. Visualize a group of hard-working shepherds finishing an exhausting, hot, and thirsty week among the sheep, leaving the fields after having completed this annual task. Suddenly one calls out to the others, *“It’s Miller time!”* With a girl in one arm and a bottle of booze in the other, the celebration begins. Tamar knew well that this was the kind of thing that took place at sheep-shearing season

3. (:14) Treacherous Bitterness Makes the Most of the Opportunity

“So she removed her widow’s garments and covered herself with a veil, and wrapped herself, and sat in the gateway of Enaim, which is on the road to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah had grown up, and she had not been given to him as a wife.”

Parunak: Her behavior, while culpable, may be mitigated by the customs of the day. Waltke observes that both Hittite (14th-13th century, ANET 196 # 193) and Middle Assyrian (14th-12th century, ANET 182 # 33) laws make not only the brothers of a deceased man but also his father responsible for raising up children to a barren wife. If such expectations prevailed in Canaan at this time, Tamar is simply claiming what is her due.

Her desire to propagate the line of promise stands in stark contrast with the carelessness for progeny of Judah (and Onan). She, like Ruth several generations later, is an example of a Gentile who recognizes the promises of God through Abraham’s seed and by faith lays hold on those

promises. Thus she becomes one of the progenitors of the Messiah (**Matt 1:3**), and one of only four women so remembered (all Gentiles, if Uriah's wife was also a Hittite).

B. (:15-18) Transacting the Deception

1. (:15-16a) Taking the Bait

a. (:15) Attracted by the Bait

“When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, for she had covered her face.”

b. (:16a) Swallowing the Bait

“So he turned aside to her by the road, and said, ‘Here now, let me come in to you’; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law.”

2. (:16b-18) Sealing the Deal

a. Negotiating the Price

*“And she said, ‘What will you give me, that you may come in to me?’
He said, therefore, ‘I will send you a kid from the flock.’”*

b. Securing the Pledge

*“She said, moreover, ‘Will you give a pledge until you send it?’
And he said, ‘What pledge shall I give you?’
And she said, ‘Your seal and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand.’”*

Bob Deffinbaugh: The seal, cord, and staff were not items purchased from mass-produced stock. Each had distinctive characteristics which were peculiar to the owner. The seal was the ancient cylinder seal used in the making of contracts. It was the counterpart of our Master Charge card today. The seal was a cylinder with the unique design of its owner carved in it. When a contract was made, hot wax was put on the document and the seal was rolled over it, leaving the impression of the owner of the seal. Judah's seal was one of a kind, as were those of others.⁴⁰ He would therefore immediately recognize it as his own. The same was true of the staff. Possession of these gave Tamar proof of the identity of the father of her child when he was born.

c. Completing the Transaction

“So he gave them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him.”

C. (:19-23) Concealing the Deception

1. (:19) Changing Identities from Temple Prostitute to Grieving Widow

“Then she arose and departed, and removed her veil and put on her widow's garments.”

2. (:20-22) Failing to Locate the Temple Prostitute

a. (:20) Sending the Kid to Receive Back the Pledge Items

“When Judah sent the kid by his friend the Adullamite, to receive the pledge from the

woman's hand, he did not find her.”

b. (:21) Finding No Clue to Her Existence

“And he asked the men of her place, saying, ‘Where is the temple prostitute who was by the road at Enaim?’ But they said, ‘There has been no temple prostitute here.’”

c. (:22) Reporting Failed Search back to Judah

“So he returned to Judah, and said, ‘I did not find her; and furthermore, the men of the place said, There has been no temple prostitute here.’”

3. (:23) Giving Up the Search and Trying to Save Face

“Then Judah said, ‘Let her keep them, lest we become a laughingstock. After all, I sent this kid, but you did not find her.’”

III. (:24-30) TAMAR GIVES BIRTH TO OFFSPRING THAT WILL FULFIL COVENANT COMMITMENT = PEREZ – FAMILY PROGENY

A. (:24-26) Hypocrisy of Judah Exposed

1. (:24) Condemnation of Tamar

“Now it was about three months later that Judah was informed, ‘Your daughter-in-law Tamar has played the harlot, and behold, she is also with child by harlotry.’ Then Judah said, ‘Bring her out and let her be burned!’”

Hughes: Judah’s violent declaration suggests that he may have leapt at the opportunity to have her out of the way once and for all.

2. (:25) Confrontation of Hypocrisy

“It was while she was being brought out that she sent to her father-in-law, saying, ‘I am with child by the man to whom these things belong.’ And she said, ‘Please examine and see, whose signet ring and cords and staff are these?’”

3. (:26) Confession of Judah

“And Judah recognized them, and said, ‘She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah.’ And he did not have relations with her again.”

B. (:27-30) Hierarchy of Perez Taking Priority Over Zerah

1. (:27) Another Set of Twins

“And it came about at the time she was giving birth, that behold, there were twins in her womb.”

Reminds us of Jacob and Esau

2. (:28-30) Wrestling Match in the Birth Canal -- Perez Breaking Out Before Zerah

“Moreover, it took place while she was giving birth, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a scarlet thread on his hand, saying, ‘This one came out first.’ But it came about as he drew back his hand, that behold, his brother came out. Then she said, ‘What a breach you have made for yourself!’ So he was named Perez. And afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand; and he was named Zerah.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why did Judah separate from his other brothers and move to this area of the country and immerse himself in Canaanite culture?
- 2) Why did Judah not give Shelah to Tamar after the death of Er and Onan?
- 3) What are the dangers of cultural influences around us today?
- 4) Where has the providence of God brought good out of evil in your experience?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: Reasons for this story in this place in the narrative:

- This is, after all (**37:2**), the history of Jacob’s family, not just of Joseph, so it should not surprise us to find other family members involved.

- In the short run (**Gen 39**). The point is to compare Judah and Joseph with respect to their moral character. Judah (now the senior son, after the disgrace of Simeon, Levi, and Reuben, who suggested selling Joseph into slavery) dishonors family responsibilities and goes after harlots, while Joseph is steadfast in the face of temptation by Potiphar’s wife.

- In the long run, this chapter shows the danger of pollution by the morals of Canaan to which Jacob’s family was susceptible. The abhorrence of Canaanite wives that they showed at Shechem has dissipated, and they are being sucked into marriages with unbelievers and cultic prostitution. This pollution is one reason that God needs to take them into Egypt—to protect them from the Canaanite influence. Egypt was no center of righteousness, but it was different enough from their own culture that they could see the distinction.

J. Ligon Duncan: The Shame of Judah

This entire passage, all the way from verse 1 to verse 30 is very important in settling the seniority of the succession of the line of Judah. The passage of course tells us that the line of Judah eventually is going to pass through the seniority of Perez instead of Zerah. And that in and of itself, hold that in the back of your mind, is going to be important for God's redemptive plan in the long run.

But this passage also serves three other purposes. From a literary point of view, this passage heightens the tensions of the reader of the story of Joseph. It's sort of like a "meanwhile back at the ranch" kind of thing. . .

Secondly, however, this story gives a backdrop to us against which we can measure the character of Joseph. We have already begun to perceive that there is something unique about Joseph. In the very next chapter we are going to see Joseph react to some very difficult situations with impeccable morality. And this passage gives us a greater appreciation for that than we would ever have had, had it been excluded.

Thirdly, this passage does something else. It reveals to us the character of the man who became the leader of the ten brothers, the leader of the ten sons of Jacob. **Derek Kidner** puts it this way: "As a rude interruption of the story of Joseph, this passage serves other purposes as well. It creates suspense for the reader with Joseph's future in the balance. It puts his faith and chastity, soon to be described, in context which sets off their rarity, and it fills out the portrait of the effective leader among the ten brothers. And so for all these reasons and more, it is apparent that this is not a wandering or a random digression."

- I. The family of Jacob is a mess, much in need of God's grace, yet His providence is active.
- II. The practice of intermingling with the world will prove a bane to Israel to the days of exile.
- III. God's providence rules and overrules in His purposes of judgment and grace.

Cf. **Judges 14** – story of Samson; **Gen.50:20**

Bob Deffinbaugh: The Skeleton in Judah's Closet

Genesis 38 is an interruption also, but a very significant one. In **chapter 37** our attention was focused upon Joseph, who was cruelly sold into slavery, a somewhat more appealing alternative than murder. In **chapter 39** the principal character again is Joseph, this time in the house of Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer. Chapter 38, therefore, seems to abruptly interrupt the flow of thought. . .

This chapter is absolutely essential to the development of the argument of the book. It occurs by design, fitting beautifully into the context. While **chapter 37** has explained how Joseph (and so the entire nation of Israel) wound up in Egypt rather than Canaan, chapter 38 tells us why this Egyptian sojourn was necessary. **Chapter 38** provides a backdrop against which the purity of Joseph in **chapter 39** stands out the more plainly. **Chapters 39** and following describe the price which Joseph had to pay for the sins of his brothers. **Chapter 38** suggests some of the consequences of the sin of Joseph's sale which Judah suffered. . .

No Israelite could take this record seriously without a deep sense of humility. Israel's "roots," if you will pardon me for saying so, were rotten. They could not look back upon their ancestry with any feelings of smugness and pride. There were too many skeletons in the closet for that. Instead, they must acknowledge that whatever good had come to Israel was the result of grace alone.

"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of

Egypt.”(Deuteronomy 7:7-8). . .

Who would ever have thought that there was any chance of the messianic line continuing through Judah from the initial events of this chapter? Here was Judah, the ancestor of Messiah, taking a Canaanite wife, failing to keep his promise to his daughter-in-law, and propositioning a prostitute, who would just have well been a part of a pagan religious cult? In spite of all of Judah’s sins and in spite of Tamar’s impatience, Perez, the forefather of David and of the Savior, was born. Who but God could have brought such a thing to pass?

Steven Cole: Conformity with Corruption

While God’s people are prone to corruption, God is marked by holiness and grace.

1. God’s people are prone to corruption.

A. CORRUPTION BEGINS WHEN YOU DISTANCE YOURSELF FROM GOD’S PEOPLE.

B. CORRUPTION TAKES ROOT WHEN YOU MARRY OUTSIDE OF GOD’S PEOPLE.

C. CORRUPTION COMES TO FRUITION WHEN YOU LIVE IN CONFORMITY TO A CORRUPT CULTURE.

2. God is marked by holiness and grace.

A. GOD’S HOLINESS MEANS THAT HE JUDGES SINNERS AND DISCIPLINES HIS PEOPLE.

B. GOD’S GRACE MEANS THAT ON ACCOUNT OF CHRIST, HE SHOWS FAVOR TO THOSE WHO DESERVE JUDGMENT.

The well-known writer, Ernest Hemingway, was raised in a solidly evangelical home in Oak Park, Illinois. His godly grandparents had graduated from Wheaton College. His grandfather, Anson Hemingway, shared a close friendship with the evangelist, D. L. Moody. Ernest’s physician father had wanted to be a missionary doctor, but his mother was too much of a city girl, and refused to go. But Ernest was raised in the church where he tithed his allowance, sang in the choir, and read completely through his King James Bible and passed a comprehensive exam on it.

After high school, he moved to Kansas City to become a reporter. He stopped going to church and began drifting from his upbringing. He enlisted in World War I, was wounded, and took to drinking to ease the pain. He once offered his sister a drink. When she refused, “he told her not to be afraid to taste all of what the world has to offer just because Oak Park had labeled it sinful and off-limits.” He married a worldly woman and moved to Paris to further his writing career. Totally alienated from his parents, eventually he would go through four wives. He was notorious for his drunkenness. In his late years, “he grew distant from everyone. He would not stand up straight and, he stopped communicating verbally.” A friend said that his “every hour was filled with the pain of being truly lost and alone.” Hemingway’s own description was, “I live in a vacuum that is as lonely as a radio tube when the batteries are dead and there is no current to plug into.” Finally, on a sunny Sunday morning in Idaho, at age 61, Ernest Hemingway put a shotgun to his head and pulled the trigger. (Culled from, “Ernest Hemingway: Tragedy of an Evangelical Family,” by Daniel Pawley, *Christianity Today* [11/23/84], pp. 20-27.)

Brian Borgman: Judah – The Salvation of a Selfish Hypocrite

Focus shifts back to Judah; gives us a negative contrast to Joseph in chap. 39; this chapter is actually the beginning of God’s work of redemption and restoration in the life of Judah; another

sordid story; no minimization of the lurid details of this story; depravity, deceit, immorality all pictured; sense of despair; God takes the despicable and the selfish and the wretched and even the hypocrite and redeems them and then uses them to advance His glory

Judah – “*this time I will praise the Lord*” – Leah hoping that he will play a key role in fulfillment of God’s promises; looks more like uncle Esau; sells his brother like Esau sold his birthright; filled with hatred and bitterness; chapter begins with Judah leaving the covenant community; a massive statement; looking for success out among the Canaanites; does the very same thing that Abraham and Isaac had dreaded for their son; that Jacob had taken such pains to avoid; that Esau had done; he marries a Canaanite and then associates and makes friends of these pagans;

Tamar more concerned with raising up seed for covenant deliverance than Judah; Judah does not make payment of the goat in person; nothing commendable about Judah here; word for temple prostitute different than common prostitute; Judah didn’t make much of an attempt to make contact with Tamar and recover his possessions; technically she is still engaged to Judah’s third son so she is charged with harlotry; story littered with breaking of vows; self-condemning hypocrisy; he wants her burned for the sin that he committed – thinks that she is just a general fornicator

37:31-32 – *Please examine it* to see whether it is your son’s tunic or not; now look at **38:25** – *Please examine it*; same word; see whose they are; pangs of conscience awakened in Judah; God’s grace is absolutely amazing; this is the kind of confrontation you can only dream of; Judah’s guilt is indisputable; Judah was in control – could have lied and tried to cover up his sin; “She’s righteous, not I” = his confession; Judah owns his sin; exonerates Tamar = dynamics of repentance

Peculiar birth story of these twins; no ordinary conception; no ordinary birth; Jacob and Esau were twins; Judah’s descendants will rule Israel; tussle in the birth canal; must have been miserable for the Tamar;

Applications:

Lesson 1 – don’t leave the place you belong; there is no escaping

Lesson 2 – Hypocrisy demonstrated by condemning someone of the very sin you are guilty of

Lesson 3 – Understand the essence of repentance and forsaking of hypocrisy

Lesson 4 – Grace of God – takes a family who is a train wreck and uses them as instrument to save His chosen people; 4 non-Israelite women with sordid past in line of Messiah – Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba

TEXT: Genesis 39:1-23

TITLE: PROSPERITY IN EGYPT – EVEN IN PRISON

BIG IDEA:

GOD USES EVEN INJUSTICE AND CAPTIVITY TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES OF PROSPERING HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE TO ACCOMPLISH HIS KINGDOM OBJECTIVES

INTRODUCTION:

We are so addicted to comfortable circumstances – to a life of ease and luxury. We flinch at even the smallest experience of injustice and are sorely tempted to maintain a good attitude and to keep our hope focused on the Lord. Our text today presents one of the clearest models for resisting temptation and maintaining godly character. We see Joseph fleeing from the seductive demands of Potiphar’s wife.

But the story has a much wider focus than just that as we consider how God works through the most difficult and challenging types of injustice to accomplish his will and glorify His name. The key is our response to such trials and hardship. Joseph is set before us as a type of our Lord Jesus Christ who suffered the most at the hands of wicked men and yet committed Himself to the will of His Father.

GOD USES EVEN INJUSTICE AND CAPTIVITY TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES OF PROSPERING HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE TO ACCOMPLISH HIS KINGDOM OBJECTIVES

I. (:1-6a) SURPRISING PROSPERITY IN EGYPT FROM THE HAND OF THE LORD

A. (:1) Sold Into Captivity

“Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an Egyptian officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the bodyguard, bought him from the Ishmaelites, who had taken him down there.”

If anyone could be excused for indulging in **self-pity**, it would certainly be Joseph. His brothers had turned on him with the intention of killing him. It was a mercy that he escaped with his life and was only sold into slavery. Here he is down in Egypt with no connections and seemingly no hope of any type of meaningful life. He was nurtured in the covenant environment of privilege and expectation as he was reminded of God’s precious promises to his forefathers. Yet here he was abandoned and treated as nothing more than a piece of property that could be bought and sold.

Parunak: Potiphar.—He is given three titles here:

- “*officer of Pharaoh*” indicates a high-ranking court official. The term later was applied to eunuchs, but there is no evidence that it has this meaning here.

- “*captain of the guard*” literally means “chief of the executioners.” We will see that the royal prison was under his responsibility. He has power of life and death, and is thus an extremely

powerful person.

• “*an Egyptian*” reminds us that he is not (as Joseph would become) a foreigner who had risen to power, but native-born nobility. (Adherents of a late exodus put Joseph in the time of the Hyksos, 1700-1550 BC, but **Gen 15:13** and **1 Kings 6:1** put Joseph about 1900 BC; the Hyksos may be the other kings of **Exod 1:8**.)

B. (:2-4) Successful in Every Endeavor

1. (:2a) Prospered by God

“And the LORD was with Joseph, so he became a successful man.”

Constable: The clause “*the Lord was with Joseph*” occurs four times in this chapter (**Genesis 39:2-3; Genesis 39:21; Genesis 39:23**) and explains the reason for his success. The divine name “LORD,” Yahweh, appears seven times in this chapter (**Genesis 39:2-3** [twice], **5** [twice], **21** , and **23**) but only one other time in the Jacob toledot (**Genesis 37:2 to Genesis 50:26**): in **Genesis 49:18**.

Parunak: Significance of phrase: “*and the Lord was with Joseph*”

1.It often encourages God’s people in times of difficulty: “If Jesus goes with me, I’ll go anywhere.”

a. **26:24**, Isaac after being chased from Gerar

b. **28:15**, Jacob fleeing Esau

c. **39:2,21**, Joseph in slavery and in prison

d. **Jer 1:8, 19; 15:20**, Jeremiah in the face of opposition to his prophecy

e. **Jer 30:11; 46:28**, the nation through chastisement

f. **Isa 43:1-5**, promise to Israel in times of trial.

2.It is ultimately messianic. Messiah’s name is “Immanu-el,” God with us. This name was initially given when Judah was threatened by a powerful military coalition of Syria and Israel, **Isa 7**. The Lord’s departing promise was, “*Lo, I am with you always,*” **Matt. 28:20**.

J. Ligon Duncan: Now ‘*the Lord is with him*’ is not a reference to God's omnipresence, God being everywhere. That's not the comfort that's being brought to bear on Joseph. The comfort that is being brought to bear is God's covenantal presence or what we might call God's evangelical presence, His gospel presence, His favorable presence. That is, that God takes a special note of His people and draws near to them in time of need.

Application: What sense do you have that God is “**with you**” and will never leave you or forsake you?

2. (:2b-3) Praised by His Master

“And he was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. Now his master saw that the LORD was with him and how the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his

hand.”

Parunak: Testimony of Joseph:

- recognized that his physical circumstances didn't invalidate the Lord's love and care for him;
- was willing to speak of the Lord to his master, and credit the Lord with his success

Consider the admirable work ethic of Joseph throughout this account.

Application: What is our testimony in the midst of difficult and challenging circumstances?

3. (:4) Promoted to Highest Position in Royal Household

“So Joseph found favor in his sight, and became his personal servant; and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he owned he put in his charge.”

Dave Guzik: Joseph rose to the top, but it took a while to happen.

- Joseph was 17 years old when he was sold into slavery (**Genesis 37:2**).
- He was 30 when Pharaoh promoted him (**Genesis 41:46**).
- Joseph was in prison for two years before his promotion (**Genesis 41:1**).
- Therefore, Joseph was in Potiphar's house for **11 years**.

It took 11 years for the full measure of God's blessing to be accomplished in Joseph's life. 11 years seems like a long time. Many think if advancement is from God, it must come quickly. Sometimes this is the case, but not normally. Normally, God allows good things to develop slowly. Human children have the longest development time both in the womb and in childhood compared to animals. In the world of plants, it takes many years for an acorn to become an oak; a squash might grow almost overnight.

C. (:5-6a) Summary of Joseph's Overflowing Prosperity and Significant Role

1. (:5) Joseph's Overflowing Prosperity

“And it came about that from the time he made him overseer in his house, and over all that he owned, the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house on account of Joseph; thus the LORD's blessing was upon all that he owned, in the house and in the field.”

2. (:6a) Joseph's Significant Role

“So he left everything he owned in Joseph's charge; and with him there he did not concern himself with anything except the food which he ate.”

II. (:6b-10) SEDUCTIVE PLEASURES MUST BE RESISTED TO MAINTAIN GODLY CHARACTER

A. (:6b) Handsome Presentation

“Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.”

B. (:7-9) Powerful Enticement

1. (:7) Open Invitation

“And it came about after these events that his master's wife looked with desire at Joseph, and she said, ‘Lie with me.’”

2. (:8-9) Obedient Integrity

“But he refused and said to his master's wife, ‘Behold, with me here, my master does not concern himself with anything in the house, and he has put all that he owns in my charge. There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil, and sin against God?’”

J. Ligon Duncan: And Joseph's response is classic in verses 8 and 9. He uses two arguments here that other people would probably use for an excuse to go ahead and engage in the affair. I want you to look at the arguments. First, in verse 8, he argues, look, my master trusts me so much that he doesn't supervise me. And, in fact, he has promoted me over the whole household. He's given me rapid promotion and he doesn't watch after me. There have been a lot of people who would say, well nobody's looking. The master's not here. He trusts me so much he's not in the house. That gives us the perfect opportunity. That's not Joseph's argumentation. It's the exact opposite. His freedom from supervision and promotion is his argument against doing this thing.

Gaebelein: the words are emphatic in the original, *"this! this wickedness! this great one!"* adultery was reckoned a great sin among all nations, and this, had Joseph committed it, would have been greatly aggravated by the favours his master had conferred upon him; and not only a sin against himself, his soul and body, and against his master, but, above all, a sin against God, contrary to his holy nature, revealed will, and righteous law; all which prevailed upon Joseph to refuse the offer made him, which he could not comply with, in honour or with a good conscience.

C. (:10) Consistent Resistance

“And it came about as she spoke to Joseph day after day, that he did not listen to her to lie beside her, or be with her.”

Deffinbaugh: The temptation of Joseph took place over an extended period of time, then, and in a variety of forms. Joseph did not deal with temptation victoriously in one momentous occasion, but in the day-to-day events of life. More than this, the victory which Joseph won over sin on that last occasion was directly related to his previous decisions.

Application: How do our **little decisions** every day of our life prepare us for the more dramatic temptations that we will face? Do we take steps to avoid temptation or do we flirt with sin?

III. (:11-18) SCANDALOUS PLOTS FALSELY ATTACK THE CHARACTER OF THE GODLY

A. (:11-12) The Attack

1. (:11) Compromising Situation

“Now it happened one day that he went into the house to do his work,

and none of the men of the household was there inside.”

Application: Do we have the necessary discernment to recognize compromising situations?

2. (:12a) Salacious Proposition

“And she caught him by his garment, saying, ‘Lie with me!’”

It would have been very easy for Joseph to succumb to this seduction and rationalize a sexual fling with Potiphar’s wife:

- If I resist, I will be in big trouble – which certainly proved to be the case
- I am not the one initiating the sin
- Nobody is around and nobody will ever know what took place
- It is flattering that such a prominent woman would solicit my attentions

3. (:12b) Desperate Escape

“And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside.”

Outer garment stripped off and he fled essentially in his underwear

Constable: This story about Joseph reverses a well-known plot in the patriarchal narratives. Whereas before it was the beautiful wife ... of the patriarch who was sought by the foreign ruler, now it was Joseph, the handsome patriarch ... himself who was sought by the wife of the foreign ruler. Whereas in the earlier narratives it was either the Lord (**Genesis 12:17; Genesis 20:3**) or the moral purity of the foreign ruler (**Genesis 26:10**) that rescued the wife rather than the patriarch, here it was Joseph’s own moral courage that saved the day.... Whereas in the preceding narratives, the focus of the writer had been on God’s faithfulness in fulfilling his covenant promises, in the story of Joseph his attention is turned to the human response.

B. (:13-15) The Accusation

“When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and had fled outside, she called to the men of her household, and said to them, ‘See, he has brought in a Hebrew to us to make sport of us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I screamed. And it came about when he heard that I raised my voice and screamed, that he left his garment beside me and fled, and went outside.’”

C. (:16-18) The Argument

“So she left his garment beside her until his master came home. Then she spoke to him with these words, ‘The Hebrew slave, whom you brought to us, came in to me to make sport of me; and it happened as I raised my voice and screamed, that he left his garment beside me and fled outside.’”

IV. (:19-23) SURPRISING PROSPERITY IN PRISON FROM THE HAND OF THE LORD

A. (:19-20) Wrongfully Imprisoned

1. (:19) Falsely Accused

“Now it came about when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spoke to him, saying, ‘This is what your slave did to me,’ that his anger burned.”

2. (:20) Forcibly Jailed

“So Joseph's master took him and put him into the jail, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; and he was there in the jail.”

B. (:21-22) Successful in Every Endeavor

1. (:21) Prospered by God

“But the LORD was with Joseph and extended kindness to him, and gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer.”

2. (:22) Promoted to Highest Position of Authority and Accountability

“And the chief jailer committed to Joseph's charge all the prisoners who were in the jail; so that whatever was done there, he was responsible for it.”

Parunak: This paragraph echoes the one with which the chapter began. In fact, the similarities draw our attention to a broader cycle that extends back to the beginning of **ch. 37** and on to **ch. 41**. Each cycle marks Joseph's promotion by the person in control, followed by his opposition by others and his subsequent humiliation. The movement from the humiliation of one episode to the promotion of the next is accompanied by a recognition of the Lord's presence with him, not only from the narrator's perspective, but in the eyes of the person promoting Joseph.

C. (:23) Summary of Joseph's Overflowing Prosperity and Significant Role

“The chief jailer did not supervise anything under Joseph's charge because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made to prosper.”

CONCLUSION:

Alan Carr: What I want you to see here is this: Joseph was in a bad situation, but he still lived a life that was blessed by the Lord. I am sure that his life was a life of endless drudgery and service, but he was faithful to his tasks. His character caused him to be faithful to his God and to his human master. As a result, God blessed his life and his work.

The great Baptist preacher John Bunyan was thrown into prison in 17th Century England for preaching the Gospel without a license. He spent twelve years in jail because he would not promise the court that he would not preach if he were released. He could have become discouraged by so long an imprisonment, but John Bunyan was a man of character and integrity.

While he was in jail he had a stool that had three legs. He removed one of the legs and carved it into a flute. He would use that flute to play Gospel songs. While in jail, Bunyan wrote Pilgrim's Progress, which is an allegory of the Christian life. It is the second largest selling book in history, only the Bible has sold more copies.

John Bunyan could have given up. Instead, he used his trials as a place to glorify his God. In

turn, God blessed him!

By the way, the Lord is still looking for men and women of faith, character and integrity. He is still looking for people that He can use in these days to get glory and honor to His name!

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What does this passage teach about the way to resist temptation?
- 2) Why do parents not do their children a good service by making life as easy as possible for them?
- 3) How should we respond to false accusations and unfair treatment?
- 4) What circumstances in your life have caused you to doubt the ability of God to bring blessing and prosperity to you?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: The OT repeatedly links Israel's apostasy with the prosperity that God gave her.

• **Deut 6:10-12; 8:11-14** anticipate such a danger for Israel once they inherit the land.

• **Deut 31:20** *For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers, that floweth with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant.*

• **Deut 32:25** *But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.*

• **Jer 2:31** *O generation, see ye the word of the LORD. Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?*

• **Ezekiel 16:14** *And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD. 15 But thou didst trust in thine own beauty,*

J. Ligon Duncan: Success, Loyalty and Betrayal

I. (:1-8) God in His providence shows favor to Joseph even in his slavery.

II. (:7-19) Joseph shows his commitment to God even in a tempting and dangerous situation.

III. (:20-23) God in His providence shows favor to Joseph even in prison.

Now, I don't know where God has you in His providence right now. But God here shows you how He protects us from the full extent of the designs of the wicked and the wilds of the world,

and how he causes us to be favored in the sight of the people for His purposes. All the while, He's crafting our character and character crafting is going on to be sure here in the life of David. The unfolding story makes it obvious that it's God who brought Joseph here for the task of preserving his people. And so God preserves Joseph so that he might be used to preserve His people. What is God preparing you for now? I think every believer needs to recognize that in God's providence, God has a purpose for you, God has a purpose for His people, and He has a purpose for Himself. All of God's plan will one day bring glory to Him, and so there is a real sense in which the way you respond in the context of God's dark providences is an opportunity for you to bring glory to God.

Hughes: Thus we are to understand that at the most uncertain time of Joseph's life, when he could see nothing of God, the covenant God of Israel was at work to effect his covenant promises through Joseph. Alone in Potiphar's house with the intimidating architecture of Egypt dwarfing him, living amidst idolatrous hymns, Joseph was not alone. Yahweh/Jehovah was with him to effect a mighty work for his covenant people and the blessing of the world.

Bob Deffinbaugh: From the Penthouse to the Prison

Since Christians today seem to think that obedience should always bring success and prosperity, Joseph's imprisonment should cause us to rethink the success strategies that are so popular in our circles. While Joseph would have made a great after-dinner speaker during the peak of his career with Potiphar, how many would have asked him to lecture during his years in prison? Much of our thinking concerning suffering and success needs to be challenged and changed. I know of no better place to begin than in Genesis 39.

(:1-18) The Results of Righteousness—Promotion and Prison

Joseph dealt with this persistent pursuit in three stages. First, he endeavored **to reason** with the woman. He explained to her that he had come to a position not only of power, but also of privilege and trust. To possess his master's wife and satisfy his own personal desires was to violate the sacred trust which was committed to him. Furthermore, she was a married woman, and as such their relationship would be adulterous. For both of these reasons the act which Potiphar's wife proposed was one that would be a great sin against God.

But Potiphar's wife was in no reasonable mood. She cared little for Joseph's logic, and so Joseph had to continually resist her advances. Even her requests which sought to bring the two in closer contact were refused. It appears that at times she appealed to him only to be near her, but Joseph knew all too well that she wanted more, and even this would be inappropriate. He was not responsible to meet either her emotional or physical needs, which were the concern only of her husband.

Finally, Joseph had to **run from her**. Day after day she sought to break down his defenses. In fact, she may have been spurred on by his resistance, for this made him even more of a challenge. Always before there had been someone about, it seems, but at last they were alone, hardly an accident I would think. At least there were no men about (**verse 11**).

I doubt that anyone who worked as a domestic in Potiphar's house was ignorant of their mistress' intentions toward Joseph. It does not appear that she cared whether they knew or not, for she daily hounded him. But when they were alone, she must have thought that Joseph would now be persuaded. Was he not resisting because he was afraid of the consequences of being caught? Who would know now? And so she boldly grasped him by his garment and pled with him.

This was no time to reason with the woman. It was not a time to “pray about it” or to meditate. The only godly course of action was to flee from her. This Joseph did by slipping out of his garment and leaving it in her grasp. Hurriedly, Joseph went outside where one would suppose there were others about and no further advances could be made.

God was with Joseph every bit as much in the prison as He was in the penthouse.

We dare not forget that this time of adversity was designed for Joseph’s good as well as for the good of his kinsmen. Let me suggest three ways in which Joseph’s time of service to Potiphar was profitable to him. In these three areas, and no doubt in many others, we see that the hand of God was good and gracious in this time of affliction.

First, the service to Potiphar was beneficial to Joseph in that it prepared him for the important task which lay ahead, that of serving as the second highest official in the land of Egypt. If one were to know that such a position of power and responsibility was 13 years in the future, how would one best prepare for it? Surely it would be necessary to learn the Egyptian language, as Joseph did (**42:23**), as well as their culture (cf. **43:32**). There were no language schools, especially for foreigners like the Hebrews. In the providence of God we can now see that this experience was, for Joseph, Potiphar’s Prep School. Here he learned the language, culture, and political interworkings of the nation, incidentally but not accidentally.

Second, Joseph’s imprisonment by Potiphar, while unpleasant, was probably the answer to his prayers. Knowing that day after day this woman persisted at trying to break down Joseph’s resistance, I would imagine that one of his most oft-repeated and earnest supplications was, “Lord, protect me from this woman.” And that is precisely what those prison bars did. His imprisonment was the answer to his prayers. Those bars and chains (cf. **Psalm 105:17-18**) in no way hindered God’s plans for Joseph, but they did keep Potiphar’s wife from him, the very thing he sought, unsuccessfully, to accomplish on his own. How frequently the answers to our prayers come wrapped in a different package than we expected.

Finally, it was in this prison that God had planned for Joseph to have an appointment with a man who would introduce him to Pharaoh and his position of power. Who would ever have thought that a job interview would have been conducted in such an unlikely place. But it was in that prison for political figures (**verse 20**) that Joseph was appointed to meet with the cupbearer of Pharaoh, the man who would someday tell this ruler of Joseph’s unusual ability to interpret dreams. Humanly speaking, to avoid imprisonment would have meant breaking an appointment which would lead to an incredible future.

Steven Cole: Moral Purity in a Polluted World

1. Be aware of situations where you’re vulnerable.
 - A. You’re vulnerable when you’re in different circumstances, where no one else will know.
 - B. You’re vulnerable when you’re successful and good looking.
 - C. You’re vulnerable when you’re alone with an emotionally needy woman.
 - D. You’re vulnerable when you’re emotionally needy.
2. Be aware of how temptation works.
3. Make a commitment to purity and develop a strategy before the temptation hits.
 - A. Make a commitment to integrity in all of life.
 - B. Make an up-front commitment to inner purity
 - C. Focus on your responsibilities, not your needs.

- D. Consciously live in the presence of God.
 - E. Call sin sin
 - F. Avoid the opportunity to be tempted.
 - G. Flee when you need to
4. Be willing to pay the price for your convictions.

Marcus Dods: And when we speak of Joseph's life as typical, we mean that it illustrates on a great scale and in picturesque and memorable situations principles which are obscurely operative in our own experience. It pleases the fancy to trace the incidental analogies between the life of Joseph and that of our Lord. As our Lord, so Joseph was the beloved of his father, sent by him to visit his brethren, and see after their well-being, seized and sold by them to strangers, and thus raised to be their Saviour and the Saviour of the world. Joseph in prison pronouncing the doom of one of his fellow-prisoners and the exaltation of the other, suggests the scene on Calvary where the one fellow-sufferer was taken, the other left. Joseph's contemporaries had of course no idea that his life foreshadowed the life of the Redeemer, yet they must have seen, or ought to have seen, that the deepest humiliation is often the path to the highest exaltation, that the deliverer sent by God to save a people may come in the guise of a slave, and that false accusations, imprisonment, years of suffering, do not make it impossible nor even unlikely that he who endures all these may be God's chosen Son. . .

In Joseph's case there were many aggravations of the soreness of such a condition. He had not one friend in the country. He had no knowledge of the language, no knowledge of any trade that could make him valuable in Egypt-nothing, in short, but his own manhood and his faith in God. His introduction to Egypt was of the most dispiriting kind. What could he expect from strangers, if his own brothers had found him so obnoxious? Now when a man is thus galled and stung by injury, and has learned how little he can depend upon finding good faith and common justice in the world, his character will show itself in the attitude he assumes towards men and towards life generally. A weak nature, when it finds itself thus deceived and injured, will sullenly surrender all expectation of good and will vent its spleen on the world by angry denunciations of the heartless and ungrateful ways of men. A proud nature will gather itself up from every blow, and determinedly work its way to an adequate revenge. A mean nature will accept its fate, and while it indulges in cynical and spiteful observations on human life, will greedily accept the paltriest rewards it can secure. But the supreme healthiness of Joseph's nature resists all the infectious influences that emanate from the world around him, and preserves him from every kind of morbid attitude towards the world and life. So easily did he throw off all vain regrets and stifle all vindictive and morbid feelings, so readily did he adjust himself to and so heartily enter into life as it presented itself to him, that he speedily rose to be overseer in the house of Potiphar. His capacity for business, his genial power of devoting himself to other men's interests, his clear integrity, were such, that this officer of Pharaoh's could find no more trustworthy servant in all Egypt-"he left all that he had in Joseph's hand: and he knew not aught he had, save the bread which he did eat."

Bruce Goettsche: Combating Temptation

There was a cartoon once where one character asked another, "why is it that opportunity knocks only once . . . but temptation knocks persistently?"

One thing is for sure . . . temptation is a subject we are all familiar with and could all use some help with.

Temptation is like a telemarketer,

- it comes to us when it is least convenient
- it comes back again and again
- it keeps pushing even after you say "No"
- it makes what it is selling sound great . . . but there is always a catch

The biggest problem in temptation is that we focus on what there is to be had and we seldom consider the cost. This is a very helpful process. The person tempted to immorality would consider:

- the grief they would bring to the Lord
- the reality that some day they will have to stand before Jesus and give an account of their decisions
- the people that they will be stealing from (a present spouse, a future mate)
- the undermining of the faithful example and hard work of other Christians in our community
- a loss of credibility and opportunity to serve and minister
- the threat of disease and pregnancy
- the embarrassment and disappointment to those who are my family and friends

W. H. Griffith Thomas: *"It is good for a young man to bear the yoke in his youth."* -- There were three yokes that Joseph bore: the yoke of slavery, the yoke of temptation, the yoke of suspicion and slander. Each of these by itself would have been heavy, but all three must have pressed deeply upon his soul. It is the worst possible thing for a young life to be made easy, to have everything done for it, to have a "good time." Yokes borne in youth have at least three results; they prove personal integrity, they promote spiritual maturity, and they prepare for fuller opportunity. In Nature and in human life the best things are not the easiest but the hardest to obtain.

Dave Guzik: Poor Joseph! Joseph went:

- From privilege in his father's house.
 - To the pit his brothers threw him into.
 - To being property in the slave market.
 - To the privilege of managing Potiphar's house.
 - To the principled stand against temptation.
 - To the perjury of false accusation.
 - To the prison of Pharaoh.
- i. We can see the mercy in this, because if Potiphar had believed his wife, he certainly would have put Joseph to death.
 - ii. We can see the injustice in this, because Joseph suffered for someone else's sin. As Christians, we remember someone who perfectly resisted all temptation, who as He stood for righteousness was stripped of His garments, and who was then punished for the sins of others. We see that Jesus is the hope of all who fail under temptation.
 - iii. We can see God's hand in all of this. All of this moves God's story forward, putting Joseph in the place where he can save his family and the whole world from coming famine, and prepare a place for them to live with him.

TEXT: Genesis 40:1-23

TITLE: *SERVING GOD IN THE PIT*

BIG IDEA: DISAPPOINTMENT AND DELAY PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES TO GLORIFY GOD

INTRODUCTION:

This staged drama between the king's cupbearer and his baker provides the backdrop for Joseph later on to be summoned before the king to interpret his dream. It will open the door that will lead to Joseph's eventual release from prison and exaltation in the royal household. But for now, the drama focuses mainly on the two diametrically opposed destinies that stem from the very similar common roots. There is a serious infraction committed by each individual that stirs the ire of the king. There is the common imprisonment under the care of Joseph. There are the parallel dreams which require interpretation by God's messenger, Joseph. We finish with the surprising contrast in fortunes coupled with the crushing blow to Joseph of remaining overlooked in his captivity when he should have been rescued. He is forgotten by man, but not forsaken by God. The providence of God remains right on track in bringing about God's desired kingdom objectives.

God is developing the character of Joseph through His two favorite classrooms: **Disappointment** and **Delay**. Joseph got to experience both of these in spades. He bounced from the pit into which he was thrown by his brothers into the pit of prison under Potiphar in Egypt. Despite his knowledge of God's glorious promises for his future, his hopes kept getting dashed time after time as God did not act on the timetable desired by Joseph. How do we deal with Disappointment and Delay? How are we able to maintain our conviction in the goodness and faithfulness of God and continue to glorify Him with our testimony and service while we remain in the pit?

TWO OF GOD'S FAVORITE CLASSROOMS ARE DISAPPOINTMENT AND DELAY – DISAPPOINTMENT AND DELAY PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES TO GLORIFY GOD

I. (:1-4) DIVINE APPOINTMENT = OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE IN THE PIT -- JOSEPH INTRODUCED TO CHIEF CUPBEARER AND CHIEF BAKER

A. (:1-3) How Did They End Up in Prison with Joseph?

1. (:1) Crime Against the King

“Then it came about after these things the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt offended their lord, the king of Egypt.”

They served at the pleasure of the king;
Positions of prominence can be quite precarious

Bob Utley: we know of 38 kinds of cakes which were regularly baked as well as 57 kinds of breads. Some of the bread was dyed different colors and made of different kinds of grain and in different physical shapes to resemble some of the animals and characteristic objects of Egypt.

2. (:2) Culprits Angered the King

“And Pharaoh was furious with his two officials, the chief cupbearer and the chief

baker.”

Don't poke the bear

Bob Utley: “*furious*” -- denotes an intense wrath that issues in action.

3. (:3) Confinement Appointed by the King

“So he put them in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, in the jail, the same place where Joseph was imprisoned.”

Providential appointment – linking these 2 with Joseph

B. (:4) How Did Joseph Serve Them as a Faithful Steward?

1. Delegation of Charge

“And the captain of the bodyguard put Joseph in charge of them,”

2. Description of Care

“and he took care of them;”

Functioned as a faithful steward; did not put his own needs first; saw needs and took the initiative to meet them

3. Duration of Confinement

“and they were in confinement for some time.”

Shows the character that God was building into Joseph – building his endurance and perseverance as he continued to maintain a good attitude and a good testimony over a long time of undeserved imprisonment

II. (:5-8) DECLARED AVAILABILITY -- JOSEPH OFFERS TO USE HIS CONNECTION TO GOD TO INTERPRET THEIR TROUBLING DREAMS

A. (:5) Dreams Needing Interpretation

“Then the cupbearer and the baker for the king of Egypt, who were confined in jail, both had a dream the same night, each man with his own dream and each dream with its own interpretation.”

Look at the Lord's timing; nothing happens for a long time and then all of a sudden, both of them have key dreams on the same night

B. (:6-8a) Dejection Perceived by Joseph – Sensitive and Compassionate

“When Joseph came to them in the morning and observed them, behold, they were dejected. And he asked Pharaoh's officials who were with him in confinement in his master's house, ‘Why are your faces so sad today?’ Then they said to him, ‘We have had a dream and there is no one to interpret it.’”

A danger of disappointment is that we become so self-absorbed that we no longer are available to serve others

Parunak: No doubt they told one another of their dreams, and were struck by the coincidences. These coincidences suggested to them that the dreams were not ordinary, but had special significance. Joseph himself later tells Pharaoh that a doubled dream is evidence of its divine origin (**41:32**, “*for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass*”; cf. **Job 33:14-18**). In fact, doubled dreams are typical of Joseph’s history (here; in **ch. 41**; the two dreams of Joseph’s dominance in **ch. 37**), and Joseph may have learned this significance from these previous dreams.

C. (:8b) Divine Connection Offered by Joseph – “Here am I, Send Me” Attitude

“Then Joseph said to them, ‘Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell it to me, please.’”

Joseph was all about giving God the credit for everything He accomplished; look at the relationship that Joseph testifies to with this powerful God

Ron Ritchie: The Egyptians had a belief, widespread in antiquity, that "sleep puts us in real and direct contact with the other world where not only the dead but also the gods dwell. Dreams therefore are a gift from the gods." (Vergote, Joseph en Egypte.) Joseph took advantage of this "teachable moment" and told them of his relationship with Yahweh , the one and only living God in this land of hundreds of manmade gods. And then he asked them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams." Joseph's attitude was consistent with the Old Testament's rejection of occult practices and its reliance on prophecy as a means of discovering God's will (see **Deuteronomy 18:10-22**).

Joseph took the initiative to offer his concern and compassion and to testify that God is able to provide the interpretation of dreams that they were seeking; he offers his assistance in serving their needs to be the conduit for God’s prophetic interpretation

III. (:9-19) DREAM ANALYSIS -- TWO VERY SIMILAR ROOTS CAN LEAD TO DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED DESTINIES

WILL YOUR HEAD BE LIFTED UP OR LIFTED OFF?

A lot hinges on a preposition in this section

A. (:9-15) Dream of the Chief Cupbearer and Joseph’s Interpretation

1. (:9-11) The Dream of the Chief Cupbearer

“So the chief cupbearer told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, ‘In my dream, behold, there was a vine in front of me; and on the vine were three branches. And as it was budding, its blossoms came out, and its clusters produced ripe grapes. Now Pharaoh's cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I put the cup into Pharaoh's hand.’”

2. (:12-13) Joseph’s Interpretation

“Then Joseph said to him, ‘This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days; within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head and restore you to your office; and you

will put Pharaoh's cup into his hand according to your former custom when you were his cupbearer.”

3. (:14-15) Joseph's Appeal for Deliverance

a. (:14) Opportunity for Deliverance

“Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house.”

b. (:15) Basis for Deliverance: Victim of Injustice

“For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon.”

Victim on two specific occasions:

- Back in the land of the Hebrews – kidnapped without cause
- Here in the land of Egypt – imprisoned without cause

B. (:16-19) Dream of the Chief Baker and Joseph's Interpretation

1. (:16-17) Dream of the Chief Baker

“When the chief baker saw that he had interpreted favorably, he said to Joseph, ‘I also saw in my dream, and behold, there were three baskets of white bread on my head; and in the top basket there were some of all sorts of baked food for Pharaoh, and the birds were eating them out of the basket on my head.’”

Parunak: The baker wants the interpretation only if it is good. The butler wants to hear what God has to say to him, regardless. This distinction between attitudes to the word of God is crucial, and we do well to examine our hearts to determine whether we are like the butler or like the baker.

2. (:18-19) Joseph's Interpretation

Then Joseph answered and said, "This is its interpretation: the three baskets are three days; within three more days Pharaoh will lift up your head from you and will hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh off you."

Parunak: Joseph's response begins identically with that to the butler, except that he replaces “branches” with “baskets.” They continue to be word-for-word identical through the phrase, “shall Pharaoh lift up thy head.” The baker's heart is soaring as he hears the interpretation unfold...but Joseph does not go on to the promise of restoration. Instead, he adds to the clause “lift up thy head”, the prepositional phrase, “from off thee.” With this extension, the expression is no longer an idiom for exalting someone, but a somber prediction of execution. The baker will be executed. . . Joseph does not ask the baker to “remember him,” as he did the butler. The baker will be in no position to deliver him from prison.

Bob Utley: It is also obvious that v. 19 does not refer to hanging because it is difficult to hang one whose head has been cut off! This hanging apparently meant to hang or to impale one publicly after he was already dead (cf. **Josh. 8:29; I Sam. 31:9-10; II Sam. 4:12**). This seems to be the general intent of this public impaling as can be ascertained from **Deut. 21:23**. The fact that the man's body would be eaten by birds would be especially horrendous to an Egyptian who place so much emphasis on embalming after death to preserve the body.

IV. (:20-22) DIVERGENT ACTIONS – TWO VERY DIFFERENT DESTINIES

A. (:20) Time for Disposition

“Thus it came about on the third day, which was Pharaoh's birthday, that he made a feast for all his servants; and he lifted up the head of the chief cupbearer and the head of the chief baker among his servants.”

B. (:21-22) Two Different Destinies – Consistent with Joseph's Interpretation

1) (:21) Chief Cupbearer Restored to His Office

“And he restored the chief cupbearer to his office, and he put the cup into Pharaoh's hand;”

2) (:22) Chief Baker Hanged

“but he hanged the chief baker, just as Joseph had interpreted to them.”

The details work themselves out in exact fulfillment to how Joseph had provided the interpretation of the two dreams. God makes no mistakes. God is all about the details.

Why is one person elected by God to salvation and another left to pay the consequences for his sinful behavior? It is a divine mystery ... but it cannot be denied or controverted.

(:23) EPILOGUE – DEVASTATING APPLICATION -- SIGNIFICANT OVERSIGHT – FORGOTTEN BY MAN BUT NOT FORSAKEN BY GOD

“Yet the chief cupbearer did not remember Joseph, but forgot him.”

One more nail in Joseph's coffin;
One more heartbreaking disappointment

Alan Carr: The path of life leads us into prison situations from time to time. We all face hardships and trials. That is the way of life, **John 16:33**. Sometime we feel like we are shut up, shut down and shut off too. And, we feel that we are forgotten in that prison. Many times we are forgotten by those around us. Even though man may forget us in the prisons of life, the Lord never forgets and He refuses to forsake us while we are there, **Heb. 13:5**. . . This is a bad place to leave our hero. He has done the right things every time he had a chance and still he suffers for “*righteousness sake*”. There he stands falsely accused, wrongly imprisoned and now, he is also forgotten. Joseph cannot see it, but the wheels of providence are slowly advancing. God is slowly but surely lining up everything in Joseph's life just the way it needs to be. Soon the plans and purposes of God will become crystal clear!

Brent Kercheville: Disappointment Qualifies Us for Service

Rather than degenerating into selfish thoughts of anger, bitterness, self-pity, withdrawal, depression, and resentment, consider how you can use your disappointment for God's service so that he is glorified. What will you do with your disappointment? You can serve God and serve others through that disappointment. Rather than falling into sin yourself, serve the beauty that has turned into a beast. Serve your family. Live a life that honors God through the

disappointments. Show that God is good even when life does not match expectations.

Disappointment is a tool to break our pride that causes us to think that we know how our lives ought to go better than God does. We need disappointment in life so that we move our faith to the one who does not disappoint: our Lord Jesus. **Don't be disappointed in the life God has given you to live.** Are we greater than God to tell him how our life is supposed to go? Job thought he could do that. God rebuked Job for that thinking and Job despised himself for thinking and speaking this way (**Job 42:6**). Naaman made the same mistake with his disappointment in the way that he thought he would be healed by the prophet of God. Are we going to tell God how life is supposed to be?

Don't waste your life living in disappointment. Are you just going to live disappointed each day? Or are you going to do something for God with your disappointment? **Know that God is working** and you can use this for his glory and for the good of others. Let your heart be changed by your disappointment to look forward to an eternal home with God that is free from disappointment.

Zeisler: The end of our story does not spell rejection, or injustice, or being used and then discarded. We will not ultimately be forgotten, lonely and rejected. The end of our story is glorification in Jesus Christ. That is our destiny if we are his children. However painful our present circumstances, we need to recall that the Lord is headed someplace with us. He has been raised from the dead, and his word is true. Although he was forgotten, rejected and misused, Joseph knew two things for sure: God was present with him and he would not fail him; and he had not yet seen written the final chapter of his story.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are we always careful to give God the credit for all He accomplishes – especially when our spiritual gifts are part of the instrumentation He uses?
- 2) How was Joseph able to rise to such a position of responsibility that he was entrusted with the supervision and care of these very prominent prisoners?
- 3) What type of injustices have you experienced and how have you seen the hand of God at work in your situation?
- 4) How would you have felt if you were in Joseph's position and remained forgotten at the end of the day? Did he realize that he was in prison for a divine purpose?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

J. Ligon Duncan: Joseph Imprisoned

I. God's favor to Joseph.

Potiphar puts Joseph in charge and in care of the cupbearer and the baker. Now this is an interesting thing. Either Potiphar has softened in his anger towards Joseph, or he has begun to

suspect that perhaps Joseph wasn't, in fact, guilty of the things which his wife had charged him with. Whatever the case is, the fact that Joseph is placed in charge of these high-ranking officials is a sign of God's favor on Joseph even in the midst of the prison. . .

Moses wants us to look right into the face of God's mysterious problems and recognize that His hand is as much behind Joseph's imprisonment as it will be Joseph's exaltation later. He has reasons for what He is doing. Those reasons are wise, they are good, they are comprehensive. They will declare His glory, they will do Joseph good, and they will ultimately accrue to the benefit of all the people of God, not only in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament. And that means you and me tonight. . .

In the favor that is shown Joseph in prison, it's an overture of God, whispering in Joseph's ear, saying Joseph, My plan is still working out for you. It makes no sense to you right now. You don't know what's going to happen on the other end of it; but I am at work because I love you, and I care for you. . .

II. Joseph interprets dreams.

When we are facing providences that we don't understand, we can either display our trust in the sovereign God or we can display our doubt in the purpose of the sovereign God. As we display our trust in Him, God's glory is born witness to, even in the midst of the nation. If we doubt, we give an account that we really don't believe the things that we say that we believe. Joseph here has the opportunity in the face of this dream to show these people that it's the one true God who is the one who holds the future and thus reveals it. . .

III. God's providence and responsibility.

He says would you remember me before Pharaoh and help me get out of this place. So he makes a simple request that is perfectly appropriate. And so you see Joseph acting and taking responsibility, being active in his pressing for release even as he trusts in God's providence. And, of course, Joseph himself has already made it clear that his interpretation of the dream is not due to any power in himself. It's God who's the interpreter of dreams . . .

IV. The baker's dream.

all of us, as we sit in the pew, should desire messengers who will tell us the truth even when it's uncomfortable for us. Even when we don't like the message. Messengers who will speak to us about our sin, about our responsibility, about our obligations, about the things which are difficult for us to do are doing us no good, because they're sharing with us God's word. And so all of us ought to pray that the Lord would raise up messengers who will speak the truth no matter what.

V. Joseph's interpretations come to pass.

By Joseph being forgotten, God is doing at least three things simultaneously:

- First of all, God is **strengthening Joseph's faith** by causing him to have to learn patience and endurance.
- God is **furthering His own glory** by delaying the answer to Joseph's desires to get out of this prison. If God had gotten Joseph out of prison through the cupbearer's initial pleas Joseph would have been tempted to think of the cupbearer as his rescuer. By delaying the answer to Joseph's prayers, God made it clear that He and He alone would come to Joseph's rescue.
- God is **establishing His plan for the salvation of Israel**. You see, the salvation of Israel depends upon Joseph's exaltation to the right hand of Pharaoh. If Joseph is freed from

prison through the mere appeal of the cupbearer at this point, he never gets the appointment in the house of Pharaoh. If he doesn't get the appointment in the house of Pharaoh, Israel is undone, even as Egypt is in its time of famine. No, God had a better plan and a better purpose and that plan meant waiting, and it meant being frustrated, and it meant being perplexed and it meant being patient. But whatever our God ordains is right. And Joseph is learning that just like we are. May God bless us to believe it in our own circumstances tonight.

Brian Borgman: Forgotten by God's Covenant Kindness

Something kept Joseph anchored in faith in his God; smiling Providence of God because the Lord was with him; doing the right thing does not always have the immediate benefits we would like to see; shown covenant love even in the midst of everything looking so awful; God was fulfilling Joseph's dreams – but required all of these painful experiences in the in between times;

2 high officials in Pharaoh's court; not some guy who owns a liquor store and a donut shop; protected Pharaoh's life; Offended – sinned against the king; no crime explicitly stated; no legal provisions for appeal; just tossed into prison; located in Potiphar's house; Potiphar continues to recognize Joseph's skill, usefulness and gifts;

Joseph notices the sadness of others; not caught up in self-pity and his own situation; still had a heart for others; had compassion; suffering can turn us in on ourselves so that we lose empathy with others; don't have access to our normal dream therapists; subject of dreams could have been a sore subject for Joseph but instead it opens him up to give testimony;

“lift up your head” –

- Summon you into his presence
- Show favor to you

One small request: when things go well for you, please remember me; show me kindness and loyalty; mention me to Pharaoh and get me out of here; strengthens his appeal by claiming his innocence – he has wrongly gone from pit to pit; Joseph doesn't give a bad report either of the conduct of his brothers or of Potiphar's wife; he has matured

The baker is hoping for similar good news as he listens in; 3 baskets ... 3 days – so far so good; *“lift off your head”* – my life is hanging on prepositions ... be clear; impale you on a pole; that is not a favorable interpretation; Joseph told the truth for the good of the baker – then pleaded with him to get right with God; the person who loves you the most is the one who will tell you the most truth; Unless you repent of your sins and turn to Jesus Christ, you too will perish forever; Hell is filled with people who say, “Man, if I could have just had 3 more days ...”

Spectacular birthday party; maybe name tags and assigned seating – called the baker and the cup bearer to the party; don't know how Pharaoh reached his decision – by adjudication, by competition (the one who wins at arm wrestling gets to live), by ???

Vs. 23 – Stated both ways for emphasis; It's an awful thing to be forgotten; 2 years is a long time; comes to sad realization that now is not the time for his deliverance; part of God's plan to show covenant kindness to Joseph, his family, to Israel, to the world

Sinclair Ferguson: Nowhere Man?

Because of potential for political coup back in the day, these 2 prominent positions were of

enormous significance; maybe there was a suspicion of an assassination plot that led to their imprisonment

Often circumstances of life and promises of God appear to move in contradictory direction and yet all the while God is providentially working out His program in His timing – like the cog wheels of the inner workings of a watch or clock

It's déjà vu all over again, all over again – hopes dashed
Joseph's hour has not yet come; God is still preparing him;

What is it in this chapter that the Lord is doing in Joseph's life?

- 1) Building his character – he had unusual administrative skills; a very attractive personality; seems to rise to the top in whatever context he finds himself; needs more than gifts; needs character; these are not the same thing
 - **Insensitive** to others; absorbed with himself; will need restraint for 7 years of plenty and administrative ability for 7 years of famine
 - Lord teaching him **patience** – you can't learn it from textbooks or from abundance but from privation and affliction and disappointment; “If I had practiced I would have been a great musician...”; some things that all the theory in the world cannot teach you; no substitute for experience; the very worst adversity is to never experience adversity
 - Acknowledges God as the only reliable and authoritative dream interpreter

- 2) Equipping Joseph for service –
 - Understands that God has gifted him with knowledge of interpretation of dreams as a service; at 17 he wants to be a leader; at 28 he wants to be a servant! God's way is to train us for service; **Eccles. 9:10** – that is his disposition; sees something that needs to be done and addresses it; cf. apostle Paul gathering sticks; be committed to glorify God in the position you find yourself right now – don't have the mentality that if you only had some elevated position you could glorify God better
 - Down you go before you are exalted = the Jesus pattern = the only pattern God has to make his people fruitful

Title of message -- Beatles' song – **Nowhere Man** – “he's a real nowhere man ... “
God in His providential grace is transforming Joseph into a Somewhere Man

Alan Carr: Forgotten But Not Forsaken

- I. (:1-4) PRISON DUTIES
- II. (:5-19) PRISON DREAMS
- III. (:6-7) PRISON DEMEANORS
- IV. (:20-41:1) PRISON DISAPPOINTMENTS

This prison disappointment served to teach Joseph two valuable lessons. They are lessons that we need to learn as well.

1. Joseph learned that he should never put his confidence in man – He tried to get help from human sources, but it failed. The fact is, there is no real help in man. Our only help comes from the Lord. He may use humans as His instruments, but behind the provision is the hand of the Almighty – **Psa. 121:1-8!**

2. Joseph learned, once again, that God's unseen hand moves us along a hidden pathway – He

would like to have been freed long before he was. But, it wasn't God's time! When the time came, Joseph was released and not a minute before. We need to learn this truth: Our God is seldom early, but He is never late! He always moves right on time!

When did He feed Elijah? Morning and evening – right on time! When did He rescue the three Hebrew boys? Not when they would have liked, but right on time! When did He help Daniel? Not when Daniel would have preferred it, but right on time! When did Jesus come to His men on the sea in the stormy night? Not when they thought they needed Him, but right on time!

Zeisler: I believe there are three categories of pain highlighted by Joseph's story which we would do well to look at.

- The first is **rejection**. . .
- Another circumstance which caused Joseph to suffer was that he was **used by others**. It seems the world is filled with people who use others. . .
- Thirdly, Joseph suffered because he was a **forgotten man**. That may be the most painful circumstance of all. Joseph befriended his fellow-prisoner, offered him a word of hope from the God of hope, and yet that was all forgotten. How many men and women languish in prisons today, forgotten people? No one visits them or writes to them; no one cares for them or remembers them.

TEXT: Genesis 41:1-57

TITLE: FROM PIT TO PINNACLE

BIG IDEA:

GOD ELEVATES JOSEPH TO PROMINENCE IN EGYPT TO ORCHESTRATE HIS ULTIMATE PROMISES OF DIVINE RESCUE AND REDEMPTION

INTRODUCTION:

[Title taken from R. Kent Hughes]

Hughes: These final events of Joseph's imprisonment were arranged by God to make Joseph an extraordinary instrument for the preservation of his people. Amidst the disappointment and delay of being forgotten by the cupbearer, Joseph's trust in God had been further tempered and deepened. Joseph had become a radically God-centered man who believed that his God-given dreams would come true in God's good time. God would remain at the center of his vision through everything that was to come. At last Joseph was ready for the great work of his life.

We make a mistake if we view this chapter simply as an example of God in His sovereignty elevating someone from the Pit of Misery to the Pinnacle of Power and Prosperity. We must view God's timing and actions in harmony with His overall redemptive promises and purposes as expressed throughout the earlier chapters in Genesis. From the initial promise of the seed of the woman who would eventually conquer Satan down thru the promises to Abraham and the patriarchs, we see God preparing Joseph to play a significant role in rescuing Judah and preserving the Jewish line of posterity that would lead eventually to the birth of the Messiah.

GOD ELEVATES JOSEPH TO PROMINENCE IN EGYPT TO ORCHESTRATE HIS ULTIMATE PROMISES OF DIVINE RESCUE AND REDEMPTION

I. (:1-13) THE REMEMBERING OF JOSEPH AND HIS GIFT OF INTERPRETING DREAMS

A. (:1-7) Two Parallel Dreams

1. (:1-4) First Dream – Fat and Thin Cows

“Now it happened at the end of two full years that Pharaoh had a dream, and behold, he was standing by the Nile. And lo, from the Nile there came up seven cows, sleek and fat; and they grazed in the marsh grass. Then behold, seven other cows came up after them from the Nile, ugly and gaunt, and they stood by the other cows on the bank of the Nile. And the ugly and gaunt cows ate up the seven sleek and fat cows. Then Pharaoh awoke.”

2. (:5-7) Second Dream – Fat and Thin Ears of Grain

“And he fell asleep and dreamed a second time; and behold, seven ears of grain came up on a single stalk, plump and good. Then behold, seven ears, thin and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them. And the thin ears swallowed up the seven plump and full ears. Then Pharaoh awoke, and behold, it was a dream.”

Parunak: The dreams are straightforward but would certainly seize Pharaoh's attention.

- They both start with recognizable features of Egyptian life:

- o “The river,” the Nile, the lifeline of this otherwise desert land
 - o Cattle grazing along the river
 - o Grain growing in the fields of silt deposited by the floods each year
- But these familiar scenes are disrupted in incredible ways.
 - o Cows are not carnivorous. What does it mean for one cow to eat another?
 - o Grain doesn’t eat anything, in the conventional sense. How can one ear of wheat eat another?
 - The repetition of the scene after a waking period makes it impossible for Pharaoh to shake off the vision.

B. (:8-13) Two Paths of Interpretation

1. (:8) First Path – Pharaoh’s Magicians

“Now it came about in the morning that his spirit was troubled, so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all its wise men. And Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.”

George Bush: His dream was from God. God impressed it upon his mind that it was a dream out of the ordinary course, and that it was significant of some very important events, but what those vents were he could not guess.

Hughes: Egyptian Pharaohs, supposedly gods themselves, were thought to live on the edge of the divine realms. So their dreams were given special credence. And these dreams were full of portent. They had come as a pair, signaling their importance and certitude. They were also closely parallel. Both featured cannibalism. Both ended in consuming violence. And both dreams were built on the number seven.

Constable: The "*magicians*" were "men of the priestly caste, who occupied themselves with the sacred arts and sciences of the Egyptians, the hieroglyphic writings, astrology, the interpretation of dreams, the foretelling of events, magic, and conjuring, and who were regarded as the possessors of secret arts

2. (:9-13) Second Path – Cupbearer Commends Joseph

“Then the chief cupbearer spoke to Pharaoh, saying, ‘I would make mention today of my own offenses. Pharaoh was furious with his servants, and he put me in confinement in the house of the captain of the bodyguard, both me and the chief baker. And we had a dream on the same night, he and I; each of us dreamed according to the interpretation of his own dream. Now a Hebrew youth was with us there, a servant of the captain of the bodyguard, and we related them to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us. To each one he interpreted according to his own dream. And it came about that just as he interpreted for us, so it happened; he restored me in my office, but he hanged him.’”

Parunak: Each phrase is mildly condescending:

- “a young man,” unlike the older, wiser courtiers with whom the king was surrounded;
- “an Hebrew,” a foreigner, not a native-born Egyptian;
- “servant to ...,” at a lower level of the palace hierarchy, unlike the butler, who was servant to Pharaoh himself (v.10).

These disparaging terms are probably meant to excuse his not mentioning this individual earlier. “O king, there was this rather inconsequential fellow in jail with us ... but you know, he could interpret dreams.”

Hughes: It was a fairly accurate account, except that the cupbearer, being the political animal that he was, did some selective editing.

- He neglected to mention that the young Hebrew actually claimed to have no power to interpret dreams and said that the power to interpret came from his Hebrew God.
- The cupbearer also gave the false impression that he took the initiative in getting Joseph to interpret his dream.
- And, of course, the cupbearer made no mention that he had failed to carry out his promise to mention Joseph to Pharaoh.

II. (:14-32) THE REVELATION FROM GOD FAITHFULLY RELAYED BY JOSEPH IN GOD’S PROVIDENTIAL TIMING

A. (:14-24) The Diviner of the Dream Interpretation – Where can Pharaoh turn?

Diviner = a person who uses special powers to predict future events

1. (:14-15) Trap of Trusting in Spiritual Giants -- Joseph Summoned as the Diviner
“Then Pharaoh sent and called for Joseph, and they hurriedly brought him out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came to Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it.’”

Deffinbaugh: To the Hebrews, a beard was a mark of dignity (cf. **II Samuel 10:4-5; Ezra 9:3**), but for the Egyptian it was an offensive thing. Joseph took the time to shave himself so as not to unnecessarily offend the king of Egypt.

Albert Barnes: The Egyptians were accustomed to shave the head and beard, except in times of mourning (Herod. 2:32).

2. (:16) Testimony to God’s Unique Role
“Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, ‘It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.’”

Hughes: to Pharaoh’s face Joseph asserted that his God was superior to and sovereign over the gods of Egypt.

J. Ligon Duncan: God, Pharaoh, is the revealer of the future. Not your magicians, not me, not the books of dreams. God is the revealer of the future. Joseph is, for the second time in two chapters, about to put on the mantle of a prophet, and he is going to reveal the future, not because he has some innate power to know the interpretations of dreams, but because God Himself reveals it to him, that he might reveal it to the Pharaoh, that he might show that He is the God who holds and knows the future. And so we see God laying the groundwork for His own exaltation, even in the midst of the land of Egypt. . . He not only knows the future, He not only has the power to reveal it to His servant, but He holds the future, because He has ordained the future.

3. (:17-24) Track Record of Failure by the Egyptian Magicians

“So Pharaoh spoke to Joseph, ‘In my dream, behold, I was standing on the bank of the Nile; and behold, seven cows, fat and sleek came up out of the Nile; and they grazed in the marsh grass. And lo, seven other cows came up after them, poor and very ugly and gaunt, such as I had never seen for ugliness in all the land of Egypt; and the lean and ugly cows ate up the first seven fat cows. Yet when they had devoured them, it could not be detected that they had devoured them; for they were just as ugly as before. Then I awoke. I saw also in my dream, and behold, seven ears, full and good, came up on a single stalk; and lo, seven ears, withered, thin, and scorched by the east wind, sprouted up after them; and the thin ears swallowed the seven good ears. Then I told it to the magicians, but there was no one who could explain it to me.’”

B. (:25-32) The Details of the Dream Interpretation

“Now Joseph said to Pharaoh,”

1. (:25) Significance -- Supremely Significant – 3 Reasons:

- a. Repeated for Emphasis
“Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same;”
- b. Divine in Origin
“God has told to Pharaoh”
- c. Prophetic in Nature
“what He is about to do.”

Parunak: Joseph’s interpretation is framed by the three-fold repetition of his assertion that God has revealed what he is about to do: **25, 28, 32**. This frame makes an important point. God’s revelation of the future is not a passive declaration of what will happen anyway, but an active statement of his sovereign will and intent.

2. (:26-31) Storyline -- Great Abundance Swallowed Up by Severe Famine

“The seven good cows are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years; the dreams are one and the same. And the seven lean and ugly cows that came up after them are seven years, and the seven thin ears scorched by the east wind shall be seven years of famine. It is as I have spoken to Pharaoh: God has shown to Pharaoh what He is about to do. Behold, seven years of great abundance are coming in all the land of Egypt; and after them seven years of famine will come, and all the abundance will be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine will ravage the land. So the abundance will be unknown in the land because of that subsequent famine; for it will be very severe.”

Hughes: the future of Egypt was established without any reference to Pharaoh. As **Walter Brueggemann** explains, “The future in Egypt does not depend upon Pharaoh. He does not get to decide. In fact, Pharaoh is irrelevant and marginal to the future of the kingdom.”

3. (:32) Sovereign Fulfillment

“Now as for the repeating of the dream to Pharaoh twice, it means that the matter is determined by God, and God will quickly bring it about.”

Indicates the certainty that these events would take place very soon

III. (:33-45) THE RECOGNITION OF JOSEPH'S WISDOM AND ADMINISTRATIVE ABILITY

A. (:33-36) Action Plan Proposed by Joseph – 5 Key Steps

Prepare these all the time for work:

- Define the task
- Assign a champion
- Establish the timetable and the metrics

1. (:33) Put the Right Man in Charge

“And now let Pharaoh look for a man discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.”

2. (:34a) Appoint Overseers

“Let Pharaoh take action to appoint overseers in charge of the land,”

3. (:34b) Collect Heavy Tax of Grain in 7 Fat Years

“and let him exact a fifth of the produce of the land of Egypt in the seven years of abundance.”

Amounts to a double tithe

4. (:35) Collect, Strategically Store and Guard the Grain

“Then let them gather all the food of these good years that are coming, and store up the grain for food in the cities under Pharaoh's authority, and let them guard it.”

5. (:36) Distribute the Grain in 7 Lean Years

“And let the food become as a reserve for the land for the seven years of famine which will occur in the land of Egypt, so that the land may not perish during the famine.”

Hughes: Fascinatingly, every aspect of Joseph's plan called for dynamic action. And here is what fascinates: Joseph's dynamic call to action was based on his knowledge of what God was about to do. So we see that the knowledge of what God is going to do does not produce passive resignation but aggressive action. The knowledge of God's purpose is not the end of human planning and action but the beginning of it. The fact that God has set the future is a mighty summons to action.

Today it is precisely this that undergirds the tremendous energy of world missions. We know how history is going to end – it will end with people redeemed from “*every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages*” (**Revelation 7:9**). So we pray and give and go!

B. (:37-45) Action Plan Affirmed by Pharaoh

Parunak: The appointment narrative consists of six successive actions by Pharaoh. His title is

repeated with each one of them, slowing down the action and marking this as the high point of the story.

- (:38-40) Two actions declare Pharaoh's intention.
- (:41-43) Two actions invest Joseph with authority.
- (:44-45) Two actions establish his position in the Egyptian nobility.

1. (:37) Summary Affirmation – It's all Good

"Now the proposal seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his servants."

2. (:38-40) Declaring His Intention to Elevate Joseph on the Basis of Merit

a. Declaring to His Servants – Man of Unique Insight and Vision

"Then Pharaoh said to his servants, 'Can we find a man like this, in whom is a divine spirit?'"

Deffinbaugh: I have become more convinced than ever, having gained a deeper appreciation for the character and humble spirit of Joseph, that it never entered into his mind that he should be the one appointed over this project. Self-interest had never been manifest in his character or conduct prior to this. He did not even mention his unjust imprisonment. Furthermore, who could ever have conceived of a Hebrew slave being elevated to the second highest office in the land? Regardless of the person in charge, the plan would have to be followed in order to deal with the famine which was predicted.

b. Declaring to Joseph – Man of Supreme Discernment and Wisdom

"So Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you.'"

Steven Cole: **BE DILIGENT TO KEEP COMPETENCE ALONGSIDE CHARACTER.**

Joseph was not only godly, he was good at what he did. He proposed a wise plan of action and he had the skill to carry it out. His plan involved collecting a fifth of the harvest each year for seven years, so that they had enough surplus not only for Egypt, but also for surrounding countries hit by this famine. It would have taken skillful administration and a lot of discipline to make this happen on a national scale. No doubt Joseph caught a lot of flak from people who wanted to use all the harvest and not save it for the future. But he was good enough as a leader to pull it off.

A lot of Christians think that character is enough on the job. They expect that God will get them the promotion because they've been faithful to have morning devotions. They sit around praying for the promotion instead of developing competence on the job to go with their Christian character. You need both. As a Christian, you need to be godly, but you also need to be good in doing what you do.

3. (:41- 43) Investing Joseph with Authority to Govern

a. Symbols of Royalty – Visible signs of power

"And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'See I have set you over all the land of Egypt.' Then Pharaoh took off his signet ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen, and put the gold necklace around his neck."

- b. Respect of Royalty – Inauguration Parade
“And he had him ride in his second chariot; and they proclaimed before him, ‘Bow the knee!’ And he set him over all the land of Egypt.”

4. (:44-45) Establishing Joseph’s Position in Royal Household

- a. (:44) Level of Authority
“Moreover, Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Though I am Pharaoh, yet without your permission no one shall raise his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.’”

- b. (:45) Sealing the Deal
“Then Pharaoh named Joseph Zaphenath-paneah; and he gave him Asenath, the daughter of Potiphara priest of On, as his wife. And Joseph went forth over the land of Egypt.”

Name Zaphenath-paneah means “God speaks and live” (though some uncertainty here)

Deffinbaugh: The final section (vv.46-57) serves several purposes. First, it reveals the accuracy of Joseph’s interpretation. Second, it evidences the administrative astuteness of Joseph in handling the affairs of state in preparation for the famine to come. Finally, it reveals to us Joseph’s continued spiritual commitment to the God of his fathers.

IV. (:46-57) THE RECORD OF GOD’S FAITHFULNESS IN FULFILLING HIS PROMISES TO JOSEPH AND PHARAOH’S DREAMS

A. (:46) Joseph Delivered and Exalted to Leadership

“Now Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went through all the land of Egypt.”

Joseph was about 17 when he descended into this life of captivity and disappointment ... so a lot of time has elapsed; he is a young man to be given so much responsibility; but he has waited on the Lord to deliver him for a long time

Dr. Dodd: No doubt for the building of granaries, and appointing proper officers to receive the corn in every place

B. (:47-49) Seven Years of Plenty – Implementing the Action Plan

“And during the seven years of plenty the land brought forth abundantly. So he gathered all the food of these seven years which occurred in the land of Egypt, and placed the food in the cities; he placed in every city the food from its own surrounding fields. Thus Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure.”

Parunak: Note that each city’s food is laid up in that city, from the produce of that city. He instituted a distributed system of managing the resources, to motivate local involvement and

facilitate the eventual distribution.

C. (:50-52) Two Sons Born to Joseph – Testimony to God’s Love and Faithfulness

“Now before the year of famine came, two sons were born to Joseph, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On, bore to him. And Joseph named the first-born Manasseh, ‘For,’ he said, ‘God has made me forget all my trouble and all my father’s household.’ And he named the second Ephraim, ‘For,’ he said, ‘God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.’”

Hughes: Joseph declared his allegiance to God and his faith in God’s word by giving his boys *Hebrew* names!

Deffinbaugh: this paraphrase may help to express the meaning which I think Joseph was trying to convey in the naming of *Manasseh*: “For,” he said, “God has made me forget all my trouble with my father’s household.” The bitterness was gone. Joseph was able, even now, to see that while his brothers were wrong in their actions, God had meant it for good (cf. **50:20**). With this attitude Joseph could exercise sufficient self-control to keep from revealing his identity too quickly, and thus bring his brothers to genuine repentance by a careful program of instruction unimpeded by feelings of anger and vengeance.

The name Ephraim, that is “fruitfulness” (margin, NASV), conveyed the assurance of Joseph that it was God who had given him prosperity and blessing in the land of his affliction. To Joseph, affliction and blessing were not contradictory, for God was able to turn sorrow into joy.

D. (:53-57) Seven Years of Famine – Success of the Action Plan

“When the seven years of plenty which had been in the land of Egypt came to an end, and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said, then there was famine in all the lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. So when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried out to Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said to all the Egyptians, ‘Go to Joseph; whatever he says to you, you shall do.’ When the famine was spread over all the face of the earth, then Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians; and the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. And the people of all the earth came to Egypt to buy grain from Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the earth.”

J. Ligon Duncan: Moses is telling you that God plunged Egypt and not only Egypt, but the entire near eastern world into a seven-year cycle of famine and starvation in order to bless the family of Jacob. God's people are the apple of His eye. And history, and in this case the history of these nations, is merely a backdrop to God's plan of redemption. You are seeing in the story of Joseph a picture of God's gospel providence. God's evangelical providence. The way that God rules the world for the sake of his people.

CONCLUSION:

From the Pit to the Pinnacle – What a Journey!

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can we make sure that others don't give us credit for accomplishments when God should receive the credit?
- 2) How important to your testimony is your work ethic and developing competence and a high level of skill at your job?
- 3) Where have you seen God exalt you and how have you dealt with the situation?
- 4) If we truly believe in the sovereignty of God, why is it necessary to develop detailed Action Plans to accomplish kingdom objectives?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hughes: Joseph's soul was in greater peril than at any other time in his short life. It is one thing to remain believing and God-centered and faithful in the pit; it is quite another to be faithful at the pinnacle. The pit instilled dependence upon God. Days, months, and years in the pit graced Joseph's soul with an ever-deepening sense of need and dependence upon God. There was only one way to look while in the pit, and that was up – to God. On the other hand, the pinnacle of Egyptian life inclined the soul toward pride and independence. At the top, looking up to God was not so natural. It was far easier then for Joseph to look down on humanity and to depend upon servants to meet his needs. And the fact that Joseph's name, speech, clothing, and wife were Egyptian all encouraged him to forget where he came from. Also, the undeniable brilliance of his interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams and his plan to spare Egypt could well have begun to give him a sense of mental and moral superiority. . .

Through these wrenching extremes [From the Pit to the Pinnacle] Joseph maintained at least three distinctives:

- At the base he had a transcending belief in the greatness of God. . .
- Along with this Joseph believed God's word that had been revealed to him through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He believed in God's sovereign promises. . .
- Furthermore, Joseph believed that Yahweh was with him both in the pit and at the pinnacle.

J. Ligon Duncan: Summary of vv.1-37

Notice the motion of the change of God's providence in the five successive sections of this passage.

- In the **first eight verses** we see Pharaoh stumped. No mention of Joseph, but we're already suspicious of how he might play a role in this particular instance, having just seen him play a role in the chapter immediately prior.
- Then in verses **9 through 14** Joseph for the first time is remembered. Having been forgotten for two years by the cupbearer and for the time before at least a year by his master, languishing in prison for some three years now, suddenly Joseph is remembered. And the plan of God begins to turn in his particular instance.
- Then in verses **15 through 24** you have Joseph, the prisoner, the convict, the criminal standing before the ruler of Egypt, the lord of Egypt, who is pouring his heart out to him

because he is perplexed.

- Then in the following verses, **verses 25 through 28** you have Joseph serving a prophetic role, explaining to the lord of Egypt exactly what God is going to do.
- And then finally in **verses 29 through 37** we see Joseph's wisdom and discernment apparent but from convict and criminal imprisoned in the royal dungeon, suddenly he has taken to himself the position as advisor to the Pharaoh of Egypt. And he does it with utterly no self-consciousness. He speaks to Pharaoh as if he had been advising him since the first day of his rule. And so we see God's plan in Joseph's life take a tremendous shift in Genesis 41.

Bob Deffinbaugh: From the Pit to the Palace

What an opportune moment for Joseph to capitalize upon! If Jacob had been in his son's sandals, things would have gone very differently, I believe. He would likely have used the occasion to make a bargain with the king—his freedom for Pharaoh's request. Jacob would have had a special on interpretations that week. At the very least he would have made certain that Pharaoh understood the injustice of his present circumstances. "You see, Pharaoh, I would really like to help you with your problem, but my mind is so troubled with my circumstances just now that I can't think ..."

As much as Joseph desired to be released from his captivity, he never brought up the subject. His first concern was not with his own comfort, but with God's glory. . .

Looking ahead, we see that the story does not end with chapter 42, for while Joseph is the principal character of this section, he is not the sole object of God's attention and activity. While there is a sense in which Joseph was blessed because of his faithfulness, there is the even broader perspective that Joseph's promotion was not for his own prosperity as much as for his brothers' preservation. Joseph's position of power and prosperity enabled him to become the "savior" of his brethren. We must be humbled by the fact that while God cares for us as individuals, He often has a broader purpose for what He gives to us. Spiritual gifts, for example, are not given for our own benefit so much as for the upbuilding of others. . .

Steven Cole: HONOR GOD BY BEARING WITNESS OF HIS SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL.

Three times (**41:25, 28, 32**) Joseph tells Pharaoh that God has determined what is going to happen and that it will happen because God has decreed it. Even though Pharaoh was the most powerful man on the face of the earth, he was nothing in comparison to the sovereign God. So in a subtle, yet unmistakable way, Joseph is letting this mighty king know that he is nothing in the sight of the God who is able to send prosperity and famine.

The sovereignty of God is a major theme that runs through the whole story of Joseph. It's obvious that God had His hand on all the events of Joseph's life: his dreams as a boy, his brother's selling him into slavery, his being sold to Potiphar, his imprisonment and eventual release. The characters were only bringing about the will of God for His chosen people, even though those who sinned were totally responsible for their sin. Joseph, for his part, had a big view of God as the sovereign God who not only could send prosperity, but also famine. And he wasn't afraid to let Pharaoh know about it.

Don't be afraid to tell lost people that the God of the universe is sovereign. I sometimes hear Christians apologize for God's sovereignty by explaining away a tragedy: "God didn't cause it,

He just allowed it"--as if that gets God off the hook somehow. You don't have to get God off the hook. The Bible plainly teaches that God is in sovereign control of all things, but at the same time, sinful men are responsible for their evil deeds.

I don't have any problem saying that God not only allows tragedies, He sends them (Isa. 45:7). Does that mean that we sit back passively and don't do anything to alleviate human suffering? No. Joseph's knowledge that this famine was coming led him to make preparations to alleviate its effects. But in the process, he bore witness to a sovereign God who is in control of the universe.

Voddie Baucham: God as Rescuer

Joseph doesn't say God sent me here to give me all the things that Egypt has to offer. God sent me here because God is a rescuer. God made a promise to Abraham that through his seed redemption will come. We see the covenant through the line of Abraham, Isaac and then Jacob comes. His wife Leah gives birth to Ruben, Simeon, Levi and Judah. In **Genesis 38** there seems to be a chapter out of place because it's not about Joseph it's about Judah. God redeems Judah. Then later we see Judah say I will be a substitute for Benjamin. Does that sound familiar? Judah's line leads to David. What does he do? He brings forth his presence with authority. He goes down to Goliath as the representative substitute of all of God's people and is victorious. Great King David eventually has a greater son who is the Lion of Judah. The promised seed who will crush the head of the serpent. What does Jesus do? Like his forbearers, He stands as a substitute on behalf of God's elect, lays down his life, accepts the wrath of God that all of God's people might be rescued. Why **Genesis 41**? Because God rescues Joseph in order to rescue Judah in order to rescue Israel in order to rescue me. **This is not about material wealth. This is about rescue and redemption. This is about God the Rescuer.** When the first Adam died we all died in him. The last Adam died and as a result we shall all feast with Him. This is not only why **Genesis 41**, but the whole Old Testament matters and makes sense. It points to God's redeeming and rescuing work in the person of Christ. Therefore regardless of where your story ends up, you must find its significance in God's redemption and rescue. If you don't you are settling for something far more insignificant.

TEXT: Genesis 42:1-38

TITLE: *PROVIDENTIAL PRESSURE*

BIG IDEA:

PROVIDENTIAL PRESSURE SETS THE STAGE FOR FAMILY RECONCILIATION AND MESSIANIC BLESSING

INTRODUCTION:

This chapter cannot be studied in isolation. It is a **stage setting** chapter – that must be taken in concert with the overall story of Joseph’s dealings with his brothers and family reconciliation. We usually think of God’s providential dealings in a positive sense – His providential blessings and provisions. But here we see the positive aspect of **Providential Pressure** as it is applied to Joseph’s brothers and then to his father Jacob.

PROVIDENTIAL PRESSURE SETS THE STAGE FOR FAMILY RECONCILIATION AND MESSIANIC BLESSING

I. (:1-5) PROVIDENTIAL PRESSURE DRIVES JACOB’S SONS TO EGYPT FOR SELF-PRESERVATION

A. (:1-2) Egypt is the Only Option to Obtain Grain

“Now Jacob saw that there was grain in Egypt, and Jacob said to his sons, ‘Why are you staring at one another?’ And he said, ‘Behold, I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down there and buy some for us from that place, so that we may live and not die.’”

The sons certainly did not want to be dispatched to Egypt – that name was a sore spot in their conscience as it brought back memories of how they had mistreated Joseph.

What an indignity for the sons of the covenant to have to resort to seeking food for sustenance from Egypt. This is emblematic of the tangled web of sin and deceit they had woven. They were in desperate need of God’s grace to lead them to repentance and reconciliation.

B. (:3) Jacob’s Ten Brothers Dispatched to Egypt

“Then ten brothers of Joseph went down to buy grain from Egypt.”

C. (:4) Benjamin Retained at Home

“But Jacob did not send Joseph's brother Benjamin with his brothers, for he said, ‘I am afraid that harm may befall him.’”

Parunak: A journey such as this was fraught with risks in the ancient world, particularly since the sons, like other travelers to Egypt, would be carrying wealth to use in buying grain, and would be a likely target for bandits. The circumstances require that they face this risk, and it is wiser that they travel as a group to discourage attacks against them. But Jacob retains Benjamin at home. Benjamin is the only remaining son of his favorite wife, and Jacob is not willing to expose him to the risks of the road.

Deffinbaugh: Perhaps the circumstances of Joseph's disappearance were too suspect for Jacob to take another chance by leaving Benjamin in the care of his other brothers.

D. (:5) Sons of Israel Arrive in Egypt with Other Nations to Buy Grain

“So the sons of Israel came to buy grain among those who were coming, for the famine was in the land of Canaan also.”

II. (:6-20) PROVIDENTIAL PRESSURE TURNS THE TABLES ON JOSEPH'S BROTHERS

A. (:6) Fulfillment of Joseph's Dream – His Brothers Come and Bow Down

“Now Joseph was the ruler over the land; he was the one who sold to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed down to him with their faces to the ground.”

Parunak: In each of the three trips to Egypt, we find Joseph's family fulfilling the dreams of **ch. 37**. The first two times it is his brothers, as predicted in the dream of the sheaves (**37:7**); the third time, his father, fulfilling the dream of the sun, moon, and stars (**37:9**). In both dreams, the verb “made obeisance” is the same as the one here translated “bowed down.”

B. (:7-12) False Charge of Spying Levied Against His Brothers (Parallel to how they had treated Joseph)

1. (:7-9) Charge of Spying

“When Joseph saw his brothers he recognized them, but he disguised himself to them and spoke to them harshly. And he said to them, ‘Where have you come from?’ And they said, ‘From the land of Canaan, to buy food.’ But Joseph had recognized his brothers, although they did not recognize him. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he had about them, and said to them, ‘You are spies; you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land.’”

Parunak: If he had revealed himself as their brother at this point, he would face a dilemma. If he were harsh with them, while they knew him as their brother, they would think him vengeful. If he greeted them cordially, they would not bow down willingly to him. To follow the guidance in the dream, he must serve as God's agent to chastise and humble them, before revealing to them who he is.

Deffinbaugh: Joseph not only realized the fulfillment of his dreams but also the reason for them. He saw that God had a purpose for placing him in his position of power, and this purpose was for him to function as the family head, protecting and preserving his family. He had great power and prestige, but God had given these to him for a purpose much greater than merely to seek revenge. He saw that leadership involved power, but that it also brought upon him the weight of responsibility. At times the greatest need is not to be aware of the power at our disposal, but of the purpose for which this power has been given.

2. (:10-11) Countered by Claim of Honesty

“Then they said to him, ‘No, my lord, but your servants have come to buy food. We are all sons of one man; we are honest men, your servants are not spies.’”

Steven Cole: The brothers tell Joseph that they are honest men (**42:11**). That's a bit humorous, because honesty hasn't been one of their noticeable virtues to this point. They deceived the

Shechemites. They deceived their father with Joseph's blood-stained coat. Judah led Tamar to believe that she would get his third son in marriage when he had no such intention. And even here, in their next breath they tell Joseph that their one brother "is no more," when they don't know that for sure. They do know that they last saw him heading for Egypt very much alive. Yet they claim to be honest men! So Joseph puts them to the test, to see whether they are indeed honest men (**42:16, 19**). If they're honest, they can return with the other brother they have talked about

3. (:12) Charge of Spying Reiterated

"Yet he said to them, 'No, but you have come to look at the undefended parts of our land!'"

C. (:13-16) Formulating the Litmus Test of Their Honesty

1. (:13) Point of Vulnerability

"But they said, 'Your servants are twelve brothers in all, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is with our father today, and one is no more.'"

2. (:14-16) Test Focuses on This Vulnerability

"And Joseph said to them, 'It is as I said to you, you are spies; by this you will be tested: by the life of Pharaoh, you shall not go from this place unless your youngest brother comes here! Send one of you that he may get your brother, while you remain confined, that your words may be tested, whether there is truth in you. But if not, by the life of Pharaoh, surely you are spies.'"

Hughes: At this point Joseph put his brothers to the test by afflicting them with what they had done to him. They had oppressed him, now he oppressed them. They had accused him of spying; now he accused them. They had thrown him into the pit; now he tossed them into prison. And most of all, he called them to bring forth their youngest brother, the favorite of their father who now occupied the place in their father's heart that had once been his.

D. (:17-20) Fine Tuning the Test

1. (:17) Time to Stew

"So he put them all together in prison for three days."

Deffinbaugh: Joseph then placed all of the brothers in confinement. I cannot prove it, but my suspicion is that the prison was probably one that we know well—Potiphar's prison. More significant is that Joseph put them in confinement together (**verse 17**). More than giving them comfort, as opposed to solitary confinement, it caused them to consider the meaning of what was taking place in their lives. This is more fully seen in their conversation recorded in later verses. Even if not bodily present with his brothers in prison, his heart must have been with them in their confinement. This was not punishment, but it was preparation, just as his confinement had been. It served to intensify their comprehension of the gravity of the situation.

Constable: Probably Joseph wanted to be sure that his brothers had not killed Benjamin since they had contemplated killing himself (**Genesis 42:15**).

The three-day imprisonment provided Joseph with time to plan his strategy, and it impressed the

brothers with the importance of cooperating with Joseph (**Genesis 42:17**). These three days also gave the brothers a taste of what Joseph had endured for three years. Joseph may have intended that they serve one day's imprisonment for each year he had suffered incarceration because of their hatred.

2. (:18-20) Tweaking the Test with Grace and Mercy

“Now Joseph said to them on the third day, ‘Do this and live, for I fear God: if you are honest men, let one of your brothers be confined in your prison; but as for the rest of you, go, carry grain for the famine of your households, and bring your youngest brother to me, so your words may be verified, and you will not die.’ And they did so.”

Parunak:—Instead of binding nine and sending one back, he will bind one and send nine back. Not only is this more humane, in minimizing the number who must be confined, but it also permits those who return to carry more grain back for their families: “carry corn for the famine of your houses.” Even while disciplining his brothers, he must provide for the family as a whole. God is showing him that this is the very reason he has been sent to Egypt (a consciousness finally articulated in **45:5, 7; 50:20**). He can fulfill this mission better by sending more grain back now.

Steven Cole: Joseph gives his brothers a glimmer of hope when he tells them, “*I fear God.*” They would not have expected this from this seemingly harsh Egyptian prime minister. But there was enough hope of fair treatment in those words to keep them from despairing and to reveal some tenderness underneath the harsh exterior of this man. If he hadn't been harsh, he wouldn't have gotten their attention. If he hadn't shown them a glimmer of grace, he would have crushed their spirits.

III. (:21-28) PROVIDENTIAL PRESSURE STIRS THE GUILTY CONSCIENCES OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS

A. (:21-23) Confession of Guilt

1. (:21) What Goes Around Comes Around

“Then they said to one another, ‘Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, yet we would not listen; therefore this distress has come upon us.’”

S. Lewis Johnson: So their conscience is awakened which incidentally so far as we know is the only acknowledgement of guilt in all of the Book of Genesis. This is not an interesting thing. The only persons who have acknowledged their guilt in the Book of Genesis are these men who say, *we are guilty concerning our brother because we saw the distress of his soul.* So their conscience was awakened, their memory recalls their deed, and their reason explains why all of this is happening. *Therefore, this distress has come upon us.*

Hughes: Joseph's brothers were wracked with guilt that, in the context of the Bible, put them in the way of grace. This was good guilt, healthy guilt, graced guilt. Without guilt there could be no forgiveness and no resolution. And without guilt they could never assume their covenant mantles. . . .

Such guilt is good. It invites God's grace. Along with this, cultivate a godly fear that reverently trembles before him. Such fear will invoke a graced wisdom in your life. And then own a godly sorrow that will lead you to repentance.

W. H. Griffith Thomas: Conscience is the “knowing” part of us, that which “knows” together “with” God, and agrees with the revelation of right which comes from him (*con-science*).

2. (:22) I Told You So

“And Reuben answered them, saying, ‘Did I not tell you, Do not sin against the boy; and you would not listen? Now comes the reckoning for his blood.’”

3. (:23) In the Dark

“They did not know, however, that Joseph understood, for there was an interpreter between them.”

B. (:24) Compassion of Joseph

1. (:24a) Hidden Compassion

“And he turned away from them and wept.”

Parunak: Joseph’s weeping: more than anyone else in Genesis. He never weeps during his time of humiliation, but repeatedly weeps after he is promoted, during the process of reconciliation with his family: **42:24, 43:30, 45:14, 15, 46:29, 50:1, 17**. This tenderness will remind us repeatedly that the steps he takes to humble and correct his brothers are not the result of hardheartedness on his part, but a conscientious, loving action needed to restore the family.

2. (:24b) Demonstrated Compassion

“But when he returned to them and spoke to them, he took Simeon from them and bound him before their eyes.”

Only kept Simeon instead of binding 9 and sending only 1 back

S. Lewis Johnson: Now we should not feel sorry for these brothers because Joseph gave them some rough handling. The first place it is not vengeance on his part. The context makes it plain that he has a great deal of warm affection for them and much mercy is exhibited to them. He doesn’t even charge them for the grain. He moves out of the room and weeps over his feelings for them and then we should remember that they were hard men, these are the men who had massacred the whole village. And not only that they are the men who had put Joseph in prison and sat down to eat a meal, tantalized him, sitting down to eat a meal while he is in the pit crying to let him out, to show some mercy to him. So we shouldn’t feel sorry for them.

C. (:25-26) Charge of Joseph

“Then Joseph gave orders to fill their bags with grain and to restore every man's money in his sack, and to give them provisions for the journey. And thus it was done for them. So they loaded their donkeys with their grain, and departed from there.”

D. (:27-28) Cry of Despair

“And as one of them opened his sack to give his donkey fodder at the lodging place, he saw his money; and behold, it was in the mouth of his sack. Then he said to his brothers, ‘My money has been returned, and behold, it is even in my sack.’ And their hearts sank, and they turned trembling to one another, saying, ‘What is this that God has done to us?’”

Parunak: On the way home, one of the brothers discovers his money. Two details about this discovery can be deduced.

1. This was probably near the end of the journey. Joseph had given them separate provisions for the trip, and only when these were exhausted would they even consider dipping into the grain they had purchased. One of the brothers' traveling provisions have run low; his asses were particularly hungry, and so he opens one of the regular bags.
2. They probably had many bags. To make reasonable provision for Jacob's large family, they must have had a large drove of asses, each carrying several bags. Only ten of these bags will have held money, so it's easy to understand how only one brother discovered it.

Dave Guzik: This was a test – not from Joseph – but from God. What would they do with the money? What would be revealed about their heart?

- The deceptive heart would hide it.
- The lying heart would make up a story about it.
- The proud heart would think it deserved it.
- The superficial heart would think nothing of it.

IV. (:29-38) PROVIDENTIAL PRESSURE FORCES JACOB TO PUT BENJAMIN IN JEOPARDY

A. (:29-34) Sad Report of the Demand to Send Benjamin to Egypt

“When they came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan, they told him all that had happened to them, saying, ‘The man, the lord of the land, spoke harshly with us, and took us for spies of the country. But we said to him, We are honest men; we are not spies. We are twelve brothers, sons of our father; one is no more, and the youngest is with our father today in the land of Canaan. And the man, the lord of the land, said to us, By this I shall know that you are honest men: leave one of your brothers with me and take grain for the famine of your households, and go. But bring your youngest brother to me that I may know that you are not spies, but honest men. I will give your brother to you, and you may trade in the land.’”

B. (:35) Surprising Revelation that Increases the Sense of Danger

“Now it came about as they were emptying their sacks, that behold, every man's bundle of money was in his sack; and when they and their father saw their bundles of money, they were dismayed.

C. (:36) Stinging Rebuke from a Desperate Father Who is Facing Additional Loss

“And their father Jacob said to them, ‘You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and you would take Benjamin; all these things are against me.’”

Bruce Goettsche: Do you know what the most common command in the Bible is? It's the command "*Fear Not*". Fear keeps us from moving forward. It keeps us from loving. It keeps us from dreaming and risking and daring to trust God in bold and daring ways. As long as we are afraid we will be limiting the work that God's grace can do in our life.

Do you see what happened as a result of Jacob's fear?

- They delayed returning for more supplies

- They prolonged the imprisonment of Simeon
- They delayed the reunion with Joseph

Jacob's fear became a barrier in his life. When we are afraid we miss seeing God's ability to provide for us. We miss seeing His marvelous sufficiency for our times of heartache.

D. (:37-38) Stubborn Reluctance to Release Benjamin to Journey to Egypt

1. (:37) Reuben's Proposal

“Then Reuben spoke to his father, saying, ‘You may put my two sons to death if I do not bring him back to you; put him in my care, and I will return him to you.’”

2. (:38) Jacob's Protestations

“But Jacob said, ‘My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.’”

Parunak: Jacob's response shows clearly his favoritism for Rachel's children and the resulting cleavage within the family.

- Benjamin is “my son.” The rest of them don't count.
- Because Joseph is dead (as he thinks), Benjamin is left alone.

Again, the others are forgotten. He would rather the whole family perish of hunger than that Benjamin be placed in risk. Clearly, he has yet some spiritual lessons to learn as well.

Constable: Throughout this chapter we can observe the attitude of Joseph's brothers changing. Faced with a personal crisis they acknowledged their guilt. They regarded their suffering as righteous divine punishment, and they began to place Jacob's interests above their own. However their repentance was not yet complete. The process of contrition had to run further before reconciliation was possible.

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When God brings severe pressure into your life, do you tend to imagine that God is against you for some reason?
- 2) What informs your conscience?
- 3) How would you contrast the attitudes and actions of Joseph with someone who was acting out of malice and vengeance?
- 4) Why is Jacob so unwilling to let Benjamin travel to Egypt as requested?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Ligon Duncan: Family and Famine

1. (:1-5) God shows us what He's willing to do to advance the good of His people.

He is now bringing the brothers of Joseph back into contact with him, and an enormous process of reconciliation is about to begin. It's a process of personal reconciliation, but it's also a plan for the redemption of the whole people of God. God is doing both at the same time. It's amazing. We see over and over how God manages to do many things with one action at the same time. It's a testimony to the wisdom and mastery of His sovereign providence.

2. (:6-28) God's wrath is revealed in His providence, in this case with a view to repentance.

Joseph now sets to bring about a plan which will bring his whole family before him in Egypt. He's not satisfied with those ten brothers. Not because he wants to exult over them, but because he is expecting the fullness of God's dream, His revelation, His plan to come to fruition. . .

Now, God in His wrath is finally going to bring a message that hits home, and you see that message hit home in **verse 21**. *“They turn to one another, and they say, ‘Truly we are guilty concerning our brother, because we saw him in the distress of his soul when he pleaded with us, and yet we would not listen. And, therefore, distress has come upon us.’ And Reuben said, ‘Did I not tell you do not sin against the boy, and you would not listen and now comes the reckoning for his blood.’”* These men knew exactly what was going on. They saw in this providence God's wrath against their sin. And for the first time in their lives they reckoned with it.

3. God's disciplining providence in the words of Jacob.

What a change has occurred in those boys' hearts. In spite of harsh providence, harsh words from the lord of Egypt, harsh words from the father, they are acting like responsible, culpable men determined to fulfill their word. We're already seeing God work a reconciling miracle and a repenting change in the hearts of the sons of Jacob.

Steven Cole: When Your Conscience Says “Ow”

In **Genesis 42**, God is awakening the sleeping consciences of Joseph's brothers. They were a hard bunch. Years before, under the leadership of Simeon and Levi, they had deceived a village, slaughtered all the men and taken the women and children captive in retaliation for one man's violating their sister. Reuben, the oldest, had slept with his father's concubine. Judah had two sons so wicked that the Lord took their lives. He himself had gone in to his daughter-in-law, Tamar, thinking her to be a prostitute. All of the brothers, except Benjamin, had sold Joseph into slavery and then crushed their father's heart by deceiving him into thinking that his son was dead.

God uses severity and grace to awaken our consciences and bring us to repentance.

God gets pretty tough, and yet the whole process is shot through with His grace. We see, first, how ...

1. God uses pressure to awaken our consciences.

For Jacob, Egypt was a neutral word. But for his sons, the word Egypt went off like a bomb in their guilty consciences. They could hear again the clink of the silver coins they received from the traders as they sold their brother into slavery. They could see him begging for his life as he was being dragged off. They remembered the terrible expression of horror on his face. Egypt!

2. God uses reciprocal treatment to awaken our consciences

F. B. Meyer (Joseph [Christian Literature Crusade], p. 72) proposes that Joseph repeated with his brothers the exact scene that had happened to him at the mouth of the pit 22 years earlier. We can't be certain, but it is plausible that when he went to his brothers to check on their welfare, they may have accused him of coming to spy on their corrupt behavior. Now he accuses them of being spies. No doubt he had protested that he wasn't spying, just as they now protest. They would have answered him roughly and without any basis for their accusation, just as Joseph now answers them. They threw him in a pit, just as Joseph now throws them in the dungeon. . .

3. God uses time for thinking about our pasts to awaken our consciences.

But the effect of three days in the dungeon got his brothers' attention. They began to think about their lives from a spiritual perspective. They thought about their own sin and the fact that sin has consequences. Before this they had shrugged off their sin as if there were no future reckoning with God. But now, sitting in prison for three days, they made the connection.

4. God uses grace to temper the whole process and bring us to repentance.

Joseph's actions toward his brothers parallel how God brings us to repentance. Notice four ways in which grace shines through:

- A. God's grace shines through when we are not treated as harshly as we deserve.
- B. God's grace shines through when He makes us become what we profess to be
- C. God's grace shines through in His compassion which underlies His discipline
- D. God's grace shines through when He blesses us when we know we deserve punishment.

Mark Twain's character Huck Finn observed, "A man's conscience takes up more room than all the rest of his insides." If your conscience feels like that—if it is saying, "Ow!"—don't turn away from God in denial of your sin. Turn to Him in genuine repentance and you will experience the sweet taste of His abundant grace.

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson: The Persistent Power of a Guilty Conscience

The Bible says, be sure your sin will find you out, and God gives us guilt and the guilty conscience. because well, be sure your sin will find you out, and therefore we may expect that when we have sinned and if there is no reconciliation we may expect that God will continue to deal with us until there is a resolution of that particular problem.

They came finally to the conclusion that it was retribution for this great crime of their lives. And so they expressed that. Now comes the reckoning for his blood. . . Someone has said conscience does not tell us what is right and wrong, but whether what we are doing agrees with the principles we know. Now since we do know a great deal of the principles of right and wrong, conscience does at times speak of that which is right as over against that which is wrong but primarily it tells us whether what we are doing agrees with the principles that we believe are correct.

The Bible speaks of a **weak** conscience. The Bible speaks of a **defiled** conscience. The Bible speaks of an **evil** conscience. The Bible speaks of a **sacred** conscience. The Bible speaks of a **pure** conscience. It speaks of a **good** conscience, and it even speaks of the **beautiful** conscience. The last part, I think is something special. There is a conscience which while intrinsically good is not very outwardly attractive to others because it is filled with scruples. We all know individuals who are in bondage to certain little scruples. They are not taught necessarily in Scripture but they are things that we have thought are in Scripture. But the Bible speaks of a beautiful conscience;

that is an individual who is guided by the principles of the word of God and not by a handful of scruples which he himself may have interpreted as being scriptural principles.

Bob Deffinbaugh: The Proper Use of Power

Until now, I have always considered the suffering and injustice of Joseph at the hands of his brothers, Potiphar's wife, and his master to be the greatest tests of his life, but I was wrong. What test could possibly be greater than the one which Joseph faced in **Genesis 42**? Here he was, faced by his brothers, absolutely destitute and defenseless, while Joseph had unlimited power. Without a doubt this was the greatest test of Joseph's character. It is one thing to be tested when you are powerless to resist. It is quite another to be given the opportunity to get revenge when your enemies are mere putty in your hands. . .

In these chapters dealing with the life of Joseph, three different responses to adversity are seen. For Joseph, his suffering was ultimately from the hand of a loving heavenly Father, Who was near in his affliction (cf. **39:23, 21-23; 40:8; 41:16,51-52**). For his brothers, their adversity was punishment from an angry God, Who was getting even with them for their sin (**42:21-22, 28**). For Jacob, it was no more than the fickle hand of fate or, worse yet, the stupidity of his sons, that made his life miserable (**42:36-38**). And yet in every instance affliction was the gentle and gracious hand of God, drawing His sons closer to Himself. . .

Jacob could not live without Benjamin, he protested. There was no way that he would ever give him up (**verse 38**). And yet this was precisely the way God had determined to save Jacob and all his family. Just as Abraham expressed his faith by showing his willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac (**22:1-19**), Jacob must be willing to give up his son Benjamin. The very thing Jacob thought would destroy him was to be the means of his salvation. But this is dealt with in the next chapters. How blind we are to the workings of God, especially when we are going our own way.

Chuck Smith: "ALL THINGS ARE AGAINST ME"

Introduction: Jacob's sons have just returned from Egypt with report of rough treatment. Accused of being spies, brother Simeon being held as hostage. Benjamin must go with them on next trip to verify their story. As they open their sacks of grain, there are bundles of money in each sack.

I. JACOB'S CRY, "ALL THINGS ARE AGAINST ME."

- A. Despair can cause us to do foolish things.
 - 1. Lash out at our friends.
 - a. *"Me have ye bereaved of my children."*
 - 2. Exaggerate the problem.
 - a. *"Joseph is not, Simeon is not."*
 - 3. Make rash statements.
 - a. *"All things."*
 - b. *"Benjamin shall not go down with you."*
- B. Despair shows loss of faith.
 - 1. Faith hopes for the best, despair expects the worst.
 - 2. Jacob got his eyes off God and onto the problem.
 - 3. Just looking at the world could cause despair.
 - 4. Just looking at our situations can cause despair.
 - 5. *"They endured as seeing the invisible."*
 - a. Faith is not blind.
 - b. Man of faith sees more than anyone.

6. "We look not at the things that are seen..."
- C. The cry came from imperfect knowledge.
1. If he only knew the whole truth, he would not be in despair.
 2. That rough man in Egypt is his beloved son, Joseph.
 3. Instead of great sorrow awaiting you, there is a great joy.
- D. It is a false cry.
1. All these things have been ordained by God for your preservation.
 - a. Later Joseph assures his brothers of this fact (**45:7**).
 - b. Joseph now had advantage of hindsight. "*All the way my Savior led.*"

Hughes: These ten needed to be confronted with their guilt. They needed an awakening of conscience. They needed to mourn. Then needed to genuinely repent. And they needed rapprochement with Joseph if they were to be preserved during the worldwide famine. Truly their future rested upon such changes.

W. H. Griffith Thomas: There is nothing more striking in the character of Joseph than the utter absence of revengeful feeling, whether it was against his brethren, or against Potiphar, or against the chief butler. At each step of his journey he shows the true forgiving spirit of the man to whom God is a supreme and blessed reality. There are some people who never seem to get over slight and injustice. They brood over them and take almost every opportunity of pouring out their wrongs and indulging a revengeful spirit. To such people "Revenge is sweet," and they take a pleasure in repaying people in their own coin. Not so with Joseph. To revenge may be human, but to forgive is Divine.

Dave Guzik: The plan was not only good for Jacob and his family but would impact all history. God was working all things together for good (**Romans 8:28**).

- If Joseph's family wasn't messed up and weird, his brothers would never have sold him as a slave.
- If Joseph's brothers never sold him as a slave, then Joseph would never have gone to Egypt.
- If Joseph never went to Egypt, he would never have been sold to Potiphar.
- If Joseph was never sold to Potiphar, Potiphar's wife would never have falsely accused him of rape.
- If Potiphar's wife never falsely accused Joseph of rape, then Joseph would never have been put in prison.
- If Joseph was never put in prison, he would have never met the baker and butler of Pharaoh.
- If Joseph never met the baker and butler of Pharaoh, he would have never interpreted their dreams.
- If Joseph never interpreted their dreams, he would have never interpreted Pharaoh's dream.

- If Joseph never interpreted Pharaoh's dream, he never would have become prime minister, second in Egypt only to Pharaoh.
- If Joseph never became prime minister, he never would have wisely prepared for the terrible famine to come.
- If Joseph never wisely prepared for the terrible famine, then his family back in Canaan would have died in the famine.
- If Joseph's family back in Canaan died in the famine, then the Messiah could not have come from a dead family.
- If the Messiah did not come forth, then Jesus never came.
- If Jesus never came, then we are all dead in our sins and without hope in this world.

We are grateful for God's great and wise plan.

TEXT: Genesis 43:1-34

TITLE: WHEN FEASTING REPLACES FEAR

BIG IDEA:

GOD'S MERCIFUL LOVE AND PROVISION FAR SURPASS OUR FEARS AND ANXIOUS EXPECTATIONS – PREPARATION FOR CONVICTION AND REPENTANCE

INTRODUCTION:

This passage bounces back and forth between the fears of Jacob and his sons and the unbounded love and provision from the hand of Joseph. Certainly, Joseph had every right to be vindictive and bitter and hateful. But his compassion and kindness and grace and mercy and love overflow in every interaction with his family as God providentially sets up the ultimate reconciliation.

Allen Ross: In this chapter the brothers promised to take the blame for any catastrophe (**responsibility**); they acknowledged their culpability and made restitution for the money in their sacks (**honesty**); they retrieved their brother from prison in Egypt (**unity**); they recognized that God was at work in their midst (**belief**); and they rejoiced in their provisions, even when a brother was receiving more than they were (**gratitude**).

S. Lewis Johnson: I say that sin is a disintegrating force, it is a dividing force, it is a separating force, and God does not overlook sin. The Prophet Isaiah speaking for the Lord God says *your iniquities have separated between you and the Lord God*. Sin is a separating force and for that reason, it is a disintegrating force and because God cannot overlook sin, he must have **conviction, repentance, and conversion** and therefore in the prime minister of Egypt's life, Joseph, we have all of these events transpiring together with the lives of Jacob and his sons toward this one goal: that there may be conviction of sin and repentance and true conversion and the brothers may be welded together into a unified body doing works meet for repentance.

GOD'S MERCIFUL LOVE AND PROVISION FAR SURPASS OUR FEARS AND ANXIOUS EXPECTATIONS – PREPARATION FOR CONVICTION AND REPENTANCE

I. (:1-15) MISSION OF DESPERATION

A. (:1-2) Providential Pressure Forces the Family's Hand

1. (:1) Severe Famine

"Now the famine was severe in the land."

Desperate mission on a number of levels

Famine continued for many years

2. (:2) Sourcing Food From Only Option = Egypt

"So it came about when they had finished eating the grain which they had brought from Egypt, that their father said to them, 'Go back, buy us a little food.'"

They held on as long as they could; rationed out their food – leaving poor Simeon back in bondage in Egypt; finally they were forced to return to Egypt

B. (:3-7) Primary Problem – Show-stopper must be addressed

1. (:3-5) No Access Without Benjamin

“Judah spoke to him, however, saying,

*‘The man solemnly warned us, You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.
If you send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food.
But if you do 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.’”*

Chiastic structure of these 3 verses

Must comply with the stated condition or there is no point in making the journey and putting others at risk

Parunak: The prominent brother in the first cycle was Reuben. It was he who led the discussion in **42:22**, and who is prominent in the report to their father in **42:37** (with his incredible suggestion that Jacob should slay Reuben’s sons if Benjamin didn’t come home). In the second cycle, Reuben disappears from view, and Judah becomes prominent, both in Canaan and Egypt. He is emerging as the dominant son in the family.

2. (:6-7) No Mulligans

“Then Israel said, ‘Why did you treat me so badly by telling the man whether you still had another brother?’ But they said, ‘The man questioned particularly about us and our relatives, saying, Is your father still alive? Have you another brother? So we answered his questions. Could we possibly know that he would say, Bring your brother down?’”

Jacob – still the shrewd, cunning deceiver -- was advocating for less than honesty if it would get the job done

Joseph’s questions had been very pointed and specific

Joseph now referred to as “*the man*”

C. (:8-10) Persuasive Points Argued by Judah

“And Judah said to his father Israel,”

1. Argument #1 – Self Preservation

“Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, we as well as you and our little ones.”

2. Argument #2 – Surety Guarantee

“I myself will be surety for him; you may hold me responsible for him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame before you forever.”

3. Argument #3 – Stopwatch Metrics – No Point Delaying Further
“For if we had not delayed, surely by now we could have returned twice.”

D. (:11-15) Practical Preparation Instructed by Israel

Introduction:

“Then their father Israel said to them,

1. Riches

“If it must be so, then do this: take some of the best products of the land in your bags, and carry down to the man as a present, a little balm and a little honey, aromatic gum and myrrh, pistachio nuts and almonds.”

Hughes: There was irony here. The gift was of the same produce that the original caravan bore that first took Joseph to Egypt, including the silver! Life was coming full circle.

Henry Alford: This is probably not honey of bees, which was probably, as now, very plentiful in Egypt, but the thick inspissated juice or jelly of grapes, which still is manufactured in Palestine and exported from Hebron to Egypt. In Ezek. xxvii. 17 it seems to be this honey which is spoken of.

Parunak:

- o **Proverbs 21:14** *A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath.*
- o **Proverbs 18:16** *A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men.*
- o **Proverbs 19:6** *Many will intreat the favour of the prince: and every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts*

2. Restitution

“And take double the money in your hand, and take back in your hand the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks; perhaps it was a mistake.”

3. Relation

“Take your brother also, and arise, return to the man; and may God Almighty grant you compassion in the sight of the man, that he may release to you your other brother and Benjamin.”

Summary: “‘And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.’ So the men took this present, and they took double the money in their hand, and Benjamin; then they arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph.”

“if I am bereaved ... “ – sounds like Queen Esther: “if I perish, I perish”

Dave Guzik: It was good for Jacob to say and believe this, but we sense too much fatalism and too little faith (*If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!*). Faith and fatalism aren't the same.

II. (:16-24) FEAR OF RETRIBUTION

A. (:16-17) Planned Celebration

“When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to his house steward, ‘Bring the men into the house, and slay an animal and make ready; for the men are to dine with me at noon.’ So the man did as Joseph said, and brought the men to Joseph's house.”

Is this a feast or a last meal?

B. (:18) Anxious Speculation

“Now the men were afraid, because they were brought to Joseph's house; and they said, ‘It is because of the money that was returned in our sacks the first time that we are being brought in, that he may seek occasion against us and fall upon us, and take us for slaves with our donkeys.’”

George Bush: So unhappy a thing is it to have guilt lying upon the conscience. It deadens the enjoyments of life and embitters its sorrows. It raises fearful apprehensions on the slightest occasions, and continually arrays the Most High in an aspect of wrath. If we wish to be happy let us seek the removal of that never-failing source of misery.

C. (:19-22) Defensive Explanation

“So they came near to Joseph's house steward, and spoke to him at the entrance of the house, and said, ‘Oh, my lord, we indeed came down the first time to buy food, and it came about when we came to the lodging place, that we opened our sacks, and behold, each man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full. So we have brought it back in our hand. We have also brought down other money in our hand to buy food; we do not know who put our money in our sacks.’”

D. (:23-24) Comforting Reassurance

1. (:23a) Reassurance by Word

a. Peace – not Fear

“And he said, ‘Be at ease, do not be afraid.’”

b. Acknowledgement of God's Providence

“Your God and the God of your father has given you treasure in your sacks;”

c. Removal of Any Offense

“I had your money.”

2. (:23b-24) Reassurance by Action

a. (:23b) Reunion with Simeon

“Then he brought Simeon out to them.”

b. (:24a) Hospitality

“Then the man brought the men into Joseph's house and gave them water, and they washed their feet;”

- c. (:24b) Provision for Their Donkeys
“and he gave their donkeys fodder.”

III. (:25-34) RENEWAL OF INTERACTION

A. (:25-26) Interaction Reflects Respectful Submission

1. (:25) Preparing the Present
“So they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon; for they had heard that they were to eat a meal there.”

2. (:26a) Presenting the Present
“When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present which was in their hand”

3. (:26b) Performing the Posture
*“and **bowed to the ground** before him.”*

All 11 bowed down; fulfillment of Joseph’s dream – God’s providence works everything out to the smallest detail

B. (:27-30) Interaction Stirs Hidden Emotions

1. (:27-28) Emotions Associated with Joseph’s Father -- Jacob
 - a. (:27) Inquiry
“Then he asked them about their welfare, and said, ‘Is your old father well, of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?’”

 - b. (:28) Report
*“And they said, ‘Your servant our father is well; he is still alive.’
And they **bowed down in homage.**”*

2. (:29-30) Emotions Associated with Joseph’s Brother -- Benjamin
 - a. (:29) Public Blessing
“As he lifted his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, he said, ‘Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me?’ And he said, ‘May God be gracious to you, my son.’”

Rachel only had 2 sons: Joseph and Benjamin; unique relationship; overwhelmed with love and emotion

Parunak: *“lifted his eyes”* -- The expression usually indicates that what is seen is of particular importance (cf. **13:10**, Lot regarding the plain of Sodom; **18:2**, when Abraham’s three visitors arrived; 37:25, the brothers spying the approaching caravan). He takes special notice of Benjamin, then, overcome with emotion, he withdraws into his chamber to weep.

Hughes: In addressing Benjamin, Joseph communicated tender, paternal affection. And his “*God be gracious to you*” is the same word found in the Aaronic benediction of **Numbers 6:25** – “*the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you*” – indicating a special blessing, because these words do not appear elsewhere in the Old Testament.

b. (:30) Private Weeping

“And Joseph hurried out for he was deeply stirred over his brother, and he sought a place to weep; and he entered his chamber and wept there.”

C. (:31-34) Interaction Centers Around Communal Feast

1. (:31-32) Serving the Meal

“Then he washed his face, and came out; and he controlled himself and said, ‘Serve the meal.’ So they served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians, who ate with him, by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat bread with the Hebrews, for that is loathsome to the Egyptians.”

Bruce Waltke (quoted by **Parunak**): Herein lies a clue to the rationale for the Egyptian sojourn. Whereas the Canaanites are willing to integrate and absorb the sons of Israel, the Egyptians hold them in contempt. Judah’s intermarriage with the Canaanites in **Genesis 38** shows the danger that syncretistic Canaanites present to the embryonic family. The Egyptian segregated culture guarantees that the embryonic nation can develop into a great nation within their borders.” The Canaanite threat took the form of contamination; The Egyptian threat will take the form of tyranny.

Dave Guzik: Egypt was one of the most racially separated societies on earth. They believed that Egyptians came from the gods, and all other people came from lesser origins. There was little social mixing with foreigners in the Egypt of Joseph’s day.

2. (:33) Seating the Brothers

“Now they were seated before him, the first-born according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth, and the men looked at one another in astonishment.”

Must have been puzzling to the brothers to be seated in their birth order

Borgman: the steward has their nametags on their plates

3. (:34a) Singling Out Benjamin for Preferential Treatment

“And he took portions to them from his own table; but Benjamin’s portion was five times as much as any of theirs.”

Parunak: He makes an obvious distinction between Benjamin’s serving and that sent to the others. The point is not to reflect his fondness for his brother, but to test their reaction. The root of their original sin in selling him into Egypt was their jealousy over the favored position in which his father had placed him. He is about to test their love for Benjamin. By ordering them in order of birth, then favoring the youngest, he is giving them an opportunity to show any jealousy that might exist.

Or was this just a legitimate and sincere expression of the deep love that Joseph had for

Benjamin – perhaps their was no grand testing scheme in view

4. (:34b) Summarizing the Celebration
“*So they feasted and drank freely with him.*”

CONCLUSION:

“*The goodness of God leads to repentance*”

S. Lewis Johnson: How often is that not true my dear Christian friends? You and I have experiences and we think, “Why has the Lord allowed this to happen?” It’s amazing to me really, it’s amazing how often we say things like this in the midst of the experiences that we have. Why has this happened to me? But our whys are answered by the word of God. They ultimately are designed to be part of the plan and program of God. He works all things together according to the counsel of his own will. If we ask why, we must look for answers in the word of God. He also works in such a way that all things work together for the ultimate good of those who are the called according to his purpose, to those who love him.

And so in the case of Jacob, he is weeping over the fact that he is losing Benjamin and all the time there is Joseph, he is not dead, he is alive. He is the prime minister in Egypt. He furthermore has access to all of the things that Jacob and the sons need and furthermore he is the key figure in bringing them into Egypt to preserve them from the evil of the land in which they are at the present time. Everything is working for Jacob’s good and he is speaking about being bereaved. So characteristic of us.

We look at the empty tomb and we weep, but in faith we see it really is the sign of victory. And I’d like to suggest to you my Christian friends that no matter what happens to you and the ultimate things do happen to us. We do lose our loved ones. They do suddenly die. They do suddenly pass from our presence into the presence of the Lord. We don’t really have to ask, “Why has this happened to me?” in the tone of a complaint. We may want to be exercised by it and ask, now what has God to teach me from this? But ultimately we know, if we have truly been brought by the Holy Spirit to trust in him, this is part of his plan and program for me. And now by the grace of God, I would like to adjust to it and respond to it in faith.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How has God used hard times in your life to demonstrate His faithful provision?
- 2) When have our anxious fears and uncertain speculations been put to rest by God’s Word and Works of Reassurance?
- 3) Why did Joseph not reveal his identity immediately to his brothers?
- 4) What can we learn from Joseph’s graciousness and hospitality and love extended to his undeserving brothers?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

J. Ligon Duncan: The Brothers Return to Egypt

we see here, God's providence conspiring to bring the brothers, all of them, back to Egypt and at the same time to discipline them in grace. . .

Once again, once again in the book of Genesis, we are seeing God require a patriarch to risk everything in order to gain the promise. The covenant promise of God is at stake. Was there doubt mixed with Israel's faith? I am sure there was. Just like there is with ours. Was there an unbelieving fear mixed with Israel's faith. I am sure there was, just like there is so often is in ours. But ultimately this whole section beseeks his absolute trust in God. He is risking everything. Everything, as he sends his sons to Egypt. We see here again the test of the faith of Israel. And we see a definition of faith even in his actions. He places his whole trust in God. Everything is in God's hands now. He would have to wait for how long? How many months would Israel have to wait before he would hear whether his hopes were dashed, or whether his fondest dreams had been fulfilled? And all of his sons be reunited with him, out of Egypt. So Israel has to place his whole trust in God. And so we see the trust of Israel here and faith defined.

Moses is going to focus in this passage on two sides of the story. First of all, he is going to continue to give us glimpses of Joseph. Of his kindness, of his own woundedness, of his desire for reconciliation. And on the brothers' side, Moses is going to continue to show us their guilty conscious, their suspicion about receiving kindnesses, their fearfulness, and at the same time, he is going to show their integrity rolling their own fear of God being cultivated. . .

When all is unveiled, friends, in God's providence, when all is unveiled, Joseph's brothers will be able to look back and see the consistent pattern of kindness that their estranged brother has performed for them, despite the fact that they had been the ones who had sold him into slavery. In God's wisdom, in His providence, He is preparing the way for reconciliation.

Steven Cole: How Grace Leads to Repentance

In all of this, Joseph has been testing his brothers, to lead them to repentance for their sin of selling him into slavery 22 years before. He is finding out their attitude toward their father, toward Benjamin, and toward God. When he sees that they are truly repentant, he reveals his identity. His actions toward his brothers parallel God's action in leading us to repentance. The story shows how ...

God's grace leads us to repentance by revealing His great love and our great sin.

Bob Deffinbaugh: The Fears of Jacob and the Tears of Joseph

We men are going to find Jacob's response to his circumstances most distressing, for it serves as an illustration of leadership very poorly exercised. The characteristics of Jacob's leadership are all too familiar today.

JACOB'S SEVEN LAWS OF LEADERSHIP

- (1) Whatever problems arise today are best dealt with tomorrow. Jacob **delayed acting** decisively on the issue of sending Benjamin to Egypt until the situation reached crisis proportions. Given enough time anything could happen, Jacob reasoned, and he was willing to wait indefinitely on this slim hope.
- (2) No problem can possibly be as bad as it seems. If the first principle betrays a

“mañana mentality,” the second is the effort to **minimize the problem** to the point that it hardly seems worth giving time to its solution. If the problem is not serious, then it can be put off indefinitely.

- (3) Honesty is not the best policy. Jacob still had a lot of the old **deceiver** in him. He believed that good communication only causes problems. He thought that the less others knew about him, the better off he and his family were. Judah was thus rebuked for telling Joseph any facts about the family. Many Christians today operate on this same principle. They think that keeping others from knowing them well avoids problems, but they, like Jacob, are desperately misled. Sin loves secrecy and darkness, while righteousness loves the light (cf. **John 3:19-21**).
- (4) Always look out for number one. Jacob’s leadership was consistently exercised in the light of **his own personal interests**. It was Judah who urged his father to think of others rather than himself (cf. **verse 3**). No leader is harder to follow than the one who seeks only his own interests. Conversely, no leader is easier to follow than the one who seeks the best interests of those he leads (cf. **Ephesians 5:22ff.**).
- (5) As much as is possible, see to it that **others receive the blame** for any problems. Jacob sought to place the responsibility on Judah and his brothers because they told the truth (**verse 6**). A good leader is one who is willing to accept the responsibility for his mistakes.
- (6) If our efforts to solve a problem fail, add money. Jacob hoped that his presents, along with double payment, would help achieve his desired ends. Christians are often accused of being the last to reach for their wallets. Whether this is true or not, we are all tempted to resort to **monetary solutions** to our problems. We may pay our children for behaving as they should or offer to pay whatever it takes to solve their problems. Money seldom solves problems, while it causes many.
- (7) When all else fails, trust God. It is no accident that Jacob mentions God last. It never seemed to occur to him as it did to Joseph that God was active in all of his troubles. His wish that God would be with his sons is only a last-ditch effort when it should have been his first line of defense. “**Foxhole religion**” is not new, and it did not cease with Jacob.

Contextually and historically, **chapter 43** serves at least two functions. First, it reveals the fears of Jacob and his sons to be entirely groundless. The best that these men could hope for was the release of Simeon and the safe return of all the men (**verse 14**). Little did these men know that the governor of Egypt was the son of Jacob and brother to his sons. What God had planned for them through the instrumentality of Joseph was more than they could ask or think (cf. **I Corinthians 2:9**). While Joseph had faced his trials with faith, his father and brothers agonized in their testing, plagued with unfounded fears.

In a very special way, **chapter 43** prepares us for the “acid test” of **chapter 44**. We might be inclined to view Joseph as engineering this plot in order to vent some of his hostilities toward his brothers. Was this not a cruel and inhuman test? The answer is a resounding “No!” as evidenced by the genuine tears of love and compassion he shed, unknown to his brothers, in **chapter 43**. Why did Moses inform us of the emotional feelings of Joseph (**42:23-24, 43:30**) if they were not known to his brothers? Simply because he intended for us to understand Joseph’s motivation for

his actions. Every test and every hardship which Joseph imposed upon his brothers was an **act of genuine love**.

R. Kent Hughes: Mercy in Egypt

Quotes philosopher **Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.** on the distinction between the sins of covetousness and envy:

“Envy is a nastier sin than mere covetousness. What an envier wants is not, first of all, what another has; what an envier wants is for another not to have it . . . to envy is to resent somebody else’s good so much that one is tempted to destroy it. The coveter has empty hands and wants to fill them with somebody else’s goods. The envier has empty hands, and therefore wants to empty the hands of the envied. Envy, moreover, carries overtones of personal resentment: an envier resents not only somebody else’s blessing but also the one who has been blessed.”

Envy was what drove Joseph’s brothers to their murderous deed. They cared nothing about owning Joseph’s beautiful coat. They tore it in pieces. What the brothers resented was Joseph’s having the coat. And they resented his person even more than his possession of it. . . Joseph checking whether his brothers were the same envious bunch that they were years earlier . . .

Brian Borgman: The Mercy of the Almighty

Chap. 43 sets up **Chap. 44**. One of the most moving portions in the bible; God uses the famine to move the pieces that will start the process of reconciliation in the family leading to the coming of the promised seed that will be the Messiah. Joseph 37 years old – shaved face and head – not recognized by his brothers;

Judah emerges as the leader; Reuben is a non-factor by now; Levi and Simeon disqualified themselves by massacre at Shechem; Offers himself as surety; no longer just self-absorbed; puts himself on the line for Benjamin and his entire family; Jacob reluctantly complies; Jacob good at putting together gifts (like he did when preparing to meet Esau); *may El Shaddai have mercy on you before the man*

Joseph longed for the day when he would see Benjamin; they were terrified at the invitation to eat noon meal at the prime minister’s home; “Were we the only ones invited?” Thought they were going to have to give an account for the money they had taken; worried that they would be cast into prison as slaves and their donkeys would be taken

TEXT: Genesis 44:1-34

TITLE: TRANSFORMATION OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS

BIG IDEA:

FAMILY RECONCILIATION REQUIRES TRANSFORMING REPENTANCE

INTRODUCTION:

The earlier chapters were important to establish a baseline regarding the selfish character of Joseph's brothers. They despised Joseph as the favorite son of their father. They had no qualms about attacking him with the intent to murder him – finally satisfying themselves with selling him into bondage in Egypt while causing their father to bemoan his supposed untimely death. Only the power of the transforming grace of God could affect the type of change in their hearts that is evidenced here in their dealings with Benjamin.

Duncan: Joseph in this passage, engages in a gigantic test of the hearts of his brothers. Joseph had been severely wounded by his brothers. His relationship had always been estranged and when they had been reunited during the time of the famine, he was concerned to see if these men were still the same kinds of men that they were when he had known them, more than twenty years before, and so since his person had not been revealed to them, since his identity had not been disclosed to them, yet since they had not recognized them, he continued to conceal himself from them and he planned to put them to the test.

S. Lewis Johnson: The threat to Benjamin is a thrust to the heart. It is a thrust to the heart of Jacob, but it is the thrust to the heart of those brothers who have brought Benjamin down to Egypt knowing that Benjamin is dear to the heart of Jacob, and Judah has become surety for him and so this threat that Joseph has mentioned and now brings to its fruition to Benjamin is something that will reveal the heart of these brothers. And the question of course that was on Joseph's mind no doubt is, are these eleven men still the same fierce men that they were when they sold me into captivity? Are they still the same cruel brothers who threw me into the pit and while I was crying to be delivered sat down and ate a meal right by the side of that pit? And in a masterstroke, he is going to find out, would they abandon Benjamin as they did Joseph, because now they have the opportunity when the cup is found in Benjamin's sack they have the opportunity to say, well we will turn Benjamin over to you and we will go on back to Canaan, and so you can see what a masterstroke this is. Joseph will find out about his brethren and so will we for that matter.

Hughes: Now, as we take up **chapter 44**, we will witness a life-altering transformation of the brothers that will variously involve conscience, repentance, enlarged sympathies, intercession, sacrifice, and substitution – all wrapped in a growing brotherly love that speaks of Christ.

FAMILY RECONCILIATION REQUIRES TRANSFORMING REPENTANCE

I. (:1-12) CAPTURE OF BENJAMIN IN JOSEPH'S TRAP SETS UP THE ULTIMATE TEST

A. (:1-2) Setting the Trap

“Then he commanded his house steward, 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. And put my cup, the silver cup, in the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his money for the grain.' And he did as Joseph had told him."

Alan Carr: God knows how to get our attention and He is not afraid to touch or take what He pleases to speak to our hearts. He has a silver cup that He can place in our lives to open our eyes when we have walked away from Him. Sooner or later, the silver cup will end up in your sack!

B. (:3-6) Springing the Trap

"As soon as it was light, the men were sent away, they with their donkeys. They had just gone out of the city, and were not far off, when Joseph said to his house steward, 'Up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, Why have you repaid evil for good? Is not this the one from which my lord drinks, and which he indeed uses for divination? You have done wrong in doing this.' So he overtook them and spoke these words to them."

Parunak: No doubt the brothers are congratulating themselves on their good fortune. The previously harsh Egyptian has treated them kindly. They have Simeon, Benjamin, and sacks heavy with grain, and they are on their way home. They can hardly expect that the most difficult part of their journey lies before them.

One aspect of his script is puzzling: the claim that Joseph uses the missing cup for divination. The practice is absolutely forbidden in the law (**Lev 19:26; Deut 18:10**), and it is unlikely that Joseph, who repeatedly gives God the credit for revealing things to him, would actually use such a mechanism. We must understand that it is part of his disguise.

C. (:7-12) Searching the Sacks

1. (:7-8) Declaration of Innocence -- Protest

"And they said to him, 'Why does my lord speak such words as these? Far be it from your servants to do such a thing. Behold, the money which we found in the mouth of our sacks we have brought back to you from the land of Canaan. How then could we steal silver or gold from your lord's house?'"

2. (:9-10) Determination of the Penalty -- Proposal

"'With whomever of your servants it is found, let him die, and we also will be my lord's slaves.' So he said, 'Now let it also be according to your words; he with whom it is found shall be my slave, and the rest of you shall be innocent.'"

3. (:11-12) Discovery of the Cup -- Proof

"Then they hurried, each man lowered his sack to the ground, and each man opened his sack. And he searched, beginning with the oldest and ending with the youngest, and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack."

Parunak: We can imagine two conflicting emotions as the search proceeds.

- Growing relief as the cup is not found. By the time he gets to Benjamin, they are almost

certain to be off free.

- Growing confusion as each brother's money is found.

No mention is made of the money, but it must have put them further off balance.

II. (:13-17) CONFESSION OF JUDAH AND THE BROTHERS BEFORE JOSEPH DEMONSTRATES FAMILY SOLIDARITY

A. (:13-14) Returning to Joseph to Confess Their Crime

1. (:13) Tearing Their Clothes

“Then they tore their clothes, and when each man loaded his donkey, they returned to the city.”

Guzik: This was a radical change in the brothers. Before, they didn't care about their father or his favored son. Now, the idea of hurting either father or son made them feel as bad as if someone had died.

Parunak: —The steward has already offered to release all but the one with whom the cup is found. Their reaction at this point is the first part of their response to the test. They could have left him to his fate and made their way home. But by now they care enough about their aged father that they will not abandon Benjamin as they abandoned Joseph. They all return to the city with Benjamin.

Alan Carr: There are no accusations thrown at one another. There are no compromises. There is simply a unified resolve to stand by their brother.

2. (:14) Falling to the Ground

“When Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house, he was still there, and they fell to the ground before him.”

Deffinbaugh: On their first visit the brothers had only been impressed with the severity of this Egyptian potentate (cf. **42:7; 43:3-5,18**). Here was a man to be feared. But on this second mission they had also gained an appreciation for the generosity and kind intent of the governor. The sumptuous noon meal and the generous provisions and accommodations were not intended to disarm these men, but to assure them of the kindness of Joseph. In effect, they had seen both the “goodness and severity” (cf. **Romans 11:22**) of Joseph. I believe part of the reason they returned en masse to Joseph was that they had gained an appreciation for his integrity. He was one to whom they could appeal. He was a man of integrity and justice. This, to me, is the best explanation of the events of the last chapter, especially Joseph's generosity and his hospitality at the noon meal.

B. (:15-17) Receiving Joseph's Judgment Upon Their Confession

1. (:15) Inquisition

“And Joseph said to them, ‘What is this deed that you have done? Do you not know that such a man as I can indeed practice divination?’”

Parunak: “What deed is this that ye have done?” This is the most elaborated form of a recurring refrain throughout Genesis. . . All the cases in Genesis appear to be calling to account rather than genuine requests for information --

- **3:13**, God to Eve in the garden
- **4:10**, God to Cain after he killed Abel
- **12:18**, Pharaoh to Abram after lying about Sarai
- **20:9**, Abimelech to Abraham after he lied about Sarah
- **26:10**, Abimelech to Abraham the second time
- **29:25**, Jacob to Laban after he is deceived concerning his bride
- **31:26**, Laban to Jacob after he stole away

Joseph's statement is the last in this series, and invites us to reflect on it. This phrase is clearly distinctive to Genesis; it occurs 8 times there, and only nine times among other books, where only Judges (2x) has more than a single instance.

We can draw the following lessons from it. • People are accountable for their actions.

• This accountability is initially imposed by God, but then echoed in men as his image-bearers. The urge to ask, "What have you done," is at the heart of the moral sensibility that lies at the base of Rom 2.

• Most of the challenges here are put to the covenant people by those outside the community (in Joseph's case, ostensibly). The world expects more of those who claim to represent the Lord. Compare the requirement of the elder that he "have a good report of them which are without," 1 Tim 3:7.

2. (:16) Confession

"So Judah said, 'What can we say to my lord? What can we speak? And how can we justify ourselves? God has found out the iniquity of your servants; behold, we are my lord's slaves, both we and the one in whose possession the cup has been found.'"

3. (:17) Judgment

"But he said, 'Far be it from me to do this. The man in whose possession the cup has been found, he shall be my slave; but as for you, go up in peace to your father.'"

III. (:18-34) COUNTERPROPOSAL OF JUDAH TO BE ENSLAVED AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR BENJAMIN PROVES THEIR UNSELFISH LOVE

(:18) Respectful Approach

"Then Judah approached him, and said, 'Oh my lord, may your servant please speak a word in my lord's ears, and do not be angry with your servant; for you are equal to Pharaoh.'"

A. (:19-21) Unique Beloved Status of Benjamin

"My lord asked his servants, saying, 'Have you a father or a brother?' And we said to my lord, 'We have an old father and a little child of his old age. Now his brother is dead, so he alone is left of his mother, and his father loves him.' Then you said to your servants, 'Bring him down to me, that I may set my eyes on him.'"

B. (:22-24) Unconditional Demand of Joseph

"But we said to my lord, 'The lad cannot leave his father, for if he should leave his father, his father would die.' You said to your servants, however, 'Unless your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see my face again.' Thus it came about when we went up to your servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.'"

C. (:25-29) Unacceptable Dilemma Facing Jacob

“And our father said, 'Go back, buy us a little food.' But we said, 'We cannot go down. If our youngest brother is with us, then we will go down; for we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us.' And your servant my father said to us, 'You know that my wife bore me two sons; and the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn in pieces, and I have not seen him since. And if you take this one also from me, and harm befalls him, you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.’”

D. (:30-32) Unfortunate Consequences of Returning Home Without Benjamin

“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, it will come about when he sees that the lad is not with us, that he will die. Thus your servants will bring the gray hair of your servant our father down to Sheol in sorrow. For your servant became surety for the lad to my father, saying, 'If I do not bring him back to you, then let me bear the blame before my father forever.’”

Hughes: Judah quoted their father’s own words, but along with his brothers he assumed the responsibility should his father’s gray head go down to Sheol in sorrow. By making the old man’s lament their own, we see that there had been a monumental change in the brothers’ hearts. Transformation had been effected in Egypt. The fledgling covenant community was moving toward a loving solidarity. The brothers had repented of their sin against Joseph. They had forgiven the unfair favoritism of their father. They so loved their father and his favorite son that they would not forsake Benjamin though the cost was immense.

E. (:33-34) Ultimate Request to Serve as a Substitute for Benjamin

“Now, therefore, please let your servant remain instead of the lad a slave to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brothers. For how shall I go up to my father if the lad is not with me, lest I see the evil that would overtake my father?”

Leupold: This is one of the manliest most straightforward speeches ever delivered by any man for depth of feeling and sincerity of purpose it stands unexcelled. What makes it most remarkable however is the fact that it comes from the lips of one who once upon a time was so callused that he cared nothing about the grief he had caused his father.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What evidence do you see in this chapter of changed hearts on the part of Joseph’s brothers?
- 2) When have the times of testing from God seemed overly severe to you? Why do you think God designed the tests in that fashion?
- 3) What is the relationship between conscience and repentance?
- 4) How does this account serve to highlight the role of Judah even more than that of Joseph?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

J Ligon Duncan: A Cup in the Sack

This passage teaches many things, but it teaches at least this. It is a mark of grace to know that we do not deserve mercy. It is the wicked that think that they deserve the mercy of God. And Judah here makes it very clear that he is not even going to ask for mercy from Joseph, because he doesn't deserve it. That in and of itself shows you the work of grace that has been done in the heart of Judah. Look at this passage with me. Judah specifically addresses Joseph, he speaks respectfully to him. He begs his patience, and then he tells the family story in verses 19-34. And he basically argues two things. In this great passage, we could divide it many ways, but he basically just argues two things.

First of all, he makes it clear that he will do anything he can to avoid hurting his father. He is ready to move heaven and earth if he can just avoid breaking his father's heart one more time.

And secondly, he makes it clear that he has made a covenant with his father. He has pledged himself, he has called on his father's curse for the rest of his life, if he does not bring his son back. And because of his love for his father, and because of the covenant that he has made with his father, on those things, he bases his plea to the one whom he doesn't even realize is Joseph.

David Guzik: Through this chapter, there is remarkable evidence of the changed hearts of Joseph's brothers.

- They did not resent it when Benjamin was given the favored portion (**Genesis 43:34**).
- They trusted each other, not accusing each other of wrong when accused of stealing the cup (**Genesis 44:9**).
- They stuck together when the silver cup was found. They did not abandon the favored son and allow him to be carried back to Egypt alone (**Genesis 44:13**).
- They completely humbled themselves for the sake of the favored son (**Genesis 44:14**).
- They knew their predicament was the result of their sin against Joseph (**Genesis 44:16**).
- They offered themselves as slaves to Egypt, not abandoning Benjamin, the favored son, their brother (**Genesis 44:16**).
- They showed due concern for how this might affect their father (**Genesis 44:29-31**).
- Judah was willing to be a substitutionary sacrifice for his brother out of love for his father and his brethren (**Genesis 44:33**).

W. H. Griffith Thomas: We observe in the first place the **deference** and **humility** with which Judah approaches Joseph – another striking fact, in view of those early dreams. We also observe the **beautiful simplicity** with which he tells the story of his father and the child of his old age – his youngest one who alone is left of his mother, his brother being dead. The **pathos** of the recital is also deeply touching and almost perfect as he goes on to show how the old man, bereaved of his two favourite sons, will be brought down to his grave in sorrow. Then the appeal closes with the **heroic offer** to become a bondman in the place of Benjamin, to sacrifice himself on behalf of his brother. *“For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? Lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.”*

Bob Deffinbaugh: The Final Test – Dothan Relived

“Is not this the one from which my lord drinks, and which he indeed uses for divination?”

Why did he give his trusted steward such latitude in everything but the specific wording of the accusation? I would suggest that it is precisely because the steward would never have worded his

rebuke in this way. Why? Because not only the charge was false, but the impression given was also not true to the facts. If Joseph never used that silver cup for divination, how would his steward ever have conceived to refer to it in that way? He would have spoken of it just as Joseph did to him. He would have called it his master's silver drinking cup, for no doubt it was used during the noon meal which Joseph shared with his brothers.

But why all this subterfuge? Why would Joseph want his brothers to think that the cup was used for divination when it was not? As for me, the answer is obvious. Joseph wanted to continue to reinforce his disguise as an Egyptian. He also wanted to impress upon his brothers that he knew everything. He had been able to seat his brothers at the table according to their age, an act that astonished and puzzled them (43:33). As Hebrews, they would expect Joseph to seek divine revelation through such means, and they would be drawn away from considering that he might know about them because they were his brothers. Furthermore, it would discourage them from concealing the truth from him since they were inclined to believe he knew everything. . .

Up until this moment there was insufficient evidence of repentance. Previous chapters have indicated that Joseph's brothers recognized their suffering as the result of their sin, but at best they felt only regret. They wished, I believe, that they had not sold Joseph into slavery. Perhaps they were sorry that their father had to suffer as he did. And they regretted that they had to endure the consequences of their sins. This was a good beginning, but it was not enough. Regret is no more than what we would expect from anyone who is faced with the unpleasant consequences of sin. Every prisoner regrets their crime, or at least the fact that they were caught. But repentance is more than regret.

The regrets of Judah and his brothers had not brought them to the point of confessing their sin to Jacob nor of making any attempt to learn of Joseph's fate. But now, given the opportunity to repeat their sin, there is a significant change of heart and action on the part of Joseph's brothers, as exemplified by Judah. They had once determined to do away with Joseph, regardless of its impact upon Jacob, in order to seek revenge and to avoid becoming Joseph's subordinates. Now, just the opposite was true. Judah was willing to become the slave of Joseph, even though he was declared innocent of the theft of the silver cup. He could not stand the thought of causing any further suffering. That, my friend, is genuine repentance.

That brings us to the point of defining repentance. Repentance is the recognition of our sins which results in the kind of sorrow that brings about a change in our intellect, emotions, and will. In other words, repentance recognizes sin and is genuinely sorry for it, so much so that this sin will be shunned and a new course of action will be sought.

The principle which underlies the protracted dealings of Joseph in the lives of his brothers is this: **there can be no reconciliation without genuine repentance.** That is what caused Joseph to delay so long in revealing his identity to his brothers. If there were to be true unity in his family, there must first be true reconciliation. And that reconciliation would not come before his brothers experienced and evidenced biblical repentance.

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In the final episode of Joseph's testing of his brothers, Joseph framed Benjamin for an imaginary crime and claimed Benjamin as a slave in recompense. When he demanded that the brothers return home to Isaac without Benjamin (**Gen. 44:17**), Judah emerged as the group's spokesman. What gave him the standing to take on this role? He had broken faith with his family by

marrying a Canaanite (**Gen. 38:2**), had raised such wicked sons that the Lord put two of them to death (**Gen. 38:7, 10**), had treated his daughter-in-law as a prostitute (**Gen. 38:24**), and had hatched the plan to sell his own brother as a slave (**Gen. 37:27**). But the story Judah told Joseph showed a changed man. He exhibited unexpected compassion in telling of the family's heart-wrenching experience of starvation, of his father's undying love for Benjamin, and of Judah's own promise to his father that he would bring Benjamin back home, lest Jacob literally die from grief. Then, in an ultimate expression of compassion, Judah offered to substitute *himself* in place of Benjamin! He proposed that he be retained in Egypt for the rest of his life as the governor's slave if only the governor would let Benjamin go home to his father (**Gen. 44:33-34**).

Kurt Bennett: What Does God Want?

Imagine with me what Judah and his brother's must be saying to each other at this point: What, what, what? What does Joseph want? Why is this happening? When will it stop? We gave Joseph our silver to buy food. We left Simeon as a prisoner. We went home, we came back, we brought Benjamin as requested. We brought gifts, almonds, honey, the best the land has to offer. We bowed before Joseph — four times so far! But no, none of that is what Joseph wants. So what then? What? What is it?

What does Joseph want from us?

The answer for Judah and his brothers concerning what Joseph wanted was this: Joseph wanted the brothers themselves. He wanted the brothers to give themselves to him.

<https://godrunning.com/2012/08/04/god-what-does-god-want-genesis-44/>

Dr. Robert Rayburn:

I grew up knowing the Joseph story, having read it and heard it many times. Never once in all of that time was I taught or did I realize that the true hero of that history was not Joseph — good and faithful man that he was — but Judah, the fourth oldest son of Jacob and Leah. The older commentators did not realize this either, and you will not find in them this understanding of the history recorded in these chapters of Genesis. My first exposure to this understanding was in a sermon preached in this church by **Prof. Bruce Waltke** in August of 1996. His sermon was entitled "*Judah: A Paragon of Love.*"

The test must be that the brothers be free to turn their back on Benjamin. So that is what the steward said: the one who was found to have the cup would become a slave (as had Joseph) and the rest would be free to go. What will they do when Benjamin was found out? Remember, Joseph was treating Benjamin as his surrogate. He was enabling the brothers to relive what they had done to him and, in reliving that history, he provided them with an opportunity to redeem themselves. We see here the brilliance of Joseph and his spiritual insight; Joseph the God-figure, as we said last time, orchestrating events to bring good things to pass for his people. . .

But Judah was not the same man he once was. He was not the man any longer whose idea it was to get rid of their brother and make some money on the side. He was no longer the man who raised boys so disreputable that God executed them in the middle of their lives. He was no longer the man who refused to fulfill the duties of a patriarch and see to the needs of his daughter-in-law and, as a result, later committed incest with her, thinking her a prostitute. Now we know why we had to be treated to that lengthy and sordid account of Judah's sinful life in **chapter 38**. We needed to know what sort of man Judah had been to appreciate what kind of man Judah had become!

If you knew nothing about the family history, Judah's offer to substitute himself for Benjamin would strike you as admirable, even heroic. But to someone who knows the family history, to someone who knows Judah's personal history – the selfish indifference he once showed to his own family and his obligations to his family – Judah's speech represents nothing less than a shocking and sublime transformation. From a betrayer of his family he became the savior of it. From a selfish and indifferent son, brother, and father, he had become a man whose love for others was a power sufficient to make him offer his own life for theirs. Remember, when Judah made that speech, he fully expected never to see his family or his homeland again. That he should have offered as an argument for his own self-sacrifice his father's favoritism for Rachel and for Benjamin betrays a spirit of heroic and amazing love and devotion. [

And Judah is the center of this story. There is no doubt about that. Judah is the developing, the changing character. Joseph, worthy though he is, is a much more static figure. It is Judah who was transformed and, if the truth be told, Judah who rose higher, even than Joseph. Joseph was righteous, he did many wise things, but he never demonstrated the Christ-like compassion for others that Judah did here. Can we be sure of that? Can we know that this is the narrator's own understanding of this history?

Yes we can. We are told that in the most unmistakable way. When Jacob later blessed his sons, the blessings of which we read in **chapters 48 and 49**, Joseph was blessed as the prince of his brothers; he received a double portion as if he were the eldest. He got, in other words, the first blessing, the blessing that Jacob had received from his father Isaac.

But the greatest blessing was not given to Joseph, it was given to Judah instead. We read Judah's blessing in **49:8-12** – I invite you to turn there, for a moment. The rest of the brothers will bow down to Judah. That is, of course, a very striking promise, following as it does the dreams that Joseph had been given, dreams that portrayed his brothers bowing down to him. And, not only will Judah rule over the family of Israel, he will go in conquest over his enemies.

That is the sense of the statement in **v. 8** that Judah's hand shall be on the neck of his enemies and as well the sense of Judah portrayed as a lion in **v. 9**. Judah is a fierce lion that has seized its prey, returned to its lair, and lies there daring anyone to challenge it.

And then the momentous promise in **v. 10**. The scepter and the staff are signs of royal authority. The king, will come not from Joseph's line, not from Reuben's, the firstborn, but from the line of Judah, Leah's fourth son. The phrase "*between his feet*" is a euphemism for the private parts and refers to Judah's progeny, his issue, his descendants. [**Wenham**] From Judah will come the king who will rule over the nations – the first specific promise of the coming King, the Messiah, who will be given the nations as his inheritance and who will rule over them as the King of Kings.

And then, in **vv. 11-12**, there is a picture painted of the prosperity of the reign of this coming king who will be Judah's descendant. "*He will tether his donkey to a vine...*" Ordinarily one didn't tie a donkey to the vine because he would eat up the grapes. But the image here is of such plenty that no one cares if the donkey eats its fill. There will be more than enough for man and animal alike. The next line, about washing his garments in wine has the same sense. There will be so much wine that one can wash his clothes in it. Throughout the OT, the golden age, the age of consummation is described in these same terms of bumper harvests and unimaginable plenty.

The sense of **verse 12** is debated. It could be a description of the king's beauty: eyes like wine, teeth white as milk. Or, it could be a continuation of the previous thought. His eyes are dark with wine, there is so much of it and his teeth white with all the milk he drinks. In any case, it is clear that what Jacob was prophesying was that from Judah would come the great hope of the world and especially of the people of God.

Or, going back to **44:33**: the king will come from Judah and from no other. The one who was willing to sacrifice himself for others is alone worthy to be the king of God's people. "*Greater love hath no man than that he lay down his life for his friends.*" Judah's greatest descendant taught us that and then proved it by giving up his life for us. It is, finally, Judah, not Joseph, who is the truest Christ-figure in this history, and the Christ-figure will be the father of the Christ himself!

There is the Holy Spirit's own verdict on the events of the biblical history. What Jesus Christ, the Savior, will be is someone who will give his life a ransom for many. It will be the Son of God's self-sacrifice that will save the world. We hadn't yet been told that. But here, we are. We are told it and we are shown it.

Here, still so early in the history of redemption, most of two-thousand years before the appearance of the Son of God in the world, we learn what is going to distinguish the coming king from all other men and all other rulers of men. He will be a king whose rule is exercised in selfless love for others, he will save his people not by leading armies on the field of battle, but by giving up his own life in their place and for their sake, and he will do that in defiance of the fact that those for whom he gives up his life did not deserve such love; in fact had done everything possible to kill such love in his heart. The King of Kings will be the King of Love. All of that Judah shows us and because he does it will be the tribe of Judah that ever after will be the leading tribe in Israel. The tribes that hailed from Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, would eventually go the way of the ten northern tribes into exile and into oblivion in the later years of the 8th century B.C. The tribe of Judah would remain and remains today. It would become in fact the entire Jewish people after the exile – indeed the word "Jew" comes from the name Judah. You see from all of this the place that Judah was given in the history of the people of God. Why? Because his life was the demonstration of the saving grace of God and an enacted prophecy of the work of the coming King who would love the unlovely and give his life for their salvation. All of this so beautifully demonstrated in the personal history of this one man.

How it happened that the Judah of **chapter 38** became the Judah of **chapter 44** who can say. But that it happened is the hinge upon which the entire history turns. Ours is a religion of moral and spiritual transformation, of the conquest of sin by the grace of God, and of the hope that we can and will become so much better people than we have been or are today. And in the center of that understanding of life and of the future stands the Lord Jesus Christ who came not be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. That the world was taught where he would come from, what his motivations would be, and how he would save us from sin and death long centuries before he ever came into the world is proof, if proof were needed, that the Son of God's self-sacrifice and nothing else is the central fact of human existence and that he and no one else is the central figure of human history, the meaning of life and the hope for the future of every human being.

TEXT: Genesis 45:1-28

TITLE: ONE BIG HAPPY FAMILY

BIG IDEA:

PROVIDENTIAL RECONCILIATION BLESSED BY GOD WITH ABUNDANT PROVISION AND INWARD TRANSFORMATION

INTRODUCTION:

Do we have a heart that **promotes reconciliation** or a heart that harbors bitterness and resentment? Do we have a confidence that **God's Providence** and overall **Sovereign Plan** is bigger than our limited perspective? Are we able to live above the ups and downs of our personal circumstances because our vision is focused on God's ultimate **kingdom agenda**? We can learn many important lessons from this account of Joseph's dealing with his brothers and his father Jacob, despite having been abandoned and severely mistreated.

Constable: quoting **Hamilton** -- In using terms like **remnant** and **survivors**, Joseph is employing words that elsewhere in the OT are freighted with theological significance. It may well be that in the deliverance of his brothers and his father Joseph perceives that far more is at stake than the mere physical survival of twelve human beings. What really survives is the plan of redemption announced first to his great grandfather.

PROVIDENTIAL RECONCILIATION BLESSED BY GOD WITH ABUNDANT PROVISION AND INWARD TRANSFORMATION

I. (:1-15) EMOTIONAL RECONCILIATION BETWEEN JOSEPH AND HIS BROTHERS

A. (:1-3) Revealing Himself to His Brothers with a Heart of Love and Forgiveness

1. (:1) Communication in Private

“Then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him, and he cried, ‘Have everyone go out from me.’ So there was no man with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers.”

Joseph has been testing the heart of his brothers to see if there has been any inward change. They have passed his various tests and now he can no longer continue to hide his identity.

J. Ligon Duncan: Joseph is not ashamed of his weeping, and he's not ashamed of the disclosure that he's going to make. The reason that he sends his servants out of the room is again to protect his brothers.

Deffinbaugh: I find several possible reasons for Joseph expelling the Egyptians from his presence before he made himself known to his brothers. First, this was a family matter. It was to be an intimate time, and outsiders would not add anything to that moment. Perhaps also Joseph felt that the full release of his emotions, held in check for years, would cost him the esteem of his servants. Mainly, however, I believe that it was for another reason that Joseph commanded everyone to leave except his brothers: it was in order to deal with the matter of the sin of his brothers in strictest privacy. If Joseph intended for no one but his brothers to observe the

outpouring of his emotions, it didn't work, for *"the Egyptians heard it"* (**verse 2**), and this report even reached Pharaoh's ears (**verses 2, 16**).

2. (:2) Crying Heard by All

"And he wept so loudly that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard of it."

Must have been very unusual for a person of Joseph's high station to be heard weeping so loudly. Joseph was about to make public his connection with this foreign family.

3. (:3) Concern for His Father

"Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?' But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence."

One of the greatest self-disclosures in all of Scripture.

Immediately he expresses his concern for the condition of his father – wanting to have the opportunity to be reunited with him as well.

Parunak: Up until now he has spoken in Egyptian, through an interpreter, and if they have known his name at all, it is as *Zaphnath Paaneah (41:45)*. Now all of a sudden they hear Hebrew words coming from his lips, and on them the name of one they thought long dead.

Deffinbaugh: Fear and guilt were written on their ashen faces, and their silence confirmed this to Joseph. They had nothing more to say, no more appeals left, no hope for mercy. Every word recorded in the first 15 verses of chapter 45 is spoken by Joseph because his brothers were speechless (**verse 3**). Not until Joseph had demonstrated that he had forgiven them and loved them did they speak (**verse 15**).

B. (:4-8) Reassuring His Brothers that He Harbors No Bitterness Because of His Confidence in God's Sovereignty

1. (:4) Family Forgiveness

"Then Joseph said to his brothers, 'Please come closer to me.' And they came closer. And he said, 'I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.'"

Parunak: Joseph endeavors to comfort them in three ways.

- **4a**, he urges them to draw near, that he might embrace them (**14,15**).
- **4c**, he repeats his name, this time adding, *"your brother."*
- **5-8**, most extensively, he reminds them of God's sovereignty in the whole affair.

2. (:5-8) Providential Provision

*"And now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for **God sent me** before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting. And **God sent me** before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance. Now, therefore, it was **not you who sent me here, but God**; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt."*

No words of reproach – he attributes what took place to the sovereignty of God who had bigger plans for Joseph and the Jewish nation.

Where has God sent you and for what purpose??

J. Ligon Duncan: And now in verses 4 through 8 we learn how Joseph had conquered bitterness, and how he had become reconciled to his brothers. Here's the secret. He rested in the doctrine of providence. . . This passage is the waterloo of Arminianism. I don't know how an Arminian reads this passage.

Parunak: What was God's greater purpose in moving him to Egypt? He says three times that God sent him, and each time he adds another purpose, starting with the broadest and most general and focusing down each time to a smaller group. If they recognize God's purpose, they will not destroy themselves with guilt or recriminations.

- **5**, "*to preserve life.*" The focus here is not on their lives alone, but on life in general. God in his grace toward his creatures provided Joseph as a way to mitigate the effect of the famine. Joseph here recognizes the divine purpose behind a secular job. Paul shows the same sense of priority in **Titus 3:14** ("*let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses*").

- **7**, to save their lives and thus "*preserve you a posterity in the earth.*" Now he traces God's purposes of grace down to the chosen family. Joseph treasures the promises that God made through Abraham, and he recognizes that the family must be saved through this time of famine if those promises are to be realized. So his focus has shrunk from all whom he fed, down to Jacob's family.

- **8**, to exalt Joseph himself. The focus finally comes to rest on Joseph and his position as "*a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.*" Now that he has focused God's blessing down to himself, he shows how his authority spreads out, starting with Pharaoh, then his house, and then all Egypt. Joseph has learned the truth of **Rom 8:28**.

Deffinbaugh: We know that the righteous God hates all sin with a perfect and irreconcilable hatred; but it is his prerogative to bring good out of evil, and no sin can be committed without his knowledge, or in opposition to his holy counsels. Sinners are as really the ministers of his providence as saints, and he glorifies himself by the wickedness which he hates and punishes, as well as by that holiness which he loves and rewards

C. (:9-13) Reporting Back to Jacob the Grace of God Who Abundantly Provides

1. (:9) Communicate My Invitation to Jacob

"Hurry and go up to my father, and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay.'"

Sense of urgency; he does not know how long his father has to live; in addition, his family needs to relocate to Egypt for the duration of the famine in order to survive.

Again, a strong statement of God's sovereign purpose at work.

2. (:10-11) Call to Deliverance and Provision

“And you shall live in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children and your flocks and your herds and all that you have.”

“There I will also provide for you, for there are still five years of famine to come, lest you and your household and all that you have be impoverished.”

What an amazing and abundant provision by the grace of God for those who truly are not deserving of such kindness.

W. H. Griffith Thomas: How significant it is that our actions are left perfectly free, and yet all the while we may be unconsciously accomplishing the great and far-reaching purposes of Divine wisdom! It gives a dignity to life to realize that nothing is trivial and without meaning.

3. (:12-13) Communicate My Splendor to Jacob

“And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth which is speaking to you.”

“Now you must tell my father of all my splendor in Egypt, and all that you have seen; and you must hurry and bring my father down here.”

J. Ligon Duncan: Why does Joseph emphasize that they are to tell his father about his rule and his glory in Egypt. Is it because Joseph is still the prideful, slightly un-self-aware man that he was more than twenty years ago? No. It's because he wants his father to remember God's revelation in the dream. What had God said? God had said He was going to exult his son. And Joseph wants his father to remember the dream and to realize, Lord God, you have brought this dream to pass in the most amazing way. We couldn't have ever dreamt that this is the way you are going to fulfill the dream of the grain bowing down to my son, Joseph, and the stars and the sun and the moon bowing to my son, Joseph, the ruler of Egypt. And Joseph knows that's going to be hard for his father to take in. So he emphasizes to them, you must tell them of the glory that you have seen of my glory in Egypt. Because it's a fulfillment of the revelation of God.

Deffinbaugh: In these verses there is a noticeable emphasis upon the glory and splendor which Joseph has attained in Egypt. For some this appears to be out of character for Joseph, who has previously been marked by modesty and humility. Why would he now flaunt his position before his brothers? There are several explanations, one or more of which may satisfy our concerns.

First, the glory which Joseph now possesses would serve to encourage his brothers, who are guilt-ridden for the wicked deed they committed against him by selling him as a slave. Joseph would thus be reminding them that his humiliation and suffering were the means to his promotion and exaltation. Look what their sin had brought about in Joseph's life! Second, it would comfort Jacob and assure him of Joseph's ability to provide for the entire family during the famine. Finally, it was a glory which Joseph desired to share unselfishly with his brothers. His motive would thus be Christ-like.

D. (:14-15) Restoring Family Affections with Genuine Emotion and Intimacy

1. (:14) With Benjamin

*“Then he fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept;
and Benjamin wept on his neck.”*

Alexander Maclaren: This wonderfully beautiful scene ends with the kiss of full reconciliation and frank communion. All the fear is out of the brothers' hearts. It has washed away all the envy along with it. The history of Jacob's household had hitherto been full of sins against family life. Now, at last, they taste the sweetness of fraternal love. Joseph, against whom they had sinned, takes the initiative, flinging himself with tears on the neck of Benjamin, his own mother's son, nearer to him than all the others, crowding his pent-up love in one long kiss. Then, with less of passionate affection, but more of pardoning love, he kisses his contrite brothers. The offender is ever less ready to show love than the offended. The first step towards reconciliation, whether of man with man or of man with God, comes from the aggrieved. We always hate those whom we have harmed; and if enmity were ended only by the advances of the wrong-doer, it would be perpetual. The injured has the prerogative of praying the injurer to be reconciled. So was it in Pharaoh's throne-room on that long past day; so is it still in the audience chamber of heaven. 'He that might the vantage best have took found out the remedy.' *'We love Him, because He first loved us.'*

2. (:15) With His other Brothers

*“And he kissed all his brothers and wept on them,
and afterward his brothers talked with him.”*

Constable: Joseph then embraced Benjamin and all his brothers to express his love and to confirm his forgiveness (**Genesis 45:14-15**). The writer highlighted the genuine reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers by recording that they talked with him (**Genesis 45:15**). Much earlier they could not speak to him (**Genesis 37:4**). After a threefold expression of Joseph's goodwill toward his siblings (weeping, explaining, and embracing), the shocked and fearful brothers gained the courage to speak. They now recognized Joseph as the one they had so cruelly abused and who was now able to crush them if he chose to do so.

Outstanding in this section is the way in which Joseph's perception of God's ways made him gracious, forgiving, and accepting rather than bitter and vindictive. He saw the loving hand of his God behind the cruelty of his brothers. He had accepted all that had come to him as the will of God, and therefore he experienced the blessing of God. Reconciliation is possible when there is forgiveness, and forgiveness is possible when there is recognition of God's sovereignty.

II. (:16-24) ABUNDANT PROVISION -- PHARAOH'S BLESSING AND CHARGE TO JOSEPH

A. (:16-20) Blessing Ordered

1. (:16) Pharaoh's Blessing

“Now when the news was heard in Pharaoh's house that Joseph's brothers had come, it pleased Pharaoh and his servants.”

Did not look at providing for this additional large household as a burden, but rather a blessing and a privilege.

2. (:17-20) Pharaoh's Charge to Joseph

“Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Say to your brothers, Do this: load your beasts and go to the land of Canaan, and take your father and your households and come to me, and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt and you shall eat the fat of the land. Now you are ordered, Do this: take wagons from the land of Egypt for your little ones and for your wives, and bring your father and come. And do not concern yourselves with your goods, for the best of all the land of Egypt is yours.’”

God gives us of the abundance of His riches in unexpected ways;
Do we give our best to God?

Why should we be anxious for material provisions – certainly our God is a better provider than Pharaoh.

Constable: Goshen (a Semitic rather than an Egyptian name) was the most fertile part of Egypt (cf. **Genesis 45:18**). It lay in the delta region northeast of the Egyptian capital, Memphis.

B. (:21-24) Charge Obeyed

1. (:21) Summary Description

“Then the sons of Israel did so; and Joseph gave them wagons according to the command of Pharaoh, and gave them provisions for the journey.”

Wagons of provisions would impress Jacob with the status of Joseph in Egypt.

2. (:22) Favored Status of Benjamin

“To each of them he gave changes of garments, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver and five changes of garments.”

J. Ligon Duncan: It's very likely that these garments are festive robes of fine Egyptian linen. Can you imagine his brothers receiving two or three of those festive robes from Joseph? The one that they had taken the coat of many colors from and left him for dead.

3. (:23) Abundant Provision for His Father

“And to his father he sent as follows: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and sustenance for his father on the journey.”

4. (:24) Parting Prohibition

“So he sent his brothers away, and as they departed, he said to them, ‘Do not quarrel on the journey.’”

Attitude needs to be one of thanksgiving and peace – not contention and strife
Not the time to be blaming one another for past failures

Alternate Interpretation:

Constable: referencing **Wenham** -- However the usual meaning of the Hebrew word is *to fear* (cf. **Exodus 15:14**). So part of his meaning may be that they should not be afraid of robbers as they returned to Canaan or fearful of returning to Egypt in the future.

III. (:25-28) TRANSFORMING REVIVAL IN THE HEART OF JACOB

A. (:25) Return of Joseph's Brothers to Jacob to Bring the Good News

"Then they went up from Egypt, and came to the land of Canaan to their father Jacob."

B. (:26-27) Revival of Jacob's Heart – Transformation From Despair to Hope

1. (:26) Stunning Announcement

"And they told him, saying, 'Joseph is still alive, and indeed he is ruler over all the land of Egypt.' But he was stunned, for he did not believe them."

2. (:27) Convincing Assurance

"When they told him all the words of Joseph that he had spoken to them, and when he saw the wagons that Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of their father Jacob revived."

Parunak: Note the two sides of Jacob, marked with the shift in his name.

- **26**, Jacob is marked with weakness and unbelief.
- **28**, Israel is marked with belief and resolve

The transition between the two is marked by an experience like death and resurrection.

- **26**, Jacob's heart fainted.—Lit, "was numb" or "stopped." Alter thinks that he had a slight heart attack, that his heart stopped momentarily. He knows his sons are not models of trustworthiness. The report about Joseph is absolutely incredible. Are they playing a cruel hoax on him?
- **27**, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.—What persuades him that they are speaking the truth is the sight of the wagons, distinctively Egyptian vehicles that he would not expect his sons to have. At this point, he recovers from his attack

C. (:28) Resolve of Jacob to Visit Joseph in Egypt – Renewed Commitment and Energy

"Then Israel said, 'It is enough; my son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die.'"

Deffinbaugh: All of the evidence led to the conclusion that Joseph was indeed alive. The broken spirit of Jacob was immediately revived. He now yearned to see his son before his death. And lest we think that Jacob was on the verge of death, let us recall that he had yet seventeen years to spend with his son in Egypt (**47:28**). All that Jacob had feared was going against him suddenly appeared in its true light. It was the hand of God in his life, sparing him from the physical and spiritual death of Canaan by preparing a place for him in Egypt.

CONCLUSION:

2 Cor. 5:18-21

How are we doing in the area of being ambassadors for Christ to spread His ministry of reconciliation?

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is the relationship between forgiveness, repentance, reconciliation and restoration?
- 2) How can Joseph have acted with no bitterness or rancor towards his brothers after these many years?
- 3) Was Joseph wrong to show partiality towards Benjamin?
- 4) What lessons can be drawn from this chapter that relate to our own reconciliation to God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: The Key to Reconciliation

The key to reconciliation is your attitude and the key to your attitude is submitting yourself to the sovereign God.

Joseph made a choice before God to forgive his brothers and to trust God to deal with them and to right the wrongs. To forgive means that you choose to absorb the pain and loss caused by the other person and they go free, even when they don't deserve it. Forgiveness is costly for the one doing the forgiving. When God forgives our sins in Christ, it doesn't mean that He brushes them aside. It means that Jesus Christ paid the penalty so that we could go free. Jesus said that just as God has forgiven us, so we must forgive others from our hearts (Matt. 18:21-35).

So the key to reconciliation is your **attitude**. Ask God to give you His love and forgiveness toward the one who has wronged you. You've got to focus on your attitude, not on the other person's behavior or attitude. It's clear that Joseph had forgiven his brothers long before they came to a place of repentance. . .

(1) You must learn to relate God to every event in your life, whether good or seemingly bad. Joseph had some things happen to him which were very unfair and unpleasant. He went in obedience to his father to find out the welfare of his brothers, only to have them sell him into slavery. He resisted Potiphar's wife and maintained his moral purity only to be falsely accused and thrown in prison. He was kind and sensitive toward the cupbearer and baker in interpreting their dreams, only to have the cupbearer forget him for the next two years. And yet Joseph related God to all these unfair events. . .

(2) You must submit to God's sovereignty in every event in your life. This is a matter of the heart, where you trust that He is good and that He is in control, even when it seems otherwise. Your only other option is to believe that what happens is a matter of chance. That's the evolutionist's explanation for life: We're here as the product of chance plus time. Maybe we can pull some of our own strings to improve our lot, but some things are just due to chance. But many Christians, who would deny evolution, live as if it were true when they complain about trials as if they've been dealt a bad hand in the game of life. When things go wrong, they don't stop to acknowledge that God is dealing with them and to submit to His sovereignty.

Steven Cole: Experiencing God's Provision

To experience God's provision, we must remove any hindrances and look beyond the gifts to the Giver.

1. To experience God's provision, we must remove any hindrances. Our text reveals five hindrances that can keep us from experiencing God's provision:

- A. **Quarreling** can hinder us from experiencing God's provision.
- B. **Guilt** can hinder us from experiencing God's provision
- C. **Doubt** can hinder us from experiencing God's provision.
- D. **Difficulties** can hinder us from experiencing God's provision
- E. **Despair** can hinder us from experiencing God's provision.

2. To experience God's provision, we must look beyond the gifts to the Giver.

- A. Look to the evidence of His faithfulness.
- B. Look to the Lord Himself.

Constable: Though the Bible never identifies Joseph as a type of Christ, many analogies are significant. Both were special objects of their father's love. Their brethren hated them both, rejected their superior claims, and conspired to kill them. Both became a blessing to the Gentiles. Both received a bride. Joseph reconciled with his brethren and exalted them, and so will Christ. .

Quoting **Waltke:** Both Abraham and Jacob figuratively receive their sons back from the dead. Both sons prefigure the death and resurrection of Christ, but Joseph even more so. Both are not only alive but rulers over all (cf. **Acts 2:32-34; Philippians 2:6-11**). Jacob's response on hearing the incredibly good news prefigures the response of the disciples when the women tell them that Christ is alive, having been raised from the dead. They too greet the news at first with stunned disbelief and finally with unspeakable joy when it is proved with many infallible proofs (cf. **Luke 24:9-49; John 21:1-9; John 21:24-25; Acts 1:3**). Their faith, like Jacob's, revives them, reorients their lives, and makes them pilgrims venturing from land plagued by famine to the best land imaginable.

Deffinbaugh: Benjamin was given five changes of garments and 300 pieces of silver. We have seen partiality before. Isaac preferred Esau above Jacob. Jacob favored Rachel above Leah. In every instance, partiality had disastrous effects. Why, then, did Joseph also show partiality to Benjamin? Of course, Benjamin was the only other son of his mother. And Benjamin did not have a part in the sale of Joseph either. But was this partiality toward him wise?

I believe that Joseph's actions were deliberate and with good intention. Partiality was one of the factors in Joseph's rejection by his brethren (cf. 37:3-4). Joseph had shown partiality toward Benjamin just as his father had persistently done, but now his brothers had chosen not to sacrifice him for their own gain. Joseph, I believe, did not avoid showing partiality toward Benjamin because that is the way life is. Some people are better looking than others. Some are good athletes, while others are not. Some are smarter than others. Life is full of distinctions. Joseph did not stop making distinctions because they would always exist, and his brothers would have to learn to live with them. Our Lord seemed to place Peter, James, and John in a privileged position, and John was called "the one whom Jesus loved." Repentance and conversion do not make our problems go away, but they do give us the strength to deal with our problems.

Principles of Forgiveness:

- (1) Biblical forgiveness should be granted quickly.
- (2) Biblical forgiveness should be granted privately.
- (3) Biblical forgiveness must be given freely and unconditionally
- (4) Forgiveness that is biblical must be granted sacrificially.
- (5) Biblical forgiveness is not provisional, but permanent.
- (6) Biblical forgiveness seeks the correction and restoration of the offender.

Bruce Goettsche: Practical Suggestions Related to Forgiveness:

- Focus on God's Sovereignty rather than Your Pain.
- Remind yourself of the Kinship You Have With the one who hurt you.
- Realize that Action comes before feeling.
- Understand that forgiveness makes sense.
- Ask God to help you.
- Give Yourself Time.

F. B. Meyer: It may be that we have here an exact representation of a scene which shall be transacted some day, when our Lord makes Himself known to His brethren, the Jews. The Apostle Paul tells us that ultimately all Israel shall be saved; and may not this be brought about, when He says to them, "*I am Jesus, your brother, whom ye delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate?*" Was not Joseph's wife rejoiced by his joy, and will not the Church of the redeemed be glad when that great reconciliation takes effect? What a beautiful interpretation Joseph put on their act of treachery -- "*God did send me before you.*" Let us always trace God's plan in the malevolence and opposition of men. They could have no power at all, unless it was given them from above. Joseph supplied all their needs - wagons to carry, food to nourish, raiment to clothe, and greetings to welcome!

TEXT: Genesis 46:1-34

TITLE: *DRASTIC CHANGE IN LIFE'S CIRCUMSTANCES – RELOCATING TO EGYPT*

BIG IDEA:

DRASTIC CHANGES NEED SUPPORT:

- FROM CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S WILL,
- FROM COMMITMENT FROM ONE'S EXTENDED FAMILY
- AND FROM COUNSEL FROM WISE LEADERSHIP

INTRODUCTION:

What types of **drastic changes** have you experienced in following God's will for your life? Maybe these changes involve new places to live . . . new employment . . . new ministry opportunities . . . new relationships. How did you arrive at the conviction to make such a drastic change in your circumstances?

Steven Cole: What is the longest you have ever lived in one house? If it's more than five years, you're above the national average. One out of five Americans moves every year. We are a transient nation. . .

In **Genesis 46:1-30**, Jacob moves his whole extended family down to Egypt. It was not an easy thing for a 130-year-old man to do! There was a famine in Canaan and his son Joseph had promised them the best of Egypt. Jacob desperately wanted to see Joseph, whom for 22 years, he had thought was dead. But Jacob knew that his grandfather, Abraham, had gotten into trouble in Egypt. God had forbidden his father, Isaac, to go there during another famine (**26:2**). Jacob knew that God's promise involved Canaan, not Egypt. So he stopped in Beersheba to seek the Lord and did not move on to Egypt until the Lord gave him a green light. One of the main reasons Moses included this section was to show how this move out of the Promised Land fit in with the covenant plan of God.

Ligonier Ministries: One of our deepest longings as human beings is to be reunited with loved ones after a long absence. Consider, for example, the wife of a soldier who leaps into his arms after he returns from battle, showering him with kisses and tears. Or think of the little boy expecting a visit from his grandparents who live in another state. He waits for hours by the front window of his house so that he will be the first to see them arrive. Whether we have children away in college or a friend who lives hundreds of miles away, all of us have known the pain of absence and the joy of reunion.

Today's passage illustrates this experience marvelously. Having paused to list the names of those sons of Jacob who came into Egypt at Joseph's request, Moses now describes the first encounter between Jacob and Joseph in over two decades (**Gen. 37:2; 41:46-54; 45:6**). We see that Joseph "prepared his chariot" to meet with his father (**46:29**), an easily omitted detail that Moses included in order to remind readers of Joseph's magnificent status and therefore, his gracious forgiveness of those who hated him. He had the power to do otherwise, but Joseph was kind to his repentant brothers, showing us how God's people repay evil with good (**Rom. 12:14-21**).

After joyful tears and embraces, Jacob said he could die in peace after reuniting with Joseph (**Gen. 46:30**). The patriarch had been convinced that he would restlessly mourn Joseph's death

all the way to his own grave (37:29–35), but he could face his end with confidence and hope after seeing his son alive. Christians have a similar experience today. Figuratively speaking, Joseph died and rose again in Jacob’s eyes. We now know the One greater than Joseph who was literally resurrected. Thus, we can face death with peace (1 Peter 1:3).

DRASTIC CHANGES NEED SUPPORT FROM CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S WILL, COMMITMENT FROM ONE’S EXTENDED FAMILY AND COUNSEL FROM WISE LEADERSHIP

I. (:1-4) CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S WILL TO UNDERTAKE THE JOURNEY

A. (:1) Seeking God’s Will at Beersheba

1. Stepping out in Faith

“So Israel set out with all that he had, and came to Beersheba,”

Parunak: Beersheba is traditionally regarded as the southern extreme of the promised land (“*from Dan even to Beersheba,*” **Judg 20:1; 1 Sam 3:20; 2 Sam 3:10;** etc.).

Deffinbaugh: Jacob had hastily packed his belongings, gathered his family, and begun the long trek to Egypt, just as Joseph had urged (**45:9**). When he had gotten as far as Beersheba, Jacob seemed to feel the full impact of what he was setting out to do. Beersheba was a place rich in the history of his forefathers. Abraham had called upon the name of the Lord here (**21:33**) and had settled in this place after offering up Isaac on Mt. Moriah (**22:19**). Here at Beersheba Isaac had been visited by God, and the covenant made with Abraham was reiterated (**26:23-25**). It would seem that Jacob lived at Beersheba when he deceived his father and obtained his blessing (**chapter 27**), for it was from this place that he had fled from Esau and departed to Haran (**28:10**). . .

How, then, could Jacob leave Canaan to enter Egypt without stepping outside the will of God? It is this matter which must have overwhelmed Jacob. I believe that he determined not to go one step further until his doubts were resolved. Consequently, it was at Beersheba that Jacob offered sacrifices to the God of his father (verse 1).

2. Sacrificing at Beersheba

“and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac.”

Parunak: There are three significant things about Israel’s sacrifice at Beersheba:

- It is the site of Isaac’s only recorded altar (**26:23-25**), at the point at which God confirmed with him the covenant to Abraham. On reaching this location, Israel recalls this crisis in his father’s life, and pauses to consider his place as the next link in the chain of promise.
- This may be one reason that this is described as “*sacrificing sacrifices*” rather than “*building an altar*.” Perhaps he is using the very altar that Isaac used years before. Almost all worship in Genesis is described in the words, “*he built an altar and called on the name of the Lord*.” Jacob does this also (**33:20; 35:7**), but here and at **31:54** (after his covenant with Laban) he is said to “*sacrifice sacrifice[s]*” (singular in **31**, plural here). It may be useful to meditate on the differences between the two terms.

a. Building an altar leaves a visible witness to the worshiper's devotion to God. This significance is confirmed in the frequent association with the action, "*call upon the name of the Lord.*" Where the sacrifice is described more fully (**8:20; 22:2**), it is always a whole burnt offering, which represents the dedication of the worshiper to the Lord.

b. The phrase "*sacrifice sacrifices*" is frequently refined elsewhere in scripture to indicate that the sacrifices in question are peace offerings, offered in thanksgiving to God for his gracious gifts (e.g., **Exod 24:5; Lev 17:5; 19:5; 1 Sam 10:8; 11:15; 1 Kings 8:63; 2 Chr 30:22; 33:16**).

- Compare this sacrifice with Jacob's previous three.

a. The first is the peace offering at Mount Gilead in **31:54**. Jacob has not yet wrestled with God, or acknowledged him as his own God at Bethel. He is like an unbeliever who is beginning to be conscious of the Lord's goodness to him. The Lord is not even mentioned in the verse; this is like most Thanksgiving dinners in America, whose participants are only vaguely aware of the one to whom they give thanks.

b. Next, he built an altar at Shechem (**33:20**). It was right that he should build an altar, but he had promised to do this at Bethel (**28:22**), not Shechem. Now he acknowledges the Lord, but his worship falls short of the form that God has ordained.

c. Finally, he fulfills his promise with an altar at Bethel (**35:7**). This is the point, according to his promise in **28:20-22**, at which he takes the Lord as his God.

d. The previous sacrifices and altars took place in the context of journeys commanded by God (**31:3; 35:1**). Now he is on the move again, but has received no divine command. The last time he undertook such a journey (**35:16**), the result was not blessing, but the death of his favorite wife. This experience makes him extremely apprehensive about this trip. When he reaches Beersheba with its memories of his father's sacrifice, he pauses to give thanks to God for the news about Joseph, and to acknowledge his dependence on the Lord. Here is the believer who is walking daily with the Lord.

B. (:2-4) Securing God's Promise and Reassurance

1. (:2) Divine Communication

*"And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night and said, 'Jacob, Jacob.'
And he said, 'Here I am.'"*

Chuck Smith: Note the two names used in these verses. "*And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and God spoke to Israel in the night saying, Jacob, Jacob.*" His given name was Jacob, a name that described his old nature, schemer, surplander. God had given to him a new name Israel, (Ruled by God). Sometimes he is still Jacob, sometimes he is Israel. We also have two natures, the old nature of the flesh and the new nature of the Spirit. Sometimes we react after the old nature and sometimes after the new. Jacob was the name of his weakness and Israel was the name of his strength. Israel had begun his journey to Egypt with all that he had.

2. (:3a) Divine Charge

*"And He said, 'I am God, the God of your father;
do not be afraid to go down to Egypt,'"*

W. Griffith Thomas: God revealed Himself by a twofold name. “*I am El*” (the Mighty One), and “*I am the God thy father.*” Thus was Jacob encouraged by a revelation of the Divine character and attitude.

3. (:3b-4) Divine Certainty -- Four Reassuring Promises

a. Promise of Abundant Multiplication

“for I will make you a great nation there.”

Hughes: the fresh revelation to Jacob was that his family would become a great nation “*there*” – in Egypt. Astonishingly, Israel would *not* become a great nation in the land of promise but on the pagan Nile! This was amazing but encouraging. Great things would come out of his move to Egypt. Thus he must not fear.

b. Promise of Abiding Presence

“I will go down with you to Egypt,”

Hughes: This recalled Jacob’s dream of a ladder extending between Heaven and earth with angels ascending and descending upon it . . . God knows no territorial constraints. He was with Jacob in Mesopotamia and likewise in Canaan (cf. **31:3; 35:3**), and now in Egypt it would be the same. Not to fear.

c. Promise of Anticipated Return

“and I will also surely bring you up again;”

d. Promise of Affectionate Death and Burial

“and Joseph will close your eyes.”

Death would be peaceful surrounded by those he loved

II. (:5-27) COMMITMENT FROM ONE’S EXTENDED FAMILY TO JOIN IN THE JOURNEY

A. (:5-7) Completion of Journey from Beersheba to Egypt

“Then Jacob arose from Beersheba; and the sons of Israel carried their father Jacob and their little ones and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him. 6 And they took their livestock and their property, which they had acquired in the land of Canaan, and came to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him: 7 his sons and his grandsons with him, his daughters and his granddaughters, and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.”

B. (:8-25) Catalog of Family Leaders

Introduction: *“Now these are the names of the sons of Israel, Jacob and his sons, who went to Egypt:”*

Deffinbaugh: Moses here intended not to name every person who went into Egypt, but every leader of family or clan who would come forth from Egypt. It was vitally important for those who came forth from Egypt to know their “roots” since the land would be divided according to tribes. In addition to this, tasks were assigned and the nation was administrated by tribal and family divisions. The purpose of Moses in this genealogy, therefore, is selective. It does not intend to name every person coming out of Canaan, but to name those who will become tribe and family heads. Thus there is a genealogical continuity throughout the entire sojourn in Egypt.

Steven Cole: We need to remember that to the first readers of this book, these names meant something. This is a list of every tribe (and every major family group within that tribe) that later formed the nation Israel. Every Hebrew knew his family ancestry. The division of labor, the organization of the army, and the parceling of the land all were based on the tribes. Even the coming of the Messiah was through the particular tribe of Judah.

1. (:8b-15) Sons of Leah

a. (:8b-9) Reuben

“Reuben, Jacob's first-born.

And the sons of Reuben: Hanoch and Pallu and Hezron and Carmi.”

b. (:10) Simeon

“And the sons of Simeon: Jemuel and Jamin and Ohad and Jachin and Zohar and Shaul the son of a Canaanite woman.”

c. (:11) Levi

“And the sons of Levi: Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.”

d. (:12a) Judah

“And the sons of Judah: Er and Onan and Shelah and Perez and Zerah (but Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan).”

e. (:12b) Perez

“And the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamul.”

f. (:13) Issachar

“And the sons of Issachar: Tola and Puvvah and Iob and Shimron.”

g. (:14) Zebulun

“And the sons of Zebulun: Sered and Elon and Jahleel.”

(:15) Summary: *“These are the sons of Leah, whom she bore to Jacob in Paddan-aram, with his daughter Dinah; all his sons and his daughters numbered thirty-three.”*

2. (:16-18) Sons of Zilpah

a. (:16) Gad

“And the sons of Gad: Ziphion and Haggi, Shuni and Ezbon, Eri and Arodi and Areli.”

b. (:17a) Asher

“And the sons of Asher: Imnah and Ishvah and Ishvi and Beriah and their sister Serah.”

c. (:17b) Beriah

“And the sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel.”

(:18) Summary: *“These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Leah; and she bore to Jacob these sixteen persons.”*

3. (:19-22) Sons of Rachel

(:19) Introduction: *“The sons of Jacob's wife Rachel: Joseph and Benjamin.”*

a. (:20) Joseph

“Now to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera, priest of On, bore to him.”

b. (:21) Benjamin

“And the sons of Benjamin: Bela and Becher and Ashbel, Gera and Naaman, Ehi and Rosh, Muppim and Huppim and Ard.”

(:22) Summary:

“These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob; there were fourteen persons in all.”

4. (:23-25) Sons of Bilhah

a. (:23) Dan

“And the sons of Dan: Hushim.”

b. (:24) Naphtali

“And the sons of Naphtali: Jahzeel and Guni and Jezer and Shillem.”

(:25) Summary: *These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to his daughter Rachel, and she bore these to Jacob; there were seven persons in all.*

C. (:26-27) Closing Summary

“All the persons belonging to Jacob, who came to Egypt, his direct descendants, not including the wives of Jacob's sons, were sixty-six persons in all,

“and the sons of Joseph, who were born to him in Egypt were two;”

“all the persons of the house of Jacob, who came to Egypt, were seventy.”

Parunak: The second summary count (v.27 “70”) is equal to the sum of the counts for the four wives, and includes “*all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt.*” The first summary count is derived from this by subtracting Jacob himself, Joseph, and his two sons, to give the 66 “*that came with Jacob into Egypt*” (v.26). Note that Jacob is in the 70, but not in the 66.

The number 70, while literally defensible, also has a strong symbolic message. **Genesis 10** listed seventy nations in the world after the flood. **John Sailhammer:**

“Just as the 'seventy nations' represent all the descendants of Adam, so now the 'seventy sons' represent all the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the children of Israel. Here in narrative form is a demonstration of the theme in **Deuteronomy 32:8** that God apportioned the boundaries of the nations (Ge 10) according to the number of the children of Israel. Thus the writer has gone to great lengths to portray the new nation of Israel as a new humanity and Abraham as a second Adam. The blessing that is to come through Abraham and his seed is a restoration of the original blessing of Adam, a blessing which was lost in the Fall.”

Number 70 symbolic for sense of completeness as well

W. H. Griffith Thomas: According to the Septuagint the number of those who came with Jacob into Egypt was seventy-five, and this number was used by Stephen (**Acts vii. 14**). The additional five seem to be the grandsons of Joseph, who are mentioned in the Septuagint version from which he quoted.

III. (:28-34) COUNSEL FROM WISE LEADERSHIP AS REUNION TAKES PLACE

A. (:28) Guidance From Judah

“Now he sent Judah before him to Joseph, to point out the way before him to Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen.”

B. (:29-30) Emotional Reunion

1. (:29) Reaction of Joseph

“And Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; as soon as he appeared before him, he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a long time.”

S. Lewis Johnson: Now we went to say right at the beginning that it is certainly true that it is our mind and our spirit for the mind and the spirit are identified in Scripture as closely related. It is the mind and the spirit that should determine our relationship to the Lord God. We are related to him not by our feelings, but we are related to him by the understanding that the Holy Spirit gives us of the truths of Holy Scripture. We have in the Bible the propositions of divine truth. These propositions are propositions however of spiritual realities and our minds are to grasp them, and we are to be guided and directed by our minds.

But God has also given us **emotions**, and it is not only biblical, but it is desirable for our emotions that have free expression under the guidance and direction of our minds and our spirits, and we notice that there is a great deal of weeping and lamentation here as God brings the reconciliation between the brothers and then finally brings Jacob into the presence of Joseph. There is nothing wrong with shedding tears in the experiences of life and if we are to fully understand divine truth and fully appreciate it, there should be some expression in our emotional life . . .

2. (:30) Reaction of Israel

“Then Israel said to Joseph, ‘Now let me die, since I have seen your face, that you are still alive.’”

Would still live an additional 17 years (**47:28**).

Parunak: Jacob can now die in peace, because everything for which he felt responsible is now settled.

- He distrusted his sons (**45:26**), and may have suspected that they dealt ill with Joseph. How could such sons deliver the blessing of Abraham? But now the breach has been overcome. Through Joseph’s bold and loving discipline, they have been reformed, and are changed men.

- Joseph was the one on whom the promises rested, according to his early dreams. If he is dead, is the promise cut off? But he is alive; God’s promises are true after all.

- The famine must have weighed heavily on Jacob, as the one responsible for providing for his family. Now he sees Joseph in a position to provide for the family’s needs, and he is confident that they will be fed.

Constable: Jacob had said that the loss of his sons would bring him to his grave in mourning (**Genesis 37:35; Genesis 42:38**). Joseph’s "resurrection" had enabled his father to die in peace. Similarly the resurrection of a greater Joseph has allowed many to face death with courage and hope (cf. **Philippians 1:21-26; 1 Peter 1:3**).

C. **(:31-34) Guidance from Joseph**

1. (:31-32) What Joseph Will Tell Pharaoh

“And Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, ‘I will go up and tell Pharaoh, and will say to him, My brothers and my father's household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me; and the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock; and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.’”

Constable: Egyptians loathed shepherds because agriculture was the basis of Egyptian society and the Nile River sustained it (**Genesis 46:34**). The Egyptians organized their fields carefully and controlled them relatively easily. The comparative difficulty of controlling sheep, goats, and cows led the Egyptians to think of those who cared for these animals as crude and barbaric. [Note: See **Keil and Delitzsch**, 1:374-75 and my note on **43:32**.] Probably too the more civilized Egyptians distrusted any nomadic peoples. [Note: **Wenham**, Genesis 16-50 , p445.]

This resulted in the Israelites living separate from the Egyptians where they increased and developed a distinct national identity and vocation as God had promised.

2. (:33-34) How the Family Should Respond to Pharaoh

“And it shall come about when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' that you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,' that you may live in the land of Goshen; for every shepherd is loathsome to the Egyptians.”

Hughes: Joseph’s emphasis to Pharaoh regarding his family’s pastoral vocation was intentionally nuanced. Since the seventy brought their own livestock, they would not be an economic burden. And more, their interests in husbandry would discourage nepotism. But most of all, Joseph was subtly telling Pharaoh that Goshen was the best place for his flock-keeping family, as it was pastureland and at the edges of Egyptian society. In this respect, what Joseph told the seventy to say to Pharaoh was somewhat of a master piece of diplomacy. . . Thus they were afforded both separation and prosperity.

CONCLUSION:

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is your decision-making process for committing to drastic change? Do you really believe in the reality of God’s guidance?
- 2) Why did Jacob stop over in Beersheba before proceeding to Egypt?
- 3) What promises from God help to alleviate your fears?
- 4) How does Joseph package up the truth to his advantage when dealing with Pharaoh?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: Overview

The third cycle in bringing Jacob’s family to Egypt occupies all of **Gen 46-50**. We see the same themes already encountered in **ch. 42** and **43-45**:

	42	43-45	46-50
Preparation	1-2	43:1-14	46:1-4
Journey to Egypt	3-5	15	46:5-27
Interaction with Joseph	42:6-25	43:16-45:24	46:31-47:10; 50:14-21
Joseph's bounty to them	25	44:1-5; 45:16-24	47:11-27 (contrast with Egyptians)
Return to Canaan	26-28	45:25	50:7-13
Bowing down to Joseph	6	43:26,28; 44:14	47:31
Joseph's weeping	24	43:30, 45:14, 15	46:29, 50:1, 17

Chuck Smith: GOD WANTED TO REMOVE HIS FEAR.

- A. God does not want his children to fear,
 - 1. The Bible tells us that fear has torment.
 - 2. God does not want to see you tormented by fear.
- B. Fear makes you unhappy.
 - 1. God wants His children to have fullness of joy.
- C. Fear has a way enervating you, it is very debilitating.
 - 1. It can keep you from moving out into new ventures.

Bruce Goettsche: Crossroads Decision

It would be nice if the decisions of life was always clear cut. We wish we always knew where God wanted us to turn and what God wanted us to do. But that is not always the case. In fact, there are times in our lives when we aren't sure which way to turn. There are times when we face a major decision and we seem to be pulled in different directions.

Maybe this isn't such a big deal to other people. But it is to us. We want God's guidance because we feel that if we walk in the path God desires for us . . . life will be more enjoyable, and it will result in greater blessing to us, and greater honor to Him. But we also know, Satan is at work to trip us up. Sometimes he makes bad things look good.

We tend to lead with our impulses rather than with our brains. We often make decisions based on instinct rather than good sense. So at those times in life when our decisions have a lot riding on them, we are especially concerned to make the right decision.

- when choosing a mate
- when selecting a college
- when choosing an occupation
- when considering a job change
- when relocation is an option
- when making decisions involving our children
- when you must make medical decisions
- when you are making estate decisions
- when you are trying to decide where to be involved in ministry
- and even when you are making a major purchase

Because of the nature of these decisions we want to be sure we are in God's will. And that is why we pause at these verses in **Genesis 46**. Here we see Jacob at a crossroads. He is facing a major decision to move his family out of the land promised to his fathers. . . .to the land where his son Joseph was ruling. But Jacob has mixed signals and feelings. On the one hand, he wants to see his son and it seems that God has blessed him greatly. On the other hand, he is living in the land that God has promised to his forefathers . . . is it wise to leave that land and go to another country. Jacob is torn. And at this time of confusion Jacob shows us how to handle those times in our lives.

Perhaps what I have today is overly simplistic. . . I prefer to think of it as foundational. We must get these three steps clear in our head before we add other qualifiers to finding God's will. So, let's dig in.

1) STEP ONE . . . ASK FOR HELP

It is when we have no other recourse that we turn to the Lord. Why is that? Why don't we stop FIRST? Why is it that we seek guidance from every place but the Lord? I thought about this some this week. I tried brainstorming reasons why I don't turn to the Lord at the beginning of the decision making process. And these are some of the possibilities I came up with,

- We have a **faulty view of God** . . . We believe He doesn't care, or He can't help, or He won't help. Maybe we believe that God doesn't want to be bothered with the decisions that weigh on my heart. Certainly we would never profess these things . . . but maybe it is what we really believe.
- We have a **faulty view of our own ability**. We think we can do it on my own. We believe that we can make our own way. We think that we can avoid the Devil's traps and find the right way without help. But surely we can't even say those words without realizing the foolishness of them. We are prone to make decisions based on emotions. We are shortsighted and tend to live for the moment.
- We **do not see the great disparity between the philosophy of the world and the wisdom of God**. At times we figure that what God wants is for us to be "happy". So, we conclude that we should do whatever will lead to that end. But that is the world's approach. What God wants is for us to be holy. He wants to lead us to faithfulness and to prepare us, not for a life of indulgence but a life of faithfulness. God doesn't want to lead us to momentary happiness . . . He wants to lead us to an abiding joy.

2) SECOND STEP: WAIT FOR AN ANSWER

3) STEP THREE: GO FORWARD WITH CONFIDENCE

W. H. Griffith Thomas:

Sometimes we are tempted to think that God's love is not wise. Circumstances happen to us which we find very difficult to reconcile with the love of God. Jacob had had the promise of the land of Canaan, and yet he was called upon to depart into Egypt. Not only so, but his family were out of that land for centuries; and as the days and years went on, it must have been a problem how to reconcile their continuance in Egypt with the assurance of Canaan for a

possession. But they did not see "*the end of the Lord.*" There was nothing arbitrary in God's dealings. Jacob yielded up his possessions in Canaan temporarily, to receive them permanently a hundredfold. Before he could inherit the land he and his must be trained and disciplined to enjoy it. They were called upon to forego a partial possession in order afterwards to value a complete possession, and in all this we see the wisdom of God's love. The Divine promises were unchangeable, the Divine love to Abraham and his seed was unalterable, and yet the Divine wisdom knew how best to fulfil those promises and to manifest that love. What a call this is for unbroken and enthusiastic faith! Let us trust where we cannot trace. Let us rest our hearts upon the wisdom of God's love. The pathway may sometimes be hard, but God still lives and loves. Experiences may often be trying and testing, but God abides faithful. Our life may be shadowed by sorrow and suffering, but the cloud will always have a silver lining, since God will never leave nor forsake His own.

TEXT: Genesis 47:1-31

TITLE: *PROVIDENTIAL PROSPERITY IN THE MIDST OF SURROUNDING POVERTY*

BIG IDEA:

GOD PROSPERS THOSE WHO SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM AGENDA

INTRODUCTION:

In studying the book of Genesis we must never lose sight of **God's Kingdom Agenda**. We began the book in Paradise – the Garden of Eden where all was right and good in the world dominated by God's righteousness and justice. After the Fall of man, we saw the introduction in **Gen. 3** of the promise of the seed of the woman who would eventually come to accomplish ultimate redemption and restoration. The worldwide focus of God's program recorded the increasing wickedness that culminated in the Flood with God saving only a small remnant in the family of Noah via the ark. As mankind again began to populate the world, it took God's sovereign judgment of the multiplication of tongues and dispersion as a result of man's pride and rebellion at the Tower of Babel in order to further God's Kingdom Agenda. Then we saw God's focus narrow to working through the lineage of one man – Abraham – and his key descendants – Isaac, Jacob and now Judah and Joseph. The covenant promises made to Abraham were critical to the ultimate blessing that God intends to bring upon the entire world.

We have seen God's sovereign providence at work in protecting and prospering Abraham and then Isaac and then Jacob and now Joseph to accomplish His ultimate purposes. We are reminded of Christ's command coupled with His promise of reassurance in **Matt. 6:33**: *“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you.”*

What are we making the priority in our life? Can we expect God to prosper us if we obey His commands and devote ourselves to His program for today which is the growth of His church? What will that prosperity look like in our lives?

Let's study **3 Key Areas Where God Prospered Joseph**

GOD PROSPERS THOSE WHO SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM AGENDA

I. (:1-12) JOSEPH'S DIPLOMACY -- EXERCISING POLITICAL WISDOM TO ENSURE THE SUCCESSFUL SETTLEMENT OF HIS FAMILY IN IDEAL INCUBATION CONDITIONS IN EGYPT

A. (:1-6) Expecting Big Blessings From God

1. (:1) Laying the Groundwork

“Then Joseph went in and told Pharaoh, and said, ‘My father and my brothers and their flocks and their herds and all that they have, have come out of the land of Canaan; and behold, they are in the land of Goshen.’”

Parunak: The seclusion of Israel in Goshen is crucial to God's purposes. It isolates them from the main stream of Egyptian population and the priestly centers on the central Nile. They can grow into a nation while retaining their distinctive identity, without the corruption that Canaan had already begun to insinuate among them.

2. (:2-4) Coaching for Success

“And he took five men from among his brothers, and presented them to Pharaoh. Then Pharaoh said to his brothers, ‘What is your occupation?’

So they said to Pharaoh, ‘Your servants are shepherds, both we and our fathers.’ And they said to Pharaoh, ‘We have come to sojourn in the land, for there is no pasture for your servants’ flocks, for the famine is severe in the land of Canaan. Now, therefore, please let your servants live in the land of Goshen.’”

3. (:5-6) Reaping the Rewards

“Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘Your father and your brothers have come to you. The land of Egypt is at your disposal; settle your father and your brothers in the best of the land, let them live in the land of Goshen; and if you know any capable men among them, then put them in charge of my livestock.’”

R C Sproul: The pharaoh graciously grants the requests of Jacob’s family and even puts them in charge of his livestock (vv. 5–6), establishing Jacob and his sons as court officials and thereby investing them with legal rights and protection. Incidentally, this turn of events corroborates what is known about ancient Egyptian civilization, again demonstrating Scripture’s trustworthiness. A later pharaoh, Rameses III, employed over 3,200 foreigners as overseers of his vast herds of cattle and other animals.

Received blessings that surpassed the initial scope of the request – family members were to be put in charge of Pharaoh’s livestock

B. (:7-10) Wisely Interacting with Those in Authority

1. (:7) Introductory Blessing

“Then Joseph brought his father Jacob and presented him to Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.”

Parunak: —Lit, “stood him up.” Jacob is so old and feeble that he must be carried into Pharaoh’s presence.

Heb 7:7 -- “the less is blessed of the better.”

2. (:8-9) Maintaining Pilgrim Mentality

“And Pharaoh said to Jacob, ‘How many years have you lived?’

So Jacob said to Pharaoh, ‘The years of my sojourning are one hundred and thirty; few and unpleasant have been the years of my life, nor have they attained the years that my fathers lived during the days of their sojourning.’”

Parunak:

- “Few” in comparison with his fathers; Abraham died at 175 (25:7), and Isaac at 180 (35:28); Jacob is now only 130, and will die at 147 (47:28).

- “*Evil*” in recognition of the difficulties through which God has brought him: strife in his parental home, abuse and deception by Laban, strife between his wives, the rape of his daughter, the viciousness of Simeon and Levi, the loss of Rachel, Reuben’s rape of his handmaid, the apparent death of Joseph, and now famine that forces him to leave the land of promise. All of these were necessary for God to form him and his family; but subjectively, all were unpleasant and “evil.”

R C Sproul: As bad as his life has been, it represents only a “*sojourning*” (47:9) — a temporary residence in exile from his heavenly home, according to **Hebrews 11:13–16**. Life in this present age, while by no means insignificant, will pale in comparison to our final home where we will dwell with the Lord on a renewed earth (**Rev. 21:1–8**). Jacob believed this truth, though he grasped it only in shadows. Under the new covenant, we long for this day with fuller clarity. John Chrysostom said believers in all ages “have the same attitude to this life as if living in a foreign land” (*Homilies on Genesis*, 65.10).

Being careful not to present himself as a rival kingdom that would pose any threat to Pharaoh

3. (:10) Concluding Blessing

“And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from his presence.”

C. (:11-12) Receiving Big Blessings From God

1. (:11) Possession of Choice Land

“So Joseph settled his father and his brothers, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had ordered.”

Parunak: They are not treated as nomads, but are given legal title to their homesteads. At this point, they have more of a legal claim to the land of their exile than they do to the land that God has promised them!

2. (:12) Provision of Essential Food

“And Joseph provided his father and his brothers and all his father's household with food, according to their little ones.”

II. (:13-26) JOSEPH’S BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATIVE SKILL -- ACQUIRING WEALTH FOR PHARAOH WHILE MAKING THE PEOPLE GRATEFUL SLAVES

A. (:13-22) Enriching Pharaoh’s House -- Consequences of Severe Famine

1. (:13) No Food – in Egypt or Canaan = Opportunity to Demonstrate Business and Administrative Skill

“Now there was no food in all the land, because the famine was very severe, so that the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan languished because of the famine.”

2. (:14-15) No Money – All Money Acquired by Joseph

“And Joseph gathered all the money that was found in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan for the grain which they bought, and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.”

“And when the money was all spent in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came to Joseph and said, ‘Give us food, for why should we die in your presence? For our money is gone.’”

3. (:16-17) No Livestock – All Livestock Acquired by Joseph

“Then Joseph said, ‘Give up your livestock, and I will give you food for your livestock, since your money is gone.’”

“So they brought their livestock to Joseph, and Joseph gave them food in exchange for the horses and the flocks and the herds and the donkeys; and he fed them with food in exchange for all their livestock that year.”

4. (:18-22) No Land – All Land Acquired by Joseph

a. (:18-20) Acquiring Land and People

“And when that year was ended, they came to him the next year and said to him, ‘We will not hide from my lord that our money is all spent, and the cattle are my lord's. There is nothing left for my lord except our bodies and our lands. Why should we die before your eyes, both we and our land? Buy us and our land for food, and we and our land will be slaves to Pharaoh. So give us seed, that we may live and not die, and that the land may not be desolate.’”

“So Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyptian sold his field, because the famine was severe upon them. Thus the land became Pharaoh's.”

Deffinbaugh: The sale of their livestock enabled the Egyptians to live through another year. As the following year approached, they found themselves once again appealing to Joseph for life-sustaining grain. They did not have either money or cattle, but they still possessed two valuable commodities: land and labor. At their own suggestion, the Egyptians exchanged their land and their labor for grain to survive the famine. Their land would belong to Pharaoh, they said, and they would be his slaves. Joseph also agreed to provide them with grain for seed when the famine ended and planting time came (**47:18-19**).

b. (:21-22) Exception: Priests Retained Their Land

“And as for the people, he removed them to the cities from one end of Egypt's border to the other. Only the land of the priests he did not buy, for the priests had an allotment from Pharaoh, and they lived off the allotment which Pharaoh gave them. Therefore, they did not sell their land.”

Deffinbaugh: This was probably for a couple of administrative reasons. First of all, the grain was stored in the cities (**41:35**) and thus could be more efficiently distributed there. Perhaps also, removing the people from their land made the transfer of ownership more tangible and permanent. Once their land was left, the emotional attachment to it would tend to weaken.

B. (:23-26) Exalting the Leadership of Joseph

1. (:23-24) Defining the Feudal Agreement

“Then Joseph said to the people, ‘Behold, I have today bought you and your land for Pharaoh; now, here is seed for you, and you may sow the land. And at the harvest you shall give a fifth to Pharaoh, and four-fifths shall be your own for seed of the field and for your food and for those of your households and as food for your little ones.’”

2. (:25) Receiving Praise from the People

“So they said, ‘You have saved our lives! Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's slaves.’”

3. (:26) Codifying the Feudal Agreement – with One Exception

“And Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt valid to this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth; only the land of the priests did not become Pharaoh's.”

III. (:27-31) JOSEPH'S FAITHFULNESS TO GOD'S COVENANT PURPOSES – PROMISING TO RETURN HIS FATHER'S BONES TO THEIR PROPER BURIAL PLACE IN THE LAND OF CANAAN

A. (:27-28) Historical Summary of God's Providential Provision

1. (:27) Property / Possessions / Progeny

“Now Israel lived in the land of Egypt, in Goshen, and they acquired property in it and were fruitful and became very numerous.”

Parunak: This verse repeats the three themes from 11-12.

- Israel *dwelt*.—This is the same verb as “*placed*” in v.11. Joseph caused them to dwell, and they dwelt there.
- They had *possessions*.—This picks up “*possession*” in v.11, and reemphasizes that Israel gained land from the famine, while the rest of the Egyptians lost their land.
- They ... *grew, and multiplied*.—This is the result of the sustenance with which Joseph provided them on an ongoing basis.

2. (:28) Long Life for Jacob

“And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years; so the length of Jacob's life was one hundred and forty-seven years.”

B. (:29-31) Solemn Oath Confirming Joseph's Faithfulness to God's Covenant Promises

1. (:29-30) Content of the Oath

“When the time for Israel to die drew near, he called his son Joseph and said to him, ‘Please, if I have found favor in your sight, place now your hand under my thigh and deal with me in kindness and faithfulness. Please do not bury me in Egypt, but when I lie down with my fathers, you shall carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burial place.’”

And he said, ‘I will do as you have said.’”

2. (:31a) Confirmation of the Oath

*“And he said, ‘Swear to me.’
So he swore to him.”*

3. (:31b) Celebration of the Oath

“Then Israel bowed in worship at the head of the bed.”

Parunak: Notice both the **content** of this request, its **seriousness**, and the **manner** in which it is phrased.

Content. — Jacob recognizes that he will shortly die. He does not want to be buried in a strange land, but insists that Joseph enter into a solemn oath to return his body to Canaan for burial. This is a sign of his love for the land that God had promised his people, and of his faith in the promise of God to bring him back to the land (**46:4**). Like the previous two episodes in which Joseph’s family comes to Egypt, this one will also end with a return to Canaan. Moses is emphasizing that the migration is temporary, and is already looking forward to the return.

Seriousness. — Recall comments on **24:2**, the only other oath made with the hand under the thigh. “The word *“thigh”* can be used euphemistically for the loins, cf. **Gen 46:26; Ex 1:5**. Understood in this way, such an oath is viewed as binding the one who takes the oath not only to the lord who imposes it, but also to his offspring. . . . The oath is being required by an old man who may die . . . before the promised action is completed. The offspring will have to oversee the execution of the promise.”

Manner. — We might expect Jacob, as the aged patriarch, to assert his superiority as head over the family to Joseph. Quite the contrary, he is submissive and acknowledges Joseph’s superiority to him, in two ways.

- **29**, The clause *“If I have found grace in thy sight”* is a clear sign of deference. It is always addressed by an inferior to a superior, by one who is unworthy to one who is in a position to give grace. . .

- At this point Israel finally accepts fully the implications of the dream, and does obeisance to his son.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What does it mean in a practical sense for you to seek first God’s kingdom and His righteousness?
- 2) What are some tangible ways in which God has prospered you?
- 3) How would you define your role in pursuing God’s kingdom agenda today?

4) What type of special skillset has God equipped you with to seek big blessings from Him?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Parunak: This episode culminates a recurrent theme in Jacob's life. He started out as an arrogant, aggressive, grasping young man, tricking his brother out of the birthright and his father out of the blessing. God's dealings with him have repeatedly humbled him, showing him that promotion comes from the Lord, not from self-advancement: **Psa 75:6,7**, "*For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.*"

- He tricked Esau, but Laban out-tricked him.
- He stole the blessing from Esau, but later offers to return it (**33:11** "*take my blessing that is brought to thee*")
- He accepts his sons' counsel about returning to Egypt for grain (**43:1-11**)
- Now he bows to Joseph, as prophesied in the dream.

Bob Deffinbaugh: A Proper Perspective of Poverty and Prosperity – Pharaoh's Prosperity and Egypt's Poverty

How can we justify Joseph's actions which seem to be exploitive:

- (1) Neither the grain nor the gain belonged to Joseph, but to Pharaoh.
- (2) The favor which Pharaoh bestowed on Joseph's relatives was a matter of grace, which he determined to grant the Israelites just as he did the priests. There was a great discrepancy between the good fortune of the Israelites and the economic failure of the Egyptians, but this was not due to Joseph's choice so much as it was Pharaoh's.
- (3) The "slavery" which the Egyptians submitted to was not the harsh and unfair variety which we know from our own nation's history. Slavery does not have to be cruel and harsh, although it can be, just as a dictatorship does not have to be harsh and repressive (as when Christ will reign over the world). The slavery of which Joseph spoke was more the arrangement that a "sharecropper" would make with a land owner and could still do in our nation today. Slavery to these Egyptians meant the non-ownership of their lands and a 20% tax on their production.
- (4) Such "slavery," even among the Israelites, was not condemned: but the slave owner was cautioned to possess this slave in a gentle and gracious way. This is just what we see Joseph doing.
- (5) We should not be distressed at the actions of Joseph when the Egyptians praised him and regarded him as their savior:

“So they said, ‘You have saved our lives! Let us find favor in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh’s slaves’” (**Genesis 47:25**).

If the Egyptians suggested this arrangement in the first place (**verse 19**) and then gratefully submitted to it (**verse 25**), why should we become so upset, unless, of course, we do not like to think such a thing could happen to us? Such an economic condition may be undesirable, but it is not unbiblical.

- (6) Much of the dilemma of the Egyptians was of their own making. Joseph created neither the seven years of plenty nor the seven years of famine; he predicted both and proposed a program to deal with them. His plan did cost the Egyptians their fortunes and some of their freedom, but it also saved them from certain death. The dire need of the land of Canaan is readily explainable, but why was there this need in Egypt? I must forewarn you that I am reading between the lines, but it is my contention that the dire poverty of the Egyptians was a dilemma of their own making.

If Joseph was the competent administrator he was portrayed to be, surely he informed the general population of the famine coming after the seven years of plenty. This would secure their cooperation in carrying out the plan Joseph had proposed to alleviate the devastation of the coming years of drought. Furthermore, if Joseph believed “that government governs best which governs least,” he would have endeavored to get the nation to follow his example in saving up for the years of adversity. Joseph accumulated one fifth of the crops of the land during the abundant years. That left four-fifths of a bumper crop for the Egyptians. Should they not have been storing up grain for the famine as well as Joseph? But it would seem that they thought the years of plenty would go on and on. Why not spend some of this excess profit? They seem to no more have expected the famine to come than the people in Noah’s day looked for a flood. The Egyptians, I believe, were informed that hard times were coming, yet they failed to prepare for them. No wonder they did not complain about Joseph’s handling of this matter and heralded him as a savior.

All lines of evidence lead us to the same conclusion: Joseph was just as godly a man here as he had been elsewhere. He wisely had prepared for the future, and his laying up a store of wheat made it possible for him to save his nation from disaster.

Doug Van Meter: “Christianity is not something that requires ideal conditions to survive. It thrives best in the hardship. In our hardships God’s strength is made perfect in weakness, and godliness springs like a root from dry ground.” **James Montgomery Boice** wrote those words in summing up the storyline of **Genesis 47**. I think he hit the nail on the head. . .

In these remaining verses of **chapter 47** we read of Joseph’s wise (and some would say ruthless) administration of land and economic affairs in Egypt. All of Egypt is basically brought under a feudal system of government as the people become serfs or tenant farmers on Pharaoh’s land. A 20% tax is levied upon the farmers as the government gives them seed from which they can sustain themselves. Finally, the people are moved into the greater city centres from which they serve Pharaoh and in which they are sustained by the surplus grain supplied through Joseph’s capable administration.

But what I find interesting is that the text nowhere states that the family of Israel was affected by this. That is, the focus is upon what happened to the *Egyptians* due to the famine. It would

appear that the Egyptians were suffering more than were the covenantal family. Of course, this may not have been the case at all, but the silence regarding the Israelites is very vocal. This is not to suggest that they did not experience the onslaught of the effects of the famine (at least in some way) but it is apparent that the famine is not what they themselves were *focused* on. And that is both interesting and instructive. In fact, the emphasis of the text is upon their fruitfulness rather than upon the famine.

I would suggest that this is how it should be for the believer. Rather than being focused on the famine that surrounds us in Egypt, we should rather be focused on what God is doing through us to fulfil His covenant. That is, the expansion of the kingdom of God is to be our focus, not the pessimistic and unbelieving expectations of the famine. . .

God's plan, His purpose and thus His promises assure us of progress in the midst of problems. I want us to see and to believe that while the world may be famishing, the church is to be flourishing. God has not changed and thus we should not lose hope in the midst of difficult times.

J. Ligon Duncan: Land of Goshen

This is one of those beautiful incidents in which God rewards faith temporally. God doesn't always show us that our decisions have been the right decisions by rewarding us immediately providentially. Just because we do the right thing, doesn't mean that everything will immediately turn out right. There are many times in our lives, where in fact, doing the right thing, provokes the evil one, or provokes the world against us. But in God's goodness, in this passage, God rewards the faith of Jacob. Think of the tremendous thing that Jacob has done. He has uprooted himself from the land of promise. He has committed himself to dying in a strange land, a pagan land. He will never again see the land of his fathers with his own eyes. And God rewards the faith to obey in Jacob with kindness in His providence. He confirms that His hand is upon Jacob's family. . .

Why is this long involved tale of Joseph's economic policy shared? First of all, to let you know just how severe the famine was. It lets you know just how great the danger was for the family of Jacob. It lets you know how severe the famine was even in the land of Egypt. So that you can appreciate just how gracious and necessary was God's providence in bringing the family of Jacob down into Egypt. But it also sets you up for a contrast. Even as all of Egypt is becoming enslaved, to Pharaoh, the family of Jacob is free through the provision of Pharaoh and the provision of Joseph in God's good providence. . .

Jacob, here, sets an example for us. For those of us who are pilgrims, wondering in a strange land, our sight must be on the city with foundations, and our hope must be in the promise of God, and nothing else.

Steven Cole: The Prosperity That Counts

These themes of the prosperity of God's people and the preservation of Egypt through Joseph tie in with the theme of God's covenant with Abraham (**12:1-3**). God had promised to bless Abraham, to make him a great nation and to bless all nations through his descendants. Here we see God beginning to bless Abraham's descendants and to use them to be a blessing to others. But God's promise didn't involve settling His people in Egypt, but Canaan. So at the end of the chapter, we see Jacob clinging to that promise by faith as he asks Joseph to bury him in Canaan. By doing that, he is saying to his posterity, "Even though you prosper in Egypt, don't forget that

God's promise involves Canaan. Follow me back there!" Applying this to us the Lord is saying,

Commit yourself to make God and His purpose prosper and He will make you truly prosper.

1. You make God and His purpose prosper by being distinct unto Him (46:31-47:6).

2. You make God and His purpose prosper by being a blessing to others (47:7-26).

...it was no small feat for a politician to please the one over him while at the same time having his constituents thank him while he sells them into slavery and institutes a 20 percent tax hike! But Joseph did what few have done: he was a skillful politician and administrator while at the same time he was a man who put first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. He was truly a blessing to others. . .

3. You make God and His purpose prosper by keeping your priorities right when God prospers you (47:27-31).

We must remember that our purpose for being here is not to accumulate the things Egypt has to offer. We're here to further God's purpose, to communicate the good news of Christ to every tribe and tongue and nation. The person who by faith lays up treasure in heaven is truly prosperous, as Jesus pointed out. He has something that the world cannot give or take away.

TEXT: Genesis 48:1-22

TITLE: *CROSSED HANDS OF BLESSING -- PUTTING EPHRAIM BEFORE MANASSEH*

BIG IDEA:

JACOB'S DEATHBED BLESSING REVEALS HIS FAITH IN GOD'S SOVEREIGN ELECTION

INTRODUCTION:

What event in the life of Jacob would you have chosen to illustrate his faith in God? It is interesting and significant that the writer of the book of Hebrews points to the events of this chapter:

Heb. 11:21

“By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.”

Hughes: we worship when we, by faith, trust God for all of life and give ourselves to him (cf. **Romans 12:1, 2**). By faith Jacob crossed his hands in worship and blessed his adopted sons as he surrendered his life and the future of his people to God's word. And his sunset faith unleashed the wild grace of God to do its wondrous work in the generations to come.

S. Lewis Johnson: In the remainder of the instances of faith in Hebrews chapter 11, that characteristic of faith shines forth, the conviction of things not seen. It may well be that this is the thing that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews thinks is the important thing in the life of Jacob, *the conviction of things that are not seen*.

Parunak: The point of Jacob's action in these verses is to elevate Ephraim and Manasseh from being Joseph's sons to being counted as peers with Jacob's other eleven sons. In this section he first declares and explains what he wishes to do, then actually performs the adoption, and finally deals with a side-effect of this legal action.

Steven Cole: In **Genesis 48**, we see Abraham's grandson, Jacob, handing his heritage in God to his son, Joseph, and to his grandsons, Manasseh and Ephraim. He adopts Joseph's two sons as his own, blessing Joseph through them. One reason this chapter is here is to explain why Joseph isn't listed as one of the tribes in Israel. He got a double inheritance through his two sons who were adopted by Jacob. . . This was the fourth consecutive generation of Abraham's descendants in which the normal pattern of the firstborn assuming prominence over the second born was reversed: Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over Reuben, and Ephraim over Manasseh.

JACOB'S DEATHBED BLESSING REVEALS HIS FAITH IN GOD'S SOVEREIGN ELECTION

I. (:1-7) PREPARATION FOR DEATHBED BLESSING FROM JACOB

A. (:1-2) Family Gathering

1. (:1) Joseph Responds to Reports of His Father's Failing Health

"Now it came about after these things that Joseph was told, 'Behold, your father is sick.' So he took his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim with him."

First reference to sickness in the bible

Parunak: In picturing this scene, we should keep in mind that these sons are mature young men. They were born (41:50) before the years of famine came, during the seven years of plenty. When Jacob came into Egypt, two years of famine had past (45:6), so they were at least two. Jacob was 130 at this point (47:9), and this is seventeen years later, when he is 147 (47:28), so the boys are at least 19, just a few years older than Joseph when he was sold into slavery.

2. (:2) Jacob (Israel) Gathers His Strength to Communicate His Final Blessings

"When it was told to Jacob, 'Behold, your son Joseph has come to you,' Israel collected his strength and sat up in the bed."

B. (:3-6) Covenant Promises

1. (:3) Rooted in Divine Revelation

"Then Jacob said to Joseph, 'God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me,'"

Luz = old name for Bethel (28:12-14; 35:11-15) – reference here is primarily to the second appearing

2. (:4) Reminded of Foundational Promises

a. Prosperity and Fruitfulness

"and He said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and numerous,'"

b. Posterity and Power

"and I will make you a company of peoples,"

c. Possession of the Promised Land

"and will give this land to your descendants after you for an everlasting possession."

Hughes: The point of Jacob's recollections of the promises here is that as heir to those promises, he had the right to decide to whom they would go with his blessing. This was a moment of immense power. Jacob's covenant recollections were redolent with faith that God would fulfill the promise through him.

3. (:5-6) Reproduced in Succeeding Generations

a. (:5) Significance of Ephraim and Manasseh to Jacob's Legacy

"And now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh shall be mine, as Reuben and Simeon are."

Hughes: these boys would become the firstborn sons of Jacob. Ephraim and Manasseh would become not Jacob's grandsons, *but* sons number one and two. They displaced Reuben and Simeon. (1 Chron. 5:1-2)

- b. (:6) Significance of Subsequent Offspring to Joseph's Legacy
"But your offspring that have been born after them shall be yours; they shall be called by the names of their brothers in their inheritance."

MacArthur: After summarizing God's affirmation of the Abrahamic Covenant to himself, Jacob/Israel, in gratitude for Joseph's great generosity and preservation of God's people, formally proclaimed adoption of Joseph's sons on a par with Joseph's brothers in their inheritance, thus granting to Rachel's two sons (Joseph and Benjamin) 3 tribal territories in the Land (cf. v. 16). This may explain why the new name, Israel was used throughout the rest of the chapter.

C. (:7) Tender Remembrances

"Now as for me, when I came from Paddan, Rachel died, to my sorrow, in the land of Canaan on the journey, when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath; and I buried her there on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem)."

A time for Jacob to reflect on the death and burial of his beloved wife Rachel – whose firstborn child was Joseph

Parunak: In spite of the promise that God made at Bethel, Rachel died in childbirth soon after the family left Bethel on its way to Hebron to reunite with Isaac. She was apparently the last remaining wife, or at least the last one able to bear children, and her passing left Jacob without the additional children God had promised him at Bethel. So he now claims Joseph's sons as his own.

Constable: "Verse 7 has long puzzled biblical interpreters. Why the mention of Rachel at this point in the narrative, and why the mention of her burial site? If we relate the verse to what precedes, then the mention of Rachel here could be prompted by the fact that just as she had borne Jacob 'two sons' (Genesis 44:27, Joseph and Benjamin) at a time when he was about to enter (Genesis 48:7) the land, so also Joseph gave Jacob 'two sons' (Genesis 48:5) just at the time when he was about to enter Egypt." [Note: [Sailhamer](#), [Genesis](#), p271.]

II. (:8-20) BLESSING OF EPHRAIM OVER MANASSEH – REVEALING FAITH IN GOD'S SOVEREIGN ELECTION

A. (:8-13) Staging of the Blessing

1. (:8-9) Presentation of the Two Sons

"When Israel saw Joseph's sons, he said, 'Who are these?' And Joseph said to his father, 'They are my sons, whom God has given me here.' So he said, 'Bring them to me, please, that I may bless them.'"

MacArthur: Blind Jacob asked for identification of Joseph's sons before he would pronounce their blessings. Perhaps, at this point, he recollected the time of blessing before his own father and the trick played on blind Isaac (27:1-29).

2. (:10-11) Proclamation of God's Gracious Providence

"Now the eyes of Israel were so dim from age that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them close to him, and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, 'I never expected to see your face, and behold, God has let me see your children as well.'"

3. (:12-13) Positioning of the Two Sons

"Then Joseph took them from his knees, and bowed with his face to the ground. And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel's left, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel's right, and brought them close to him."

B. (:14-16) Surprising Reversal of the Blessing

1. (:14) Switching Hands

"But Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, crossing his hands, although Manasseh was the first-born."

Constable: This is the first of many scriptural instances of the laying on of hands (**Genesis 48:14**). By this symbolic Acts, a person transferred a spiritual power or gift to another. This rite was part of the ceremony of dedicating a person or group to an office (**Numbers 27:18; Numbers 27:23; Deuteronomy 34:9; Matthew 19:13; Acts 6:6; Acts 8:17; etc.**), offering sacrifices, and the healings Jesus Christ and the apostles performed. In this case Jacob symbolically transferred a blessing from himself to Joseph's sons. Once uttered, blessings were irreversible (cf. **Numbers 23:20; Romans 11:29**).

2. (:15-16) Swearing the Blessing

*"And he blessed Joseph, and said, 'The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, **The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day**, The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads; And may my name live on in them, And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; And may they grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.'"*

- God walks with His children
- God shepherds His children
- God redeems His children

Parunak: This first, prayer-blessing has three requests.

God ... bless the lads.—The first is adorned with a three-fold description of the one to whom he prays for this blessing. This three-fold description relates God's increasingly intimate protection of his people, and describes three roles that he fills.

1. He **judges all that his people do**. Abraham and Isaac walked before him, that is, in his sight. . . Of course, he is conscious of all that anyone does, but the expression denotes the recognition by Abraham and Isaac that they were answerable to God. By asking this

God to bless Ephraim and Manasseh, he is reminding them that they too should live in the consciousness of God's judgment.

2. He not only judges his people, but he also **shepherds them**. This is the fuller sense of "fed me." Jacob was an expert shepherd, and it is appropriate that here he introduces for the first time in Scripture this lovely metaphor of the Lord as the shepherd of his people (an image that he will repeat in **49:24**).
3. Finally, he is the **redeeming angel**. . .

let my name be named on them.—This is the language of adoption. He desires that they be counted as his offspring.

let them grow into a multitude.—Finally, he prays that they may flourish, and be a significant part of the great seed promised to the patriarchs. In fact, in the first census at the exodus, together they are second in number only to Judah, and in the second census they outnumber any other tribe.

Steven Cole: Even in Jacob's great time of sorrow, when Rachel died, God's comfort had been real. The pain of that loss was still with the old man as he reminisced here (**48:7**). But God had been with him. Then the hammer blow of Joseph's loss had hit the grieving man. He had thought that he would never see his son again. He went through years of confusion, wondering how the loss of his one son who seemed to follow the Lord could fit in with the promises of God. But now, at the end of his journey, God had proved Himself faithful, as Jacob held in his arms not only Joseph, but Joseph's two sons. And so as he blesses his grandsons, Jacob tells them how God has been his shepherd all his life to that day and how God will be with them (**48:15, 21**).

C. (:17-20) Sovereign Preference of the Younger Over the First-Born

1. (:17-18) Joseph's Protest

"When Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on Ephraim's head, it displeased him; and he grasped his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head to Manasseh's head. And Joseph said to his father, 'Not so, my father, for this one is the first-born. Place your right hand on his head.'"

Hughes: Blessings once uttered could not be undone (cf. **27:34-37**). Since Isaac's unwitting blessing of Jacob could not be reversed (though Jacob had deceived his father), how much more immutable was Jacob's deliberate blessing of Ephraim over Manasseh.

Put yourself in Manasseh's shoes – all his life he had been prepared for the privilege and responsibility of the blessing of the first-born; quite a shocker

2. (:19-20) Israel's Persistence

"But his father refused and said, 'I know, my son, I know; he also shall become a people and he also shall be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.' And he blessed them that day, saying, 'By you Israel shall pronounce blessing, saying, May God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!' Thus he put Ephraim before Manasseh."

MacArthur: Ephraim did indeed become the dominant tribe of the 10 northern tribes, eventually being used as the national designate for the 10 tribes in the prophets (**Is 7:2, 5, 9, 17; Hos 9:3-16**).

III. (:21-22) BLESSING OF JOSEPH OVER HIS BROTHERS CULMINATES JACOB'S LEGACY

A. (:21) Promise of Return to Canaan

“Then Israel said to Joseph, ‘Behold, I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your fathers.’”

B. (:22) Portion of Privileged Inheritance

“And I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow.”

Deffinbaugh: Jacob achieved his purpose by adopting both of Joseph's sons as his own, on a par with Reuben and Simeon (**verse 5**). Now each of them would receive one portion, but in so doing Joseph received a double portion: **vs. 22**.

Parunak: “*One portion*” is literally “*one Shechem*.” The reference to his sword and bow can only refer to the conquest of the city by Simeon and Levi. Though he strenuously condemned their violence, ultimately he as the head of the family was responsible for it, and through it Shechem came into their possession. Now he grants it to Joseph as his personal possession, and it is where Joseph's bones are laid to rest in **Josh 24**.

Constable: Jacob spoke as though he had taken Shechem from the Amorites by force (**Genesis 48:22**). Probably Jacob viewed Simeon and Levi's slaughter of the Shechemites as his own taking of the city (**Genesis 34:27-29**). [Note: **Waltke**, *Genesis*, p601.] Another view is that Moses used the perfect tense in Hebrew, translated past tense in English (“*took*”), prophetically. In this usage, which is common in the Old Testament, the writer spoke of the future as past. The idea was that, since God predicted them by divine inspiration, events yet future are so certain of fulfillment that one could speak of them as already past. Here the thought is that Israel (Jacob) would take Canaan from the Amorites, the most powerful of the Canaanite tribes, not personally, but through his posterity (cf. **Genesis 15:16**). [Note: **Keil and Delitzsch**, 1:385.] Other scholars have suggested still another explanation.

"It is not impossible that the property which Jacob owned at Shechem was taken away by the Amorites after he left the region (cf. **Genesis 35:4-5**) and that he eventually returned and repossessed it by force of arms?" [Note: **Davis**, p294. Cf. **H. Vos**, p165; **Aalders**, 2:267; **Leupold**, 2:1158; **Bush**, 2:384; and **Thomas**, p464.]

Apparently Jacob gave Joseph Shechem, which he regarded as a down payment of all that God would give his descendants as they battled the Canaanites in the future.

CONCLUSION:

S. Lewis Johnson: What a **legacy** for a father to leave to his children; a legacy of acquaintance with the Lord God of heaven. We think that our father has been good when he leaves his children some real estate and some securities, and if he does that, then he has been a good father. The

greatest thing that a father can leave his children is the heritage of the knowledge of God. The greatest thing that you can do for your children is to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord God. You cannot give them any inheritance that is greater than that, and if you give them all of these other things and fail there, you have failed as a father and you have failed as a mother. The greatest thing that you can do is just what Jacob leaves for his children.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What steps are you taking to pass along a godly heritage to your children and grandchildren?
- 2) How has God demonstrated His faithfulness in shepherding you through the good times and hard times down through the years?
- 3) What do we learn about God's sovereign choice in this chapter?
- 4) Do we ever argue with God about His plans and purposes and try to push our opposing agenda?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hughes: God's grace must never become captive to position or privilege or heredity or expectation or tradition or convention or disposition. God's grace is sovereign. It cannot be tamed. The economy of grace operates on its own principles – humbling human wisdom and exalting the unlikely, so that the last are often the firsts, and the first last.

Deffinbaugh: How could there be such a contrast between this testimony to Joseph and that given to Pharaoh? How could Jacob say this with sincerity? Jacob's life had been one long sequence of sorrows. He had antagonized his brother and deceived his father. He had to leave home, never again to see his mother alive. He was forced to live with an uncle who was nearly as deceptive as he and to take four wives rather than just Rachel, the one of his choice. His wives fought with each other over him, and his children hated one another. His daughter was raped; his oldest son had slept with his concubine, and Judah had slept with what appeared to be a prostitute. He was deprived of his wife and her first son; and Benjamin, the only remaining descendant of Rachel, was in serious jeopardy. Finally, a famine forced him to leave the land of promise. His life had been full of sorrow.

When Jacob testified that the Lord had been his shepherd all along, he did not deny his sufferings. But now he has come to see them in a different light. Just as Joseph had known in the midst of his sufferings that God had been with him, Jacob was assured of God's presence in all of his sorrows. While our Shepherd "*makes us lie down in green pastures*" (**Psalm 23:2**), He also is with us as we "*walk through the valley of the shadow of death*" (**Psalm 23:4**). Jacob has come to see that every event in his life was a part of the will of God for him and that God was guiding him and shaping him through adversity. . .

Life for Jacob looked considerably different from the perspective of the graveyard. Now, having been able to trace the hand of God in his life, he can see that life was not one long sequence of sorrows, but a chain of events in the sovereign plan of God to accomplish His purposes.

Sorrow and suffering were seen to be friends, not foes, as Jacob had once concluded. Previously, Jacob sought peace and prosperity as his highest goal. With such goals, acquiescence is preferable to adversity. Jacob had preferred to do nothing when his daughter was forcibly taken rather than run the risk of losing his comfort and security. Holiness was not nearly so dear to Jacob as happiness. Men will never be noted for their character when pleasure is of higher priority than purity.

But now, from the graveside, Jacob has come to realize that it was his suffering and trials which were the instruments of God to draw him to the point of submission to the will of God, to Egypt, to worship, and to spiritual intimacy.

W. H. Griffith Thomas: Faith looking upward –

The one thing that seems to stand out pre-eminently in this narrative is the reality to Jacob of God's presence and promise. All through the story the one theme is God (**xlvi. 3, 11, 15, 20, 21**). The troubled waters of Jacob's life had now settled and cleared, and were flowing placidly in a quiet stream of fellowship with God. He rested his heart upon what God had done for him, and on what God had promised to him and to his seed. Faith is always occupied with the Word of God, and finds in that Word its nutriment, encouragement, inspiration and power.

R C Sproul: Liar, self-reliant, image-conscious, and careless: these are all adjectives that accurately describe most of Jacob's life.

Whether deceiving his father (**Gen. 27**), using his own wits to appease Esau (**32:1–21**), worrying more about his reputation than his daughter's safety (**chap. 34**), or ignoring the fraternal hatred incited by his favoring of Joseph (**chap. 37**), Jacob has not been the paragon of piety.

However, today's passage tells us Jacob did not end his life this way. The time has now come for Jacob to bless Ephraim and Manasseh (**48:1–11**), and Joseph brings his two sons to Jacob. . .

Jacob has learned that the Lord does not have to act in line with the conventional way of doing things. He is sovereignly free to accomplish His good will apart from our plans and presumptions, and we must embrace His way, even when it is unconventional. Our self-reliance and efforts to deceive are wrong, not to mention foolhardy.

Honest, God-dependent, noble, and careful: these traits define Jacob on his deathbed. True servants of Christ are made of such attributes . . .

TEXT: Genesis 49:1-33

TITLE: DEATHBED PROPHECIES OF ABUNDANT BLESSING

BIG IDEA:

FINAL PROPHETIC BLESSINGS AND FINAL BURIAL CHARGE ISSUED BY JACOB UPON HIS DEATHBED

INTRODUCTION:

It is fitting that Jacob's final words should communicate a legacy of blessing and of fulfillment of covenant promises to the 12 tribes of Israel. His walk with God had been quite a roller coaster of wrestling and striving with the Almighty. At times, he gave in to his natural tendency to rely on his own craftiness and scheming. While at other times he demonstrated the growing maturity of a man who had learned to walk by faith and anticipate future blessing.

Significant that some of these "blessings" were actually curses.

The emphasis is on the blessing prophesied for **Joseph** and for **Judah** – ten of the 25 verses deal with just these two major figures with Messianic implications.

Hughes: Again we must emphasize that though some of the brothers were chastised and passed over and two were given ultimate leadership, *all* the sons of Jacob were blessed because they all became founders of tribes that would emerge victoriously from Egypt as the children of Abraham – and from them would come the blessing.

John Sailhamer: Jacob's last words to his sons have become the occasion for a final statement of the book's major theme: God's plan to restore the lost blessing through the offspring of Abraham.

FINAL PROPHETIC BLESSINGS AND FINAL BURIAL CHARGE ISSUED BY JACOB UPON HIS DEATHBED

I. (:1-28) FINAL PROPHETIC BLESSINGS

A. (:1-2) Summons to Hear

"Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, 'Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what shall befall you in the days to come. Gather together and hear, O sons of Jacob; And listen to Israel your father.'"

Parunak: *the last days.*—This phrase always has a prophetic sense, describing something either in the historical (**Num 24:14; Deut 4:30; 31:29**) or distant eschatological (**Isa 2:2**) time. The future in focus in this blessing reaches from the settlement in Canaan (**v.13**) to the coming of the Messiah (**v.10**) and on into the **Messianic age (v. 11)**. He is concerned to point them beyond their temporary residence in Egypt, and to remind them that their ultimate home is elsewhere.

B. (:3-27) Specifics – Prophecies Relating to Each of the 12 Sons

1. (:3-4) Reuben Disqualified – Preeminence Removed Because of Flagrant Defilement

- a. Positive – five-fold description

*“Reuben, you are my first-born;
My might
and the beginning of my strength,
Preeminent in dignity
and preeminent in power.”*

Parunak: Thus Reuben might have expected three things: the birthright (as firstborn), the priesthood (as Jacob’s first fruits), and the throne (because of his dignity and power). . . As the Jewish sages note, he lost all three benefits. The birthright went to Joseph, the priesthood to Levi, and the throne to Judah. Reuben warns us of the danger of trusting in privilege and position. Such position provides no immunity to judgment for sin. Reuben presumed on his privilege, and lost it.

b. Negative

“Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence, Because you went up to your father's bed; Then you defiled it-- he went up to my couch.”

Hughes: Jacob’s prophetic word came true. When Reuben’s descendants settled in the Transjordan, they soon disappeared from history, and no prophet or judge or king would ever come from the tribe of Reuben. Reuben’s descendants were characterized by a lack of leadership and resolve.

Deffinbaugh: I do not think Reuben’s lust was sexual as much as it was political—it was a lust for power. Reuben, like Satan, was not content with his exalted position and wanted more power, more pre-eminence (cf. **Isaiah 14:12ff.**; **Ezekiel 28:12ff.**). He therefore took Bilhah, his father’s concubine, not because of her sexual desirability, but because she was symbolic of the right to rule over the family. To possess the harem of the ruler was to usurp the authority of the ruler (cf. **I Kings 2:13f.**). Since “the last shall be first” (**Mark 10:31**) and those who serve shall rule in the kingdom of God (**Mark 9:35**), Reuben had to be rejected from his position of power and pre-eminence. He who would rule must surely first rule himself.

Sproul: Reuben may have an advantage according to the world, but no such benefit is present in God’s eyes. Until now, Jacob has said nothing about his eldest son’s sin with his surrogate wife Bilhah (**35:22**). But silence does not indicate Jacob’s ignorance, for this violation costs Reuben his place of prominence (**49:4**). With his sin, Reuben has shown himself to be unstable as water, slippery in his character. Unsteady in righteousness and wisdom (see also **42:37**), Reuben has forfeited his rightful place as the family’s leader.

Children often inherit the sinful proclivities of their parents, and the history of the tribe of Reuben would bear this out. No prophet, judge, or king came from Reuben. Instability characterized this family, manifested in the indecisiveness of this tribe when God’s people later came under attack (**Judg. 4:1–5:16**). Though blessed to be counted among the Lord’s own, Reuben and his descendants nevertheless reaped consequences for their sins.

Sailhamer: The word “*excel*” is a play on the two statements that have preceded it: “*excelling in honor*” and “*excelling in power*” – though Reuben has excelled, he will no longer excel.

Application: Reflect on how sin can destroy the greatest potential we can imagine; sin is never worth it

2-3. (:5-7) Simeon and Levi – Cursed for Their Violent, Rebellious Anger

“Simeon and Levi are brothers; Their swords are implements of violence. Let my soul not enter into their council; Let not my glory be united with their assembly; Because in their anger they slew men, And in their self-will they lamed oxen. Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce; And their wrath, for it is cruel. I will disperse them in Jacob, And scatter them in Israel.”

Parunak: “*Self-will*” - It is an attitude that arrogates to itself the divine right of bringing judgment on others, apart from a legitimate delegation of that responsibility. In the case of Simeon and Levi, the proper channel for that delegation should have been through the father of the clan, Jacob. He should have decided how to respond to the affront to his family. They went around the legitimate chain of command and gave vent to their own violent lust, and for this they are condemned.

Sproul: The references to violence and killing in **Genesis 49:5–6** recall their perversion of the sign and seal of circumcision to exact revenge upon the Shechemites for violating their sister Dinah (**chap. 34**). No direct commentary on the immorality of this event has been voiced yet, though many contextual clues have indicated that God was displeased. The blessing on Simeon and Levi removes any ambiguity about their deeds. Their wanton slaughter of an entire city was wrong, and their families will feel the consequences.

All of Jacob’s sons are brothers, but he calls Simeon and Levi “brothers” explicitly since the sword binds them together in ways they are not bound to their other brothers (**49:5**). The Hebrew term for *violence* here tells us an abhorrent ruthlessness motivated their behavior. Simeon and Levi even hamstringed Shechem’s oxen needlessly (v. 6), injuring innocent animals and ruining them as beasts of burden. On account of their sin, the brothers will be scattered in the Promised Land without permanent inheritance rights (v. 7).

Hughes: The tribe of Simeon virtually disappeared after the time of the conquest of the promised land. And when the tribe of Levi was given the responsibility of the priesthood, its people were therefore disallowed from having their own territory.

Application: Holiness is necessary to divine fellowship. (**J. Ligon Duncan**)

4. (:8-12) Judah – Exalted to Position of Dominant Leadership

Parunak: Jacob’s blessing on Judah has four parts. The first and third emphasize his position as ruler (thus inheriting the position of prince that Reuben forfeited), while the second and fourth emphasize the nature of his rule (security and prosperity).

a. Dominion

“Judah, your brothers shall praise you; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's sons shall bow down to you.”

b. Security

“Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?”

cf. Messianic title: “*Lion of Judah*” -- (Num. 24:9; Micah 5:8; Ezekiel 19:1-7)

c. Government

“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.”

Clear Messianic prophecy

d. Prosperity

“He ties his foal to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine; He washes his garments in wine, And his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes are dull from wine, And his teeth white from milk.”

Hughes: There will be such an abundance of grapes that the Messiah will tether his donkey to a choice grape vine with no concern as to his donkey’s helping itself to the vintage. There will be such a surplus of wine that people will not worry about using it to wash clothes. . . The poetic imagery Jacob used to describe Messiah’s reign was evocative of extravagant abundance and joy – with grape-laden vines used as hitching posts and clothing washed in wine – images appropriated in Jesus’ first miracle when he changed the water into wine at Cana in Galilee.

Cf. Messianic imagery – Is. 63:1-6; Rev. 19:11-15

5. (:13) Zebulun – Tribe of Sea Merchants

“Zebulun shall dwell at the seashore; And he shall be a haven for ships, And his flank shall be toward Sidon.”

Hub for international trade

MacArthur: Although Zebulun’s territory did not border the Mediterranean nor the Sea of Galilee, the tribe was situated to benefit from the important trade route, the Via Maris, traversed by sea traders moving through her territory.

6. (:14) Issachar – Subservient Role Because of Compromising Love of Comfort

“Issachar is a strong donkey, Lying down between the sheepfolds. When he saw that a resting place was good And that the land was pleasant, He bowed his shoulder to bear burdens, And became a slave at forced labor.”

7. (:16-17) Dan – Shrewd Judge and Warrior

“Dan shall judge his people, As one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent in the way, A horned snake in the path, That bites the horse's heels, So that his rider falls backward.”

Sproul: Jacob calls him a serpent (v. 17), having in mind a poisonous yellow desert snake who would hide in crevices or burrow in the sand and strike unsuspecting people or animals. Like this serpent, Dan will be small compared to his prey but far deadlier than his victim suspects. The tribe of Dan does indeed end up as one of Israel’s smaller clans; however, perhaps the most well-

known of all the judges emerges from this tribe centuries after Jacob. Samson, a Danite, would rescue the Israelites from the Philistines, usually by relying on his own craftiness (**Judg. 13–16**).

(:18) Aside

“For Thy salvation I wait, O LORD.”

Sailhamer: Breaking in, as it does, on the increasingly terse poetic images, this expression of hope in the Lord’s deliverance provides the much-needed clue to the meaning of Jacob’s words. In the individual and future destiny of the sons is embodied the hope of all Israel. That hope is of a future prosperity for the nation and future victory over their enemies. At the center of that hope is the king from the tribe of Judah.

8. (:19) Gad – Warrior Tribe

“As for Gad, raiders shall raid him, But he shall raid at their heels.”

J. Ligon Duncan: And then, in **verse 19**, the particular pronouncement upon Gad is given. He was to settle in the Transjordan where he would be the victim of border raids. But we are told that he would overcome even in that adversity and he would raid those who raid him, and would succeed.

9. (:20) Asher – Gourmet Delights

“As for Asher, his food shall be rich, And he shall yield royal dainties.”

10. (:21) Naphtali – Beautiful Oratory

“Naphtali is a doe let loose, He gives beautiful words.”

MacArthur: Deer-like speed and agility marked Naphtali’s military prowess. The song of Deborah and Barak, who hailed from Naphtali (**Jdg 4:6**), is representative of his eloquent words (**Jdg 5**).

11. (:22-26) Joseph – Emblem of Fruitfulness

*“Joseph is a fruitful bough, A **fruitful bough** by a spring; Its branches run over a wall. The archers bitterly attacked him, And shot at him and harassed him; But his bow remained firm, And his arms were agile, From the hands of the Mighty One of Jacob (From there is the **Shepherd**, the **Stone of Israel**), From the God of your father who helps you, And by the Almighty who blesses you With blessings of heaven above, Blessings of the deep that lies beneath, Blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father Have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; May they be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.”*

Hughes: The metaphor is evocative of a well-watered tree that is so healthy and fruit-laden that its branches hang low over garden walls, offering its fruit to all who pass by. Certainly this is what Joseph had been for his family and the surrounding world during the famine. (cf. **Is. 4:2**)

The blessings of the future far outstrip those already experienced. We have been blessed, and we do indeed have every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus right now in the heavenly places. But the

consummation of the blessing will go beyond this – because it is God’s intent to bless you eternally.

Sproul: Joseph’s blessing includes all spheres of life, focusing especially on the fertility of agriculture from the underground springs of water and fertility in child-bearing (**Gen. 49:25**). Here again is an echo of God’s original blessing on Adam and Eve for them to be fruitful and multiply (**1:26–31**). They failed to conform to the Lord’s revealed will, but Joseph’s faithful offspring, which by extension includes all righteous believers, will succeed and inherit the earth (**Matt. 5:5**).

12: (:27) Benjamin – Ravenous Wolf

“Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the morning he devours the prey, And in the evening he divides the spoil.”

Sproul: Benjamin went on to succeed and father many godly individuals. Ehud, a Benjaminite judge, rescued Israel from Moab (**Judg. 3:12–30**). Jonathan hailed from the tribe of Benjamin, and, unlike his father Saul, he loved David (**1 Sam. 9:1–2; 14:49; 18:1–5**). Esther, who saved her people from extinction during Persian rule, and her cousin Mordecai also counted Benjamin as a forefather (**Est. 2:5–7**). Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, was a Benjaminite as well (**Rom. 11:1**). Though they had sinful ancestors like the rest of us, all of these persons finally chose righteousness over evil.

C. (:28) Summary

“All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them. He blessed them, every one with the blessing appropriate to him.”

II. (:29-32) FINAL BURIAL CHARGE

“Then he charged them and said to them, ‘I am about to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought along with the field from Ephron the Hittite for a burial site. There they buried Abraham and his wife Sarah, there they buried Isaac and his wife Rebekah, and there I buried Leah -- the field and the cave that is in it, purchased from the sons of Heth.’”

(:33) EPILOG – DEATH OF JACOB

“When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.”

J. Ligon Duncan: Moses is saying that God ordains and that in His ordination, He rules and overrules the evil of men and He turns that evil to His own purposes as part of His decree. Because His providence is kind and purposeful; purposeful for blessings for His people. And the whole prophecy that is told in this chapter, and we have only had a chance to rush through it to see some of the things that it says, this whole prophecy serves to confirm the certainty of God's covenant promises because of His providence. . .

The covenant promises frame our lives at both ends and they provide the substance of our trust and obedience. God calls us to trust those promises, not to trust anything that comes along, but to

trust the promises. He calls us to obey His word, not to obey anything that comes along, but to obey His word. And so the covenant promises not only frame the beginning and the ending of our lives, but they provide for us the substance, they guide us into what it means to trust and obey the Lord all the way. And Jacob gives us a wonderful example of trusting those promises to the very end. Jacob is absolutely confident that God is going to be faithful and bring His people out of the land of Egypt and into that land of promise.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What type of legacy are we trying to leave for our children and grandchildren?
- 2) Where in the Gospels do we see Jesus warning people not to trust in their natural heritage for spiritual blessings?
- 3) What types of blessings have been passed down to you from your parents?
- 4) Why such an emphasis on both Judah and Joseph in this chapter?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Bob Deffinbaugh: You may not agree with the answers which I find in this text, but I am convinced that none of us will understand the passage without answering a few key questions.

- (1) Did every detail of Jacob's prophecy come to pass? If not, why not?
- (2) What purpose does this prophecy serve for the sons of Jacob, since none of them will live to see the fulfillment of them in Canaan?
- (3) What reasons did Moses have for recording this conversation between Jacob and his sons?
- (4) Why did Reuben, Simeon, and Levi receive a rebuke from their father for their sinful actions, when Judah, just as great a sinner (chapter 38), received the greatest blessing of all the sons, as he would be the forefather of the Messiah?
- (5) What can we learn from these prophecies?

In general we must say that all of the prophecy of Jacob either was fulfilled or will be in the future outworking of God's plan for Israel. To the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob, the prophecy was a warning of the potential for following in the footsteps of their father. As sons of their father, they had the predisposition to sin just as their forefathers. These words of warning were also words of hope for, through the grace which God provided, they need not follow in the steps of their fathers. The warning of sin and its consequences was designed to turn men from their sin to the Messiah, through whom deliverance would come. The sons of Jacob, like Jacob himself, must wait for God's salvation: "*For Thy salvation I wait, O Lord*" (**verse 18**).

Hughes: The entire book of Genesis is about blessing and how grace is going to go out to the world. And through the Lion of the tribe of Judah it has come to you, and you have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and his intent for you is further blessing.

J. Ligon Duncan: In verses **1-28**, we have a series of pronouncements in which Jacob blesses his sons. Sometimes that literally means pouring out his favor, acknowledging God's hand of favor on his sons. In other cases, he characterizes his sons, and speaks of God's providential future for them in light of that character. In all cases, he foretells the future and four things need to be noted about these specific passages before us.

First of all, these prophecies are **retrospective and prospective**. They look back and they look forward. They look back often to things which these men have done in their lives. Characteristics that they have, deeds that they have done, whether good or evil. And then they look forward into the future, as to how those characteristics are going to come to pass. The future brings to fruition some of the tendencies that are described in these young men, and in other cases it brings to fruition or fulfillment, some of the consequences for their past behavior. That is the first thing to note.

Second thing, is to note that this is specifically a **prophecy**. It is not simply looking at the characteristics of the men and projecting that onto the future as an educated guess. "Well, son, you have acted like this all of your life, I guess that when you get older, I guess you are going to act like that too." This is specifically a prophecy. In fact, much of it, most of it comes to pass not in the lifetime of these young men, but over four hundred years later when their tribes enter into the land of Canaan.

Thirdly, notice specifically that the greatest blessings are heaped upon **Judah and upon Joseph**. That is particularly significant in light of Judah and his previous behavior, specifically with regard to Tamar. Because Reuben and Simeon and Levi, are specifically chastised for wickedness that they had committed. And yet, in God's grace, blessing is pronounced upon Judah, in spite of his previous sin. And so we see the grace of God manifested in this great prophecy as well. And we see the blessing and the headship heaped upon Joseph and thus especially on his younger son, Ephraim.

Finally, there is one passage, **verse 10**, that looks far into the future. Far beyond simply the land of Canaan. It looks to the time when Judah's reign will not end, but will be increased in the reign of **Shiloh**. Who Jewish commentators from the earliest time, and Christians from the earliest times have recognized as the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Shiloh.

Sproul: Jacob's blessing in the chapter looks forward to success for the people of Israel. True, some tribes do not fare as well as others (**vv. 3-7**); nevertheless, the great blessings on Judah and Joseph, in particular, point to greater days for the nation (**vv. 8-12, 22-26**). Joseph's fruitfulness alludes to the blessing of offspring for the descendants of Israel (**v. 22**), one of the key parts of the Abrahamic promise (**12:1-3**). Judah obtains victory over its enemies and "*the obedience of the peoples*" (**49:10**), harkening back to the promise that Abraham's offspring would rule and conquer (**17:6; 22:15-18**).

TEXT: Genesis 49:33 – 50:26

TITLE: GOD'S MASTER PLAN

BIG IDEA: KEY LESSON OF GENESIS:
“GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD” –
APPRECIATE THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN ACCOMPLISHING HIS
REDEMPTIVE AGENDA

INTRODUCTION:

There are a lot of **bad things** that happened throughout this first book of the Bible – this book of Beginnings – this book called Genesis. We started off with God's beautiful Creation and Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden where God proclaims all that He has made as fundamentally GOOD. But it didn't take long for man to ruin that environment with sin and rebellion. Brother killing brother in the Cain and Abel incident; the corrupt conditions of the world in the days of Noah necessitating judgment via a worldwide, catastrophic flood; the prideful construction of the Tower of Babel – all of these serve as very prominent examples of the bad things associated with the Fall and the depravity of mankind.

Then we saw God shift His focus beginning in Chap. 12 to His sovereign election in working out His kingdom agenda through the one person He had chosen – **Abraham**. As we tracked through the lives of the Jewish patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and even Judah – we continued to see the tension between walking by faith and trusting in the flesh to bail oneself out of the crisis of the moment. But through all of the ups and downs of such roller coaster spiritual pilgrimage, the one constant was God's faithfulness to His **covenant promises**. Time after time we witnessed the working behind the scenes of His **magnificent Providence** to redeem bad circumstances and accomplish His **Master Plan**.

Never was that more in evidence than in the life of **Joseph**. Despite being attacked and abandoned for dead by his brothers ... then sold into captivity in Egypt ... then wrongly accused by Potiphar's wife and cast into prison ... **God meant it all for good**. He blessed Joseph in surprising fashion and then had that blessing overflow to Joseph's immediate family, to the inhabitants of Egypt and even the rest of the world who needed deliverance from a devastating famine. But all the time God was focused on the Messianic prospect of the ultimate seed of the woman that would bring about the redemption of His people.

As we wrap up our studies in the book of Genesis today, let's

APPRECIATE THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD IN ACCOMPLISHING HIS
REDEMPTIVE AGENDA

This final chapter has the two bookends of the death/embalming/burial of first **Jacob** and then **Joseph**. But sandwiched in between is the heart of what God wants to communicate – His prevailing **goodness** working itself out in the **providential governance** of His creation.

- I. (49:33 – 50:14) DEATH/EMBALMING/BURIAL OF JACOB –**
FORETASTE OF POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND
- A. (49:33) Death of Jacob**

“When Jacob finished charging his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and breathed his last, and was gathered to his people.”

Jacob lasted a lot longer than he probably thought he would as he made the dramatic pilgrimage down into Egypt to be reunited with Joseph and to receive the provision of food his family needed so desperately.

Jacob had seen God deliver him from the emotional depths of anguish and despair as he once again was able to cast his eyes on Joseph. Then God demonstrated His goodness in providing for his household through the instrumentality of His goodness administered by Joseph in Egypt – what a surprising turn of God’s Providence.

Egypt was not his final destination; he gave explicit instructions regarding the transfer of his dead bones back to the promised land. Hebrews speaks to his vision for the future.

B. (:1-3) Grieving/Embalming for Jacob in Egypt

1. (:1) Expression of Grief

“Then Joseph fell on his father’s face, and wept over him and kissed him.”

What love Joseph demonstrated for his father. He had been the recipient of His father’s special attentions in his youth; and now he leads his brothers in grieving for the loss of this key historical figure in God’s covenant program.

Steven Cole: Although it is possible to grieve excessively, the Bible teaches that normal grief is a proper human emotion and that tears are the normal response in grief. . . . In fact, God the Holy Spirit is capable of grief, as seen in the admonition, “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God” (**Eph 4:30**). One of the most difficult commandments God has given anybody was when He told the prophet Ezekiel that He was going to take his wife and, as a sign to the disobedient nation, he was not allowed to mourn outwardly or weep for her (**Ezek. 24:16-17**). But that was clearly an exception. Grief is normal and proper when we lose loved ones in death. You’re not more spiritual if you don’t grieve.

2. (:2-3a) Embalming

“And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel. Now forty days were required for it, for such is the period required for embalming.”

Bob Deffinbaugh: The process of embalming among the ancient Egyptians is thus described by **Herodotus**, b. ii., c. 86—8, “The body was given to the embalmers, who first took out the brains and entrails and washed them in palm wine impregnated with strong astringent drugs; after which they began to anoint the body with the oil of cedar, myrrh, cinnamon, and cassia; and this lasted thirty days. They next put it into a solution of nitre (saltpetre) for forty days longer, so that they allowed seventy days to complete the embalming; after which they bound it up in swathes of linen besmeared with gum. Being then able to resist putrefaction, it was delivered to the relatives, inclosed in a wooden or paper case somewhat resembling a coffin, and laid in the catacomb or grave belonging to the family, where it was placed in an upright posture against the wall.

3. (:3b) Extended Season of Mourning

“And the Egyptians wept for him seventy days.”

Shows the level of respect the Egyptians had for Joseph that they showed such concern for the passing of his beloved father.

C. (:4-9) Burial Journey Back to Promised Land

1. (:4-6) Request Directed to Pharaoh

“And when the days of mourning for him were past, Joseph spoke to the household of Pharaoh, saying, ‘If now I have found favor in your sight, please speak to Pharaoh, saying, My father made me swear, saying, Behold, I am about to die; in my grave which I dug for myself in the land of Canaan, there you shall bury me. Now therefore, please let me go up and bury my father; then I will return.’ And Pharaoh said, ‘Go up and bury your father, as he made you swear.’”

2. (:7-9) Return of Jacob’s Body to Promised Land

“So Joseph went up to bury his father, and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his household and all the elders of the land of Egypt, and all the household of Joseph and his brothers and his father's household; they left only their little ones and their flocks and their herds in the land of Goshen. There also went up with him both chariots and horsemen; and it was a very great company.”

Impressive funeral procession

Deffinbaugh: For an unknown reason, the procession made its way from Egypt to Canaan by means of an unusual route. Rather than traveling to the north and approaching Canaan from the west, they proceeded northeasterly and entered Canaan from the east, from the other side of the Jordan (cf. **verse 10**). Perhaps it is not coincidental that this route would more closely parallel the entrance of Israel into Canaan after the Exodus.

D. (:10-11) Gravesite Mourning in Abel-mizraim

1. (:10) Sorrow of Family Lamentation

“When they came to the threshing floor of Atad, which is beyond the Jordan, they lamented there with a very great and sorrowful lamentation; and he observed seven days mourning for his father.”

2. (:11a) Spectacle of Great Mourning

“Now when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning at the threshing floor of Atad, they said, ‘This is a grievous mourning for the Egyptians.’”

3. (:11b) Significance of the Name

“Therefore it was named Abel-mizraim, which is beyond the Jordan.”

E. (:12-14) Summary

1. (:12) Obedience of Jacob's Sons to His Deathbed Charge

"And thus his sons did for him as he had charged them;"

2. (:13) Burial of Jacob at Abraham's Plot in Machpelah

"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 had bought along with the field for a burial site from Ephron the Hittite."

3. (:14) Return of Joseph and Household to Egypt

"And after he had buried his father, Joseph returned to Egypt, he and his brothers, and all who had gone up with him to bury his father."

II. (:15-21) KEY LESSON OF BOOK OF GENESIS: GOD MEANT IT FOR GOOD

A. (:15-18) Worldly Operating Principle = Revenge and Bondage

1. (:15) Expectation of Revenge

"When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, 'What if Joseph should bear a grudge against us and pay us back in full for all the wrong which we did to him!'"

How does the world operate when they are wronged?

Steven Cole: Three mean-looking guys on motorcycles pulled into a truck stop cafe where a truck driver, a little guy, was sitting at the counter, quietly eating his lunch. The three thugs saw him, grabbed his food, and laughed in his face. The truck driver didn't say a word. He got up, paid for his food and walked out.

One of the bikers, unhappy that they hadn't succeeded in provoking the little man into a fight, bragged to the waitress, "He sure wasn't much of a man, was he?"

The waitress replied, "No, I guess not." Then, glancing out the window she added, "I guess he's not much of a truck driver, either. He just ran over three motorcycles."

The familiar saying, "Don't get mad, just get even" sums up the world's philosophy of how to deal with someone who wrongs you. But in contrast to the world's way, God prescribes a radical approach when we are wronged: We are to be kind and tenderhearted, forgiving one another just as God in Christ has forgiven us (**Eph. 4:32**).

It's easy to say that, but it's tough to apply it. The difficulty increases in proportion to how badly you've been hurt. When you've been hurt badly, you don't feel like forgiving the person, even if he repents, at least not until he's suffered a while. You want him to know what it feels like. You want him to pay.

Deffinbaugh: Now, years later, they were still plagued with guilt about their treatment of Joseph (cf. **42:21-22**). They had not yet fathomed Joseph's forgiveness, even though 17 years had evidenced nothing but grace. But, they reasoned, that was a time when Jacob still lived. Would

Joseph not hesitate to retaliate with his father present even as they had waited for an opportune moment away from their father to eliminate Joseph? Now Jacob was gone for good. Joseph was free to do with them as he pleased. That thought consumed them, even more than the loss of their father. This fear prompted a plan which they hoped would soften Joseph's anger.

2. (:16-17a) Solicitation of Forgiveness

“So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, ‘Your father charged before he died, saying, Thus you shall say to Joseph, Please forgive, I beg you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, for they did you wrong. And now, please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father.’”

Sounds like they made up this scenario to try to stave off certain retribution.

3. (:17b) Demonstration of Compassion

“And Joseph wept when they spoke to him.”

Heart of compassion and mercy

4. (:18) Prostration in Servitude

“Then his brothers also came and fell down before him and said, ‘Behold, we are your servants.’”

Still operating from a natural mindset – assuming subservient position of bondage and servitude

B. (:19-21) Divine Operating Principle = Redemption and Forgiveness

*“But Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for am I in God's place? And as for you, you meant evil against me, but **God meant it for good** in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive. So therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.’ So he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.”*

Principle: Vengeance belongs to God

Principle: God's Amazing and Gracious Providence turns evil into good in accomplishing His Redemptive Agenda

Steven Cole: Should I forgive a person who is not repentant? The Bible is clear that we are to forgive just as God has forgiven us. God doesn't extend forgiveness until we repent. But, God aggressively offers forgiveness to us and seeks through His kindness to bring us to repentance. He paid the price for our forgiveness in the death of His Son while we were still His enemies. **The barrier to reconciliation wasn't with God; it was our own lack of repentance.**

So we must distinguish between forgiving the person in our heart and extending forgiveness to him verbally. We must forgive the person in our heart before he repents, which means that we will sincerely pray for God's mercy toward him; we will look for ways to be kind; we will make it clear that we want to restore the relationship. We've got to root out our bitterness by submitting to the sovereign goodness of God. Then, the moment the offender repents, like the

father of the prodigal son, we rush to welcome and embrace him.

Constable: Joseph's response to his fearful brothers reveals his attitudes toward God and them (**Genesis 50:18-21**; cf. **Genesis 27:41**). He humbled himself under God's authority. He regarded God as sovereign over him and the One who had providentially guided all the events of his life. He knew that God's purposes for him, his family, and all people were good (cf. chs 1-2). Consequently he behaved with tender compassion toward his brothers. He proved to be his brothers's keeper (cf. **Genesis 4:9**). Genesis opened with a couple, Adam and Eve, trying to become like God. It closes with a Prayer of Manasseh, Joseph, denying that he is in God's place.

Each sentence of his threefold reply is a pinnacle of Old Testament (and New Testament) faith. To leave all the righting of one's wrongs to God (**19**; cf. **Romans 12:19**; **1 Thessalonians 5:15**; **1 Peter 4:19**); to see His providence in man's malice (**20**; cf. on **Genesis 45:5**); and to repay evil not only with forgiveness but also with practical affection (**21**; cf. **Luke 6:27 ff.**), are attitudes which anticipate the adjective "Christian" and even "Christlike." [Note: **Kidner**, p224.]

III. (:22-26) DEATH/EMBALMING/BURIAL OF JOSEPH – LOOKING FORWARD TO THE EXODUS – TAKING POSSESSION OF THE PROMISED LAND

A. (:22-23) Summary of Joseph's Years

“Now Joseph stayed in Egypt, he and his father's household, and Joseph lived one hundred and ten years. And Joseph saw the third generation of Ephraim's sons; also the sons of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were born on Joseph's knees.”

Deffinbaugh: More than 50 years elapsed between verses **21** and **22**. Moses was intent upon placing the deaths of Jacob and Joseph side by side. Irrelevant details are therefore set aside to take us directly to the death bed of Joseph, and thus to parallel the death of Jacob.

B. (:24) Reassurance of God's Covenant Promises Regarding Possession of the Promised Land

“And Joseph said to his brothers, ‘I am about to die, but God will surely take care of you, and bring you up from this land to the land which He promised on oath to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob.’”

C. (:25) Charge Regarding Ultimate Burial in the Promised Land

“Then Joseph made the sons of Israel swear, saying, ‘God will surely take care of you, and you shall carry my bones up from here.’”

D. (:26) Death/Embalming/Temporary Burial of Joseph in Egypt

“So Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years; and he was embalmed and placed in a coffin in Egypt.”

Hughes: Genesis ends with Joseph's coffin awaiting the exodus, and the story continues in the second book of the Pentateuch. Even more important, the Old Testament ends with the expectation of the Messiah who, when he came, by grace led his people in a second exodus from the bondage of this world.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is your level of awareness of the providence of God at work in your life?
- 2) Do burial events help you to focus on God's promises for the future?
- 3) If vengeance is wrong, how do you explain the imprecatory psalms? What is their application for us today?
- 4) How has God caused all things to work together for your good?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh: And so we come to the end of an era and to the end of a magnificent book. But two funerals do not seem to be a very bright ending for a book. Man's origin began in the garden of perfection and beauty in paradise. It ends in two coffins, one in Canaan, the other in Egypt. What a dismal conclusion. Moses could never make it as a writer in our times.

But wait a moment; that is just the point. Genesis **chapter 50** is not the end of the story; it is only the end of the book of Genesis. Moses has yet four books to write, and God has ordained another 61 before the final chapter is written. And in the final chapters of the book of the Revelation we once again return to paradise.

Steven Cole: *"You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."* That's the Old Testament equivalent of **Romans 8:28**, *"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."*

The classic philosophic problem of suffering revolves around the question of how God can be both sovereign (or all-powerful) and good at the same time. If He were good, then He wouldn't will our suffering; if He were powerful, He would do something about it. Yet we suffer. Thus, God must be either weak or not good.

There are several fallacies in that syllogism. It ignores the presence of sin in the world as the reason for suffering. Also, it assumes that all suffering is bad. But in our fallen world, God often brings great good out of terrible suffering. Also, the argument assumes that God must alleviate suffering immediately, while the Bible affirms that God's final solution will only come when He creates a new heavens and earth.

When someone wrongs you, you need to be on guard. Satan tempted Eve by getting her to doubt the goodness of God. He implied that God was withholding something good by keeping the forbidden fruit from her. The devil will tempt you by whispering, "If God really cared for you, He wouldn't have let this happen." No doubt Joseph often had to resist that temptation over the years. But in each case, Joseph affirmed by faith, "They meant it for evil, but God meant it for good."

Elisabeth Elliot, whose first husband was murdered by the savage people he was trying to reach

for Christ, and whose second husband died of cancer, wrote, “The experiences of my life are not such that I could infer from them that God is good, gracious and merciful necessarily. To have had one husband murdered and another one disintegrate, body, soul and spirit, through cancer, is not what you would call a proof of the love of God. In fact, there are many times when it looks like just the opposite. My belief in the love of God is not by inference or instinct. It is by faith.” (Cited by **James Boice**, Genesis [Zondervan], 3:332.)

There’s a way you can tell whether you have taken your proper place before God or not: Do you grumble about your circumstances or about the people who have mistreated you? If you do, you aren’t in submission to the sovereign goodness of God. You may not think you’re grumbling against God. You’d say you’re angry with the person who did you in. But really, you’re angry at God, grumbling against Him for allowing it to happen. You’ve got to deal with your attitude before God or you’ll live and die a bitter, unforgiving person. You must come to the place where you can say, “That person meant it for evil, but God meant it for good, and I submit to and trust His purpose in it all.”

Constable: The story of Joseph illustrates patient faith and its reward. It ends the book of Genesis and brings its theme to a literary climax. ... “But the story of Joseph shows us that the road to victory, dominion, mastery, and judicial authority, is through service, the humble service of a slave. Through service and suffering, God purges and destroys indwelling sin in the believer (not completely, but sufficiently), builds character in him, and fits him for the mastery of the world.” [Note: **Jordan**, pp67-68.]

Bruce Goettsche: The Invisible Hand of Providence

There are times when life feels like it is out of control. A shooting is reported on the news. One more person has cancer. Someone we love is diagnosed with debilitating disease. A long term relationship crumbles. Someone we love dies suddenly. We lose a job. We face financial reversals. We are falsely accused. Or we have one of those periods where nothing seems to go as planned. At these times life seems unpredictable and arbitrary. And that's why the concluding chapter of Genesis is so important. In the words of Joseph we gain insight to these difficult times of life. Joseph gives us insight into the **Providence of God**.

That term may be unfamiliar to you. The word providence means literally to "*see beforehand*." It teaches that God sees the end or the purpose for what happens in life. He sees (and ordained) the final goal. . . . so God is actively involved moving creation toward that goal. **R.C. Sproul** states it succinctly,

The central point of the doctrine of providence is the stress on God's government of the universe. He rules His creation with absolute sovereignty and authority. He governs everything that comes to pass, from the greatest to the least. Nothing ever happens beyond the scope of His sovereign providential government. He makes the rain to fall and the sun to shine. He raises up kingdoms and brings them down. He numbers the hairs on our head and the days of our life. [Essential Truths p. 62]

Where do I find this doctrine in Genesis 50? Look at verses **15-21**. . .

Joseph contends God was guiding the circumstances of his life. He looks back at the events of his life and see that God was working in the details. He sees the fact that he was sent by his Father, that he was sold by his brothers, purchased by Potiphar, accused by Mrs. Potiphar,

imprisoned with the Baker and Cupbearer, and elevated by Pharaoh as all part of God's perfect plan in his life. He believes in God's providence.

The doctrine of providence is not very popular today. When difficult circumstances come our way, many contemporary folks are quick to jump "to God's defense." They proclaim, "God had nothing to do with it!" or worse, they will say, "God couldn't do anything about it." But there are two problems with these statements. First, there is no comfort in them at all. What is comforting about knowing that God is powerless to control the things that happen in your life? And second, in this attempt to safeguard God's reputation . . . they make God less than God. God's promises, His plans, His purpose are now subject to the arbitrary whims of man. If He is God . . . OF COURSE He could have done something about it. . . .God is never powerless! So the question becomes: what is God doing in bringing about or in "not stopping" certain events. Joseph contends that God's actions or inaction (in some cases) is due to His providence.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

When we talk about God's providence it is important that we understand the issue clearly. There are some things we need to be clear about.

Some things are Evil. Please understand that we are not saying that what his brothers did was good. Joseph acknowledges that the brothers INTENDED evil. They wanted to hurt him. They sinned and are responsible to God for that sin. What Joseph acknowledges is that God took their evil intentions and used them for good. . .

Some Things are Painful. Certainly during the difficult times of his life Joseph hurt. I suspect he may have been discouraged. Believing in God's providence does not mean that things were easy for Joseph. They weren't. We have reflected on what it might have been like to be sold by your own brothers. We break out into a cold sweat as we imagine being falsely charged with rape. We have all felt the pain of feeling forgotten. . .

Believing in God's providence doesn't mean that you will understand what God is doing . . . it only means you will trust that God is doing something.

God's Definition of Good is not the same as ours. We don't define "good" the same way that God does. To us "good" is that which makes us happy, satisfied or brings us enjoyment. We see good as the absence of any pain. But God's definition is different. God defines good as that which leads us to Christlikeness, or that which brings us to trust Him more or which advances His Kingdom.

TEXT: Revelation 21:1-8

TITLE: *ULTIMATE DESTINY – ETERNAL LIFE OR SECOND DEATH*

BIG IDEA:

UNDERSTANDING ULTIMATE DESTINY SHOULD CREATE A THIRST FOR THE FREE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE THAT ONLY JESUS CHRIST CAN GIVE

INTRODUCTION:

[Pause in study of book of Mark until weeks approaching Easter]

Introduction to study of **book of Genesis** – Book of Beginnings – Book of Origins
Overall introduction and discussion of structure next week

Gen. 1:1 *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”*

Tremendous statement of global truth – foundational to so much of our understanding of man’s relationship to God; yet a truth that is almost universally rejected today by the unsaved in our culture who have come to accept the brainwashing of the theory of evolution – in fact a multitude of Christians probably struggle with this concept of divine creation as well.

Can’t really deal with **ultimate origins** without also dealing with **ultimate destiny**;

We always like to pick a key verse to focus on as our verse for the year for Solid Rock Community Church – that is what takes us to **Rev. 21:6** today and its overall context which is verses 1-8

UNDERSTANDING ULTIMATE DESTINY SHOULD CREATE A THIRST FOR THE FREE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE THAT ONLY JESUS CHRIST CAN GIVE

I. (:1-5a) VISION OF THE ULTIMATE DESTINY OF GOD’S PEOPLE – ENJOYING FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IN NEW JERUSALEM IN A NEW HEAVEN AND NEW EARTH

A1. (:1) New Creation Replacing Original Creation

1. Appearance of New Creation

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth;”

Καὶ εἶδον οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινὴν.

Emphasis on newness – not like what had come before it
Cf. **Is. 65:17; 66:22**

Placed chronologically here after the Millennial Kingdom and after the Great White Throne Judgment –

Walvoord: Only a few other passages in the Bible deal with the subject of the new heaven and the new earth, and these are often in a context dealing with the millennium (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22; II Peter 3:13). The fact that millennial truths are mentioned in the same context in all three of these major references has often confused expositors. However, it is a common principle in

prophecy to bring together events that are distantly related chronologically, such as frequent reference to the first and second comings of Christ ... or various resurrections ...

The eternal state is clearly indicated in the absence of sea, for frequent mention of bodies of water occur in millennial passages (cf. Ps. 72:8; Isa. 11:9, 11; Ezek. 47:10, 15, 17, 18, 20; 48:28; Zech. 9:10; 14:8).

[telescoping effect we discussed often in our study of book of Isaiah]

2. Disappearance of Original Creation

“for the first heaven and the first earth passed away,”

ὁ γὰρ πρῶτος οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ πρώτη γῆ ἀπῆλθαν

where we get the English word *prototype*

3. Transformation of Basic Structure

“and there is no longer any sea.”

καὶ ἡ θάλασσα οὐκ ἔστιν ἔτι.

Large body of water in contrast to land – present in abundance at original creation

About **71 percent** of the Earth's surface is water-covered, and the oceans hold about **96.5 percent** of all Earth's water. Average depth is 2.3 miles deep.

MacArthur: The sea is emblematic of the present water-based environment. All life on earth is dependent on water for its survival. But believers' glorified bodies will not require water (unlike our present human bodies, whose blood is 90 percent water). The new heaven and the new earth will be based on a completely different life principle.

Chris Benfield: I believe that John rejoiced in the removal of separation. He was on the Isle of Patmos when he penned these words, secluded and removed from those he loved. In God's new creation we will never be lonely or despaired again.

Tony Garland: Some suggest the sea is omitted from the eternal state because of its negative connotation.

- It was the sea, overflowing with rain and the fountains of the deep, which judged the world at the flood (Gen. 7:11).
- The sea covered Pharaoh and his army at the Exodus (Ex. 14:28).
- Leviathan, the fleeing serpent who would be slain, made his home in the sea (Isa. 27:1).
- The wicked are compared to the troubled sea (Isa. 57:20).
- The four vicious Gentile powers seen by Daniel arose from the sea (Dan. 7:3+).
- The final beastly ruler, the Antichrist arose out of the sea (Rev. 13:1+).

Another possibility is that the sea represents the need of cleansing due to sin which will no longer be necessary in the eternal state.

The lack of sea in the eternal state offers a helpful guide when interpreting the OT. In passages describing times of great blessing, if the sea is mentioned, then we know the passage cannot relate to the eternal state, but must describe conditions of the Millennial Kingdom.

B1. (:2) New Jerusalem Prepared as a Holy and Righteous Bride

1. Nature of New Jerusalem

“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem,”
καὶ τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἰερουσαλὴμ καινὴν εἶδον

Tony Garland: The holy city is also called the holy Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10+). Throughout Scripture, Jerusalem is considered holy, although at times she plays the harlot (Isa. 1:21). Jerusalem is called the “*city of the great King*” (Ps. 48:2), “*city of God*” (Ps. 87:3), “*the faithful city*” (Isa. 1:21), and the “*holy city*” (Isa. 52:1). Joel predicted, concerning her final state: “*Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again*” (Joel 3:17). Anyone who takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy will have his part in the holy city taken away (Rev. 22:19+).

essential nature is that of Holiness and righteousness – consistent with the character of God; how different from the wicked world in which we live

saints of all ages involved; not just NT church believers – common metaphor in the Bible – can be used with multiple applications – here it refers to all the people of God and their dwelling place for all eternity

MacArthur: the third city named Jerusalem in redemptive history. The first is the historic Jerusalem, the City of David which currently exists in Palestine. The second Jerusalem will be the restored Jerusalem where Christ will rule during the millennial kingdom. . .

In his vision, John saw the “*new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,*” its “*architect and builder*” (**Hebrews 11:10**). The implication is that it already exists (**Hebrews 12:22-23**). All of heaven is currently contained in the new Jerusalem. It is separate from the present universe.

2. Origin of New Jerusalem

“coming down out of heaven from God,”
καταβαίνουσιν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ

not man-made; no human kingdom produced this state

3. Role of New Jerusalem

“made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.”
ἡτοιμασμένην ὡς νύμφην κεκοσμημένην τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς.

Perfect passive participles – “*made ready*” and “*adorned*”

- Passive because the bride did not do this work herself; this is the work of God
- Perfect – work that was accomplished in the past with abiding results

- a. Connotation of Beauty
- b. Connotation of Union
- c. Connotation of Majesty

d. Connotation of Joy

C. (:3) God Dwelling in Fellowship and Blessing with His People

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them,’”

καὶ ἤκουσα φωνῆς μεγάλης ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου λεγούσης· ἰδοὺ ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ σκηνώσει μετ’ αὐτῶν, καὶ αὐτοὶ λαοὶ αὐτοῦ ἔσονται, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς μετ’ αὐτῶν ἔσται [αὐτῶν θεός],

Walvoord: last of 21 times in book of Revelation that mention is made of a great or loud voice; subsequent revelation is important and authoritative

Why did God create man and a perfect environment for man in the Garden of Eden in the first place? So God could walk with man and fellowship with him

Greek words used in the LXX for tent of meeting or tabernacle of God

Cf. **John 1:14** – *“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us”*

Cf. name *Immanuel* = God with us

Gaebelein: In Eden God visited man unfallen, walked and talked with Him. Then sin severed this fellowship. He dwelt in the midst of Israel in the holiest of the tabernacle. In this age the Church is His habitation by the Spirit, but the blessed consummation in the eternal state will result in God dwelling with His redeemed creatures. What holy, glorious, never-ending intimacy that will be! It is the time when God is all in all (**1 Corinthians 15:28**).

Tony Garland: Of all the things which God could say concerning the blessings attending the eternal state, why is this emphasized by being the first? Because it is the greatest blessing found in all of Scripture. In this promise is found the culmination of the scarlet thread of redemption which runs from Genesis through Revelation. This has been the great purpose of the Kinsman-Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Since the rebellion of Adam, every tabernacle, every Temple, every correspondence between God and man has been with this ultimate goal in mind: the restoration of full fellowship between God and man.

B2. (:4) Joy of Holiness and Righteousness Replacing Sorrow Associated with Sin and with Suffering for Christ

“and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”

καὶ ἐξάλειψει πᾶν δάκρυον ἐκ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν, καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι οὔτε πένθος οὔτε κραυγὴ οὔτε πόνος οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι, [ὅτι] τὰ πρῶτα ἀπῆλθαν.

Tremendous promise that gives us hope – why do people want to hold on to the things of this world? Any type of materialistic spirit should be obliterated by this promise; our desire is for the first things to pass away and be replaced by something far superior

Alan Carr:

1. **No sadness** - Wipe = obliterate, erase, blot out, wipe out! No cause for tears!
2. **No Separation** - No more untimely separations by death!
3. **No Sorrow** - No Mourning - No more broken hearts!
4. **No Suffering** - No more hurts, no more labors, no more longings!

A2. (:5a) Sovereign God Trumpets His New Creation

“And He who sits on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’”

Καὶ εἶπεν ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ· ἰδοὺ καινὰ ποιῶ πάντα

Tone of **Sovereignty of God** throughout this passage – same is true for book of Genesis as a whole – God sits on the throne and is in control of His universe

II. (:5b-8) PROMISE OF ULTIMATE DESTINY – EITHER ETERNAL LIFE OR SECOND DEATH

A. (:5b) Certainty of the Promise

“And He said, ‘Write, for these words are faithful and true.’”

καὶ λέγει· γράψον, ὅτι οὗτοι οἱ λόγοι πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοὶ εἰσιν.

The scriptures contain only that which is faithful and true and can be relied upon; God communicates His ideas and thoughts in specific language – not in some type of vague feelings or mystic imaginations – verbal, plenary inspiration

B. (:6a) Central Figure Who Controls Eternity

“And He said to me, ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.’”

καὶ εἶπέν μοι· γέγοναν. ἐγὼ [εἰμι] τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος.

What is done? Work of bringing into existence this new order – seen as already accomplished -- The perfect tense emphasizes the completion of the task of creating the new order and the ongoing effects of that creative act which continue into the present as seen by John. Reminds us of Christ’s similar proclamation from the cross as the work of accomplishing redemption was completed and He fulfilled His earthly mission at His first coming.

Same title – 4 instances – **Rev. 1:8, 11; 22:13** – 2 at beginning and ending of the book

Significance of this title:

- The first word and the last word
- The originator of all things and the terminator of all things
- All things find their focus in Christ and consist in Him
- Eternality of Jesus Christ

William Barclay: The word for beginning is *arche*, and it does not simply mean first in point of time, as something is in the first place of a series. It means first in the sense of the *source* and *origin* of all things. It means that God is the **source** and the **origin** from which all things draw their being; it means that all things have their beginning, their birth, their creation, their origin, their coming into being in and through God. The word for end is *telos*, and it does not simply mean end in point of time, the last thing in a series. It means the *goal*, the *consummation*, that in which things come to their completing and their ending. John is saying that all life begins in God and all life ends in God. Man comes from God and man goes to God. Paul expressed the same thing when he said perhaps a little more philosophically: “*Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things*” (**Romans 11:36**), and when he spoke of “*one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*” (**Ephesians 4:6**). For all men, God is the source of being in which they begin and the final goal to which inevitably they go.

J Hampton Keathley III: Though the new creation is still in the future, these words solidly affirm the creation of all things new as though already accomplished. And what’s the basis of this? The sovereign independence and eternity of God as the Alpha and Omega, the first and last word on all things.

C. (:6b-8) Contrasting Destinies

1. (:6b-7) Promise of Eternal Life

a. Free Gift for Those Who Humbly Desire It – Divine Sovereignty

“I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.”

ἐγὼ τῷ διψῶντι δώσω ἐκ τῆς πηγῆς τοῦ ὕδατος τῆς ζωῆς δωρεάν.

Key elements of the gospel here:

- Salvation comes only from Christ
- Person must sense their need for salvation – must be a hunger and thirst
- Christ has abundant provision from the spring of the water of life (**John 4:14; 7:37-39**)
- By grace apart from works – freely given without cost

Tony Garland: This is the essential difference between religion and relationship. Religion looks to find, in the puny self effort of man, something of value to present before God by which man may be justified. Relationship sees man’s utter incapability and throws itself upon the grace and mercy of God, accepting that which God has already provided as a remedy. Self-righteousness, which is no real righteousness, is the primary stumbling block leading to God for it recoils at the idea that restoration to God is completely **without cost**.

That’s why the great gospel chorus proclaims: “Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to the cross I cling” – Not “Something in my hand I bring ...”

b. Secure Inheritance for Overcomers – Human Responsibility

“He who overcomes shall inherit these things,”

ὁ νικῶν κληρονομήσει ταῦτα

not 2 groups of Christians as Dillow would try to theorize: those who overcome and inherit kingdom rewards and those who are carnal and just get into the kingdom of heaven; all believers are overcomers by God’s grace and all inherit the promises

1 John 5:4-5 those who trust in Jesus are overcomers by His grace

c. Family Fellowship with the Sovereign God – Eternal Security

“and I will be his God and he will be My son.”

καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτῷ θεὸς καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι υἱός.

That is why we emphasize that salvation is about a **personal relationship** with God

Why would we ever resort to **idolatry** – to setting up something in our lives that is a rival to God in terms of our allegiance and emotional attachment and devotion?

We have an eternal relationship with the one, true God.

2. (:8) Promise of Second Death

a. Description of the Character and Practice of the Wicked

“But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars,”

τοῖς δὲ δειλοῖς καὶ ἀπίστοις καὶ ἐβδελυγμένοις καὶ φονεῦσιν καὶ πόρνοις καὶ φαρμάκοις καὶ εἰδωλολάτραις καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ψευδέσιν

Tony Garland: Jesus told the Pharisees, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. . . . 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 8:44). The coming of the lawless one, the Antichrist, was with all power, signs and lying wonders (2Th. 2:9). Those who continue to lie will ultimately fall prey themselves to lies: they will not come to the truth (2Th. 2:11-12). Eventually, their own conscience becomes seared (1Ti. 4:2). All who reject salvation are ultimately liars: “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ?” (1Jn. 2:22). The truth of God has been made known to men through general revelation, but men actively suppress the truth (lie) in unrighteousness. Knowing the truth, they promote false ideas such as God doesn’t exist or that His existence cannot be known (Rom. 1:18).

b. Description of the Destiny of the Wicked

“their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

τὸ μέρος αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένῃ πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ, ὃ ἐστὶν ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος.

CONCLUSION:

2 Peter 3 – Live for Eternity

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is the significance to you of the title that Jesus is *the Alpha and the Omega*?
- 2) Are we looking for thirsty souls in our work of evangelism?
- 3) How is the presence of God dwelling with His people the key blessing of eternity?
- 4) What does this passage have to say to those who almost want to worship the environment of this age?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

James Hamilton: God created the world so that he could make known his justice and his mercy. The justice God will demonstrate against the wicked is on display in the new heaven and the new earth in his wrath on those who burn in the second death of the lake of fire in **21:8**. For all eternity God's justice will be on display so that the redeemed who enjoy God's mercy will continue to feel the mercy they have received.

J. A. Seiss: Think, then, what its regeneration must bring! -- an earth which no longer smarts and smokes under the curse of sin; -- an earth which needs no more to be torn with hooks and irons to make it yield its fruits; -- an earth where thorns and thistles no longer infest the ground, nor serpents hiss among the flowers, nor savage beasts lay in ambush to devour; -- an earth whose sod is never cut with graves, whose soil is never moistened with tears or saturated with human blood, whose fields are never blasted with unpropitious season, whose atmosphere never gives wings to the seeds of plague and death, whose ways are never lined with funeral processions, or blocked up with armed men on their way to war; -- an earth whose hills ever flow with salvation, and whose valleys know only the sweetness of Jehovah's smiles; -- an earth from end to end, and from centre to utmost verge, clothed with the eternal blessedness of Paradis Restored.

Ian Brown: Jehovah Jesus: The Alpha And Omega!

So many titles and descriptions of Jesus in the scriptures (as many as 700); Jesus is far greater and glorious than the aggregate of all of these titles; blessing contained in every title; the better we will get to know Him

The commencement and the conclusion; the first and the last; the beginning and the ending; no mind is big enough to comprehend all that is in this claim

What does this title signify?

1) The Permanence of Christ – He is Eternal; *“I am the first and the last”* – 3 refs. To Jehovah in Isaiah – but identified as Jesus in the NT; He is the eternal God; why base your life on things that are not going to last; have your life directed around Jesus

Eternal in His Power
in His Priesthood
in His Pardon

in His Praise
in His Person – “Great is Thy Faithfulness”

2) The Proclamation of Christ – applying the entire Greek alphabet to Himself; what do you do with letters? You build words; Christ came as the Word; this is how God reveals Himself to mankind; God’s ultimate prophet to us; beginning and end of God’s revelation to man

Rev. 1:11 – write what you see in a book

Revelation of God in book of nature is not sufficient – tells of His might and majesty; but we need the Word of Scripture

3) The Provision of Christ – His sufficiency

He is everything to us; no lack or deficiencies – everything we need;

It please the Father that in Christ should all fullness dwell

Brian Bell: Paradise Lost is Paradise Restored

The Story of Scripture comes “full circle”. [Paradise Lost is Paradise Restored!]

2.5. Human history started with a garden & ends with a city!

2.6. In the beg God created heaven & earth(Gen.1:1); I saw a new heaven & earth(21:1)

2.7. The darkness he called night(Gen.1:5); there shall be no night there(21:25)

2.8. God made 2 great lights(Gen.1:16); the city had no need of the sun or moon(21:23)

2.9. In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die(Gen.2:17); be no more death(21:4)

2.10. Satan appears as deceiver(Gen.3:1); Stan disappears forever(20:10)

2.11. Walk of God w/man interrupted(Gen.3:8-10); Walk of God w/man resumed(21:3)

2.12. Initial triumph of the serpent(Gen.3:13); Ultimate triumph of the Lamb(22:3)

2.13. I will greatly multiply your sorrow(Gen.3:16); no more sorrow(21:4)

2.14. Cursed is the ground for your sake(Gen.3:17); no more curse(22:3)

2.15. Mans dominion broken(Gen.3:19); Mans dominion broken restored(22:5)

2.16. 1st paradise closed(Gen.3:23); New paradise opened(21:25)

2.17. Access to the tree of life disinherited(Gen.3:24); Access to the tree reinstated (22:14)

2.18. Driven from God’s presence(Gen.3:24); they shall see His face(22:4)

David Thompson: Observations about New Heaven and New Earth

1) **Is. 65:17** – former things won’t be remembered; **Is. 66:22**; different Gk words for new; *neos* = new to you in time; *kainos* – never having been used; brand new environment; no unbeliever will ever get to see this; don’t confuse millennial kingdom with eternal state; new form and quality to it; this environment will feature the glory of God; think of the potential without any marring by sin;

2) Old heaven and earth will pass away; global warming is not the threat; cf. 2 Pet. 3; God will burn it all up;

3) No longer any oceans; does not mean no water; vegetation required water; but there will be eternal sustenance of life coming directly from God; oceans divide people; massive geographic harmony; totally different climate;

4) New Jerusalem – incredible city; not just getting a makeover as in the Millennium; won’t be built by men; absolutely beautiful as a bride; breath-taking; this city is something you want to see; spectacular

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5) Abiding presence of God – visible, tangible, real – in the person of Jesus Christ; Satan wants you to forget about God; never be a point of time where we will forget about God

6) Eternal comfort – vs. 4 – wonderful bliss; no sadness; God eliminates tears and anything that can cause the tears; cf. list of things that can hurt people and cause them to shed tears; no need for medication to eliminate pain; all the good things we enjoy right now (health, family, money) come from God but we worry that they could pass away in a moment

7) Fulfillment of written promises of God – 5 blessings here:

- God sitting on the throne – in control; who is this person? Rev. 1:7 – the one who was pierced, Jesus Christ

- will feature all things new – you can start all over; the things you struggle with will be gone; no more failure

- written Word of God will be featured –

- will feature complete fulfillment of man's thirst and longing – drink from God's eternal spring without cost

- will feature eternal sonship – I John 5:4 – overcomers are believers; guarantees you entire inheritance;

Illustration: Moody looking at his burned down house; friend says: "I hear you lost everything" – Moody responded: I have far more than what I lost here – I will inherit a new world where God dwells with me

8) No Unbelievers here – too cowardly to give their lives for Jesus Christ; some just refused to believe; some were caught up with abominable sins – would rather have those pleasures than a relationship with Jesus Christ