

Begin with God

Text: Gen. 1:1

Introduction:

1. Genesis has been called the seed plot of the Bible. Every subject of major importance can be traced back to its “first mention” in Genesis. In fact, “all the foundational doctrines and morality of the Christian faith can be found in Genesis, at least in embryonic form.”¹
2. As we will discuss further, the importance of Genesis cannot be overstated as it lays the foundation to the rest of the Bible. Take Genesis out of the Bible and the rest of the Word of God makes little sense. It is so important to accurately understand both the first and last book of the Bible. They are like two bookends that hold the Bible together. The first and last Books of the Bible have been subjected to the most vicious attacks by Satan. Someone said, “The devil hates most the two books which describe his entrance and exit, Genesis and Revelation.”
3. Illustration: Two strainer posts in a fence. Get them wrong and everything in between will be out of alignment.
4. Comparison between Genesis & Revelation. There is a tie between Genesis and Revelation, the first and last books of the Bible. Genesis presents the beginning and Revelation presents the end (By J. Vernon McGee)
 - In Genesis the earth was created; in Revelation the earth passes away.
 - In Genesis was Satan’s first rebellion; in Revelation is Satan’s last rebellion.
 - In Genesis the sun, moon, and stars were for earth’s government; in Revelation these same heavenly bodies are for earth’s judgment.
 - In Genesis the sun was to govern the day; in Revelation there is no need of the sun.
 - In Genesis darkness was called night; in Revelation there is “no night” (See Rev. 21:25; 22:5)
 - In Genesis the waters were called seas; in Revelation there is no more sea.
 - In Genesis was the entrance of sin; in Revelation is the exodus of sin.
 - In Genesis the curse was pronounced; in Revelation the curse is removed.
 - In Genesis death entered; in Revelation there is no more death.
 - In Genesis was the beginning of sorrow and suffering; in Revelation there is no more sorrow or tears.
 - In Genesis was the marriage of the first Adam; in Revelation is the marriage of the Last Adam.
 - In Genesis we saw man’s city, Babylon, being built; in Revelation we see man’s city, Babylon, destroyed, and God’s city, the New Jerusalem, brought into view.
 - In Genesis Satan’s doom was pronounced; in Revelation Satan’s doom is executed.
5. In this introductory message we will consider **4 introductory points** that will aid our study of the Book of Genesis.

¹ J Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, Creation Book Publishers, April 2015, p. 8.

Begin with God - Genesis Series

I. THE TITLE OF THE BOOK

A. The English Title

1. The word 'genesis' is a transliteration from the Greek word γενεσις which means 'generation'. Significantly this word is used in Matthew 1:1 at the opening of the New Testament – “The book of the **generation** (genesis) of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.”
2. The word means origin, beginning. So, Genesis is rightly referred to as the Book of origins/beginnings. It describes the genesis or beginning of the universe.

B. The Jewish Title

1. The Jews refer to it as 'Bereshith' which is the very first Hebrew word meaning “in the beginning.”
2. It has been well said, “Genesis reveals the beginning of everything, except God.”
3. Genesis is the first Book of the five books of Moses that form the Pentateuch (called the Torah by the Jews).

C. Genesis is the Book of Origins

Genesis details the origins of²:

1. The universe.
2. Order & complexity.
3. The solar system.
4. The atmosphere and hydrosphere.
5. The origin of life.
6. The origin of man.
7. Marriage and the home.
8. Evil.
9. Language.
10. Human government.
11. Culture.
12. Nations.
13. The chosen people.
14. Henry Morris writes, “The Book of Genesis is in reality the foundation of all true history, as well as of true science and true philosophy. It is above all else the foundation of God's revelation, as given in the Bible. No other book of the Bible is quoted as copiously or referred to so frequently, in other books of the Bible, as in Genesis.” Not only is Genesis frequently referenced in the other O.T. writings but “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.”³

II. THE AUTHOR OF THE BOOK

A. The Divine Inspiration of the Book

The Bible, of which Genesis is a part, is:

² Adapted from Henry Morris (The Genesis Record).

³ Henry Morris. Morris has these 200 citations listed in Appendix 4 of his commentary.

Begin with God - Genesis Series

1. The Inspired Word – “All scripture is given by **inspiration** of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17)
2. The Infallible Word – Prov. 30:5 “**Every word of God is pure**: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.” John 17:17 “Sanctify them through thy truth: **thy word is truth**.” We believe in verbal, plenary inspiration. By this we mean that the inspiration extends to all parts of the written Word of God and it includes the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit even in the selection of the words of Scripture. “...It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word** that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” (Matt. 4:4)
3. The Indestructible Word
Jesus said:
 - a. “...the scripture **cannot be broken**;” (Jn. 10:35);
 - b. “Heaven and earth shall pass away: **but my words shall not pass away**.” (Lk. 21:33)
 - c. “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” (Matt. 5:18)
 - d. “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fall.” (Lk. 16:17)
 - e. The Bible teaches not only the inspiration of the Word but also the preservation of the Word. Psalm 12:6-7 “The words of the LORD are **pure words**: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. **Thou shalt keep them**, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them **from this generation for ever**.”

B. The Human Instrument for the Book

1. 2 Pet. 1:21 “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were **moved by the Holy Ghost**.”
2. A good KJV Bible has at the top of the page “The first Book of Moses, called Genesis”. We hold unashamedly to the Mosaic authorship of Genesis. Moses’s education in the palace in God’s providence would have prepared him for this scholarly work. Acts 7:22 “And Moses was **learned in all the wisdom** of the Egyptians, and was mighty in **words** and in **deeds**.” In fact, it is highly likely that Moses developed early written Hebrew. He would have written between 1446-1406 B.C.⁴
3. That Genesis was written by Moses was the all but unanimous view of both Jewish and Christian scholars for the last 1800 years. This began to be viciously attacked at the turn of the 19th century with the rise of liberal theology and the practice of so called “higher criticism”. Victor Hamilton writes, “For almost eighteen hundred years hardly anyone questioned the unity of Genesis, whether the writers were the rabbinical scholars of Judaism or the ecclesiastical

⁴ H. Richard Hester, *Old Testament Bible History*, p. 17.

Begin with God - Genesis Series

scholars of Christendom. Thus, a Maimonides⁵ within Judaism, an Augustine within Catholicism, and a Calvin within Protestantism shared no disagreement on the point of Genesis' origin and composition. For all of them Genesis was a unified work, and more specifically, the work of Moses. It is now fashionable to label such an approach as "traditional" or "precritical."

4. We offer four solid, Bible proofs for Moses' authorship:
 - a. The Pentateuch Affirms Mosaic Authorship
 - i. Exodus 17:14 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this *for a memorial in a book*, and rehearse *it* in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."
 - ii. Exodus 24:3-7 "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. (4) And Moses **wrote all the words of the LORD**, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. (5) And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. (6) And Moses took half of the blood, and put *it* in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. (7) **And he took the book of the covenant**, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient."
 - iii. Exodus 34:27 "And the LORD said unto Moses, **Write thou these words**: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel."
 - i. Numbers 33:1-2 "These *are* the journeys of the children of Israel, which went forth out of the land of Egypt with their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron. **And Moses wrote their goings out** according to their journeys by the commandment of the LORD: and these *are* their journeys according to their goings out."
 - ii. Deut. 31:9, 22, 24-26 (9) "And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel...(22) Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel (24) And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing **the words of this law in a book**, until they were finished, (25) That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, (26) **Take this book of the law**, and put it in the side of the ark of the

⁵ Jewish scholastic philosopher and rabbi (1135-1204 A.D.). He was a Jewish philosopher, jurist, and physician, the foremost intellectual figure of medieval Judaism. Bokser, Ben Zion. "Moses Maimonides". Encyclopedia Britannica, 26 Mar. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Moses-Maimonides>. Accessed 24 September 2021.

Begin with God - Genesis Series

covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.”

b. Other O.T. Books affirm Mosaic Authorship

For example:

- i. Josh. 1:7-8 “Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which **Moses my servant commanded thee**: turn not from it *to the right hand or to the left*, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This **book of the law** shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”
- ii. Judg. 3:4 “And they were to prove Israel by them, to know whether they would hearken unto the commandments of the LORD, which he commanded their fathers **by the hand of Moses.**”
- iii. 1 Kings 2:3 “And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in **the law of Moses**, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself:”
- iv. Ezra 6:18 “And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which *is* at Jerusalem; as it is written in **the book of Moses.**”
- v. Neh. 8:1 “And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that *was* before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring **the book of the law of Moses**, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.”
- vi. Dan. 9:11 “Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that *is* written in **the law of Moses** the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.”

c. N.T. writers affirm Mosaic Authorship

- i. John 1:17 “For **the law was given by Moses**, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”
- ii. 1 Cor. 9:9 “For it is written in **the law of Moses**, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?”
- iii. 2 Cor. 3:15 “But even unto this day, when **Moses is read**, the vail is upon their heart.”
- iv. Heb. 10:28 “He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:”

d. Jesus Christ affirms Mosaic Authorship

- i. Matt. 8:4 “And Jesus saith unto him, **See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer**

Begin with God - Genesis Series

- the gift that **Moses** commanded, for a testimony unto them.” A reference to the Book of Leviticus.
- ii. Mark 7:10 “**For Moses** said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:” Reference to the 10 commandments in Exodus.
 - iii. Mark 12:26 “**And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?**”
 - iv. Luke 24:27, 44 “**And beginning at Moses** and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in **all the scriptures** the things concerning himself. (44) And he said unto them, **These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.**”
 - v. John 7:19 “**Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?**”

III. THE OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

A. A Suggested Outline

1. Genesis 1-11 – Focus on humanity in general and four great events:
 - a. The Creation (Chap. 1-2)
 - b. The Fall (Chap. 3-5)
 - c. The Flood (Chap. 6-9)
 - d. The Tower of Babel (Chap. 10-11)
2. Genesis 12-50 – Focus on Israel in particular and the lives of four great men:
 - a. Abraham (12:1-25:18)
 - b. Isaac (25:19-27:46)
 - c. Jacob (28-36)
 - d. Joseph (37-50)

B. A Scriptural Outline

There is a discernable outline within Genesis itself, each section being introduced with the words “These are the generations of...” or something similar occurring 11 times in total. This translates into 10 sections in Genesis:

1. The generations of the heavens and the earth (Gen. 2:4)
2. The generations of Adam (Gen. 5:1)
3. The generations of Noah (Gen. 6:9)
4. The generations of the sons of Noah (Gen. 10:1)
5. The generations of Shem (Gen. 11:10)
6. The generations of Terah (Gen. 11:27)
7. The generations of Ishmael (Gen. 25:12)
8. The generations of Isaac (Gen. 25:19)
9. The generations of Esau (Gen. 36:1, 9)
10. The generations of Jacob (Gen. 37:2)

IV. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BOOK

The debate over how to interpret Genesis must be addressed as to err on this point will lead to devastating outcomes on the Christian's worldview and doctrinal framework. To summarize, there are essentially two methods:

A. The Popular and Perverse Methods

1. Sadly, much of Christendom today seeks to twist the creation account, indeed, the first 11 chapters of Genesis to accommodate and old earth, evolutionary view of "science".
2. Dr. Jonathan Sarfati comments on this: "Around the turn of the 19th century, the unbiblical philosophy of uniformitarianism smuggled its way into geology, and theologians responded in different ways. Nigel Cameron and Doug Kelly have documented the change in commentaries over this period. Before the rise of uniformitarianism, a straightforward view of Genesis was practically unanimous. They also documented how most conservative commentators were intimidated by 'science'. It is only after the rise of this philosophy that we see the invention of ways to add millions of years to the Bible. Since long ages were previously not even thought of by conservative exegetes, it is strong evidence that they are not in the text at all."⁶ In other words, these new interpretations of Genesis were not the result of diligent and careful exposition but a response to the external pressures of unbelieving scholarship and the rise in the popularity of the evolutionary theory.
3. This desire to conform to the dictates of mainstream "science" has led even many who claim to be evangelical, to seek to interpret the Genesis creation account in such a way so as to accommodate molecules to man evolution. Some of these are as follows:
 - a. The gap theory – they say there is a gap between the first and second verse of Genesis and try and fit billions of years in there. That means you end up with death and decay preceding man's fall when in actual fact, the Bible clearly states that death and suffering came as a result of man's sin (Rom. 5:12).
 - b. The day age theory – this promotes the idea that instead of 6 literal, 24-hour days, the days were actually long periods of time to accommodate billions of years. The wording of the text itself rules this out where it references the "evening and the morning", a clear reference to a 24-hour period. Further, Exodus 20:11 reaffirms that creation took place in six literal days. Ex. 20:11 "**For in six days** the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Since the sabbath day is a literal 24-hour day, then it follows that the six days of creation were also literal 24-hour periods.
 - c. The poetry theory – the proponents of this theory claim that Genesis 1 is poetic language and not to be taken as a literal, historical account. This is refuted for the following reasons:
 - i. **Hebrew grammar** affirms that Genesis is historical narrative. Hebrew experts who have studied the Hebrew

⁶ J Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, Creation Book Publishers, April 2015, p. 64.

Begin with God - Genesis Series

grammar of Genesis 1-11 have found that it has the same literary style as the other historical books such as Exodus, Joshua, Judges etc... If Genesis were poetry, then it the Hebrew would resemble the poetic books like the Psalms. Hebrew poetry does not rely on rhyme or metre like English poetry but something called *parallelism*. This is where “the statements in two or more consecutive lines are related in some way.” Sarfati writes, “Despite what is so often claimed, any doubts about the genre of Genesis don’t stem from the grammar and style of the text itself. Rather, they come from considerations outside the text, such as long-age uniformitarian geology and evolutionary biology.”⁷ Psalm 19:1-2 is a good example of what is called *synonymous parallelism*. Parallelism is absent from Genesis except where people are quoted so it is not poetry but historical narrative.⁸ Further, there is no change in style from Gen.1-11 to Gen. 12-50.

- ii. **Other Biblical writers** quote Genesis as historical narrative. We will consider a number of examples under the next point.

B. The Principled and Proper Method

1. The key to understanding the Bible is to use the Literal, Grammatical-Historical method of interpretation.
2. This is how Christ; the Apostles and the other Biblical writers interpreted the Book of Genesis.
 - a. 1 Chronicles 1-8 is a “concise but comprehensive genealogy from Adam and Noah through the 12 tribes of Israel through the kings of Israel and Judah until after the Babylonian Exile.”⁹
 - b. Luke 3:23-38 is a “genealogy of Christ through Mary through David (via his son Nathan) through Abraham, Noah, then finally Adam, “the son of God” (Note: not the descendent of ape-like ancestors!).¹⁰
 - c. Hebrews 11 is the Bible’s Hall of faith and lists Abel, Enoch and Noah from the early chapters of Genesis as literal people.
 - d. Most importantly, Christ believed in a literal creation account. When asked the divorce question the Lord Jesus replied, Matt. 19:4-5 “And he answered and said unto them, **Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?**” Further, Jesus believed in a literal Noah and a literal flood. He also believed in a literal lot and the literal destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:26-29) To claim a “superior” position to that of the Son of God Himself is ignorance, arrogance, pride and blindness of heart.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 48-50.

⁸ Ibid, p. 50.

⁹ Ibid, p. 47.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Begin with God - Genesis Series

- e. The Apostle Paul believed in a literal Adam as found in Romans, the N.T. thesis on the doctrine of salvation (Rom. 5:12-21).
 - f. The Apostle John believed in a literal Cain (1 John 3:12).
 - g. The Apostle Peter believed in a literal Noah and his family and the worldwide flood (1 Pet. 3:20; 2. Peter 3:6)
 - h. Jude believed in a literal Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 1:6), a literal Cain (Vs. 11) and a literal Enoch (Vs. 14-15).
3. To summarize, "If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense or you will end up with nonsense."

Conclusion: Do you know God? He has revealed Himself in the Bible so that you might know Him. Have faith in God's Word. It is the most reliable document in the entire world!

Genesis: Fundamental to the Christian Faith

Text: Gen. 1:1

Introduction:

1. Review of last lesson:
 - a. Authorship – Moses. The events recorded in Genesis were prior to Moses’s time but He was moved of the Holy Spirit to record those earlier events (2. Pet. 1:21). Further, Moses likely had access to ancient records which he used under the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit. For example, “This is the **book** of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him;” (Gen. 5:1) This is entirely in harmony with the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures.
 - b. Date – Moses likely would have written between 1446-1406 B.C.¹
 - c. Interpretation – Genesis needs to be interpreted according to the normal, literal method of interpretation. If the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense!
2. The importance of the first and last Books of the Bible cannot be overstated. The devil hates most the two books which describe his entrance and exit, Genesis and Revelation.” Illustration: Two strainer posts in a fence. Get them wrong and everything in between will be out of alignment.
3. Henry Morris: “If the Bible were somehow expurgated of the Book of Genesis (as many people today would prefer), the rest of the Bible would be incomprehensible. It would be like a building without a ground floor, or a bridge with no support.”²
4. In this lesson, we will consider some further ways that Genesis is fundamental and essential to the Christian faith. The foundations of the Christian faith are so important to have right. Psalm 11:3 says, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

Consider the importance of Genesis in relation to...

I. EPISTEMOLOGY

- A. **Definition:** Epistemology is “the theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope, and the distinction between justified belief and opinion.”³
- B. **Application:** Your beliefs about God and the origins of the universe will powerfully shape your worldview. Henry Morris writes, “The Book of Genesis gives vital information concerning the origin of all things – and therefore the meaning of all things – which would otherwise be forever inaccessible to man. The future is bound up in the past. One’s belief concerning his origin will inevitably determine his belief concerning his purpose and his destiny. A naturalistic, animalistic concept of beginnings specifies a naturalistic, animalistic program for the future.

¹ H. Richard Hester, *Old Testament Bible History*, p. 17.

² H Morris, *The Genesis Record*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1994, p. 17.

³ Oxford Dictionary 2021, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/epistemology?locale=en>; Viewed 1/10/21.

Begin with God - Genesis Series

An origin at the hands of an omnipotent, holy, loving God, on the other hand, necessarily predicts a divine purpose in history and an assurance of the consummation of that purpose. A believing understanding of the Book of Genesis is therefore prerequisite to an understanding of God and His meaning to man.”⁴ Belief in the Creator and the creation account as recorded in Genesis will be foundational to your views on things such as:

1. Gender & sexuality.
2. Marriage & the family.
3. The sanctity of human life (i.e., abortion, euthanasia).
4. The ultimate questions of life such as where did the universe come from? Why are we here? Why do we have to do? What is the purpose of life?

II. COSMOLOGY

A. Definition: The word means, “The science of the origin and development of the universe.”⁵

B. Application: All other man-made systems of cosmology start with matter energy as the starting point whereas Genesis starts with the eternal God.

1. For example, the Babylonian account of beginnings describes a war between the great Babylonian deity Marduk and Tiamat. “Marduk proves himself stronger and prevails, cleaving her into two monstrous halves, the upper of which he fixes in place as the heavens, in which in turn he fixes the heavenly bodies; and the lower of which halves, on the other hand, he sets in place as the earth. Then he compounds material of his own blood for the creation of man.”⁶ Another example is the Phoenician cosmogony which has the idea of a world egg that hatches to produce the world.⁷
2. The Genesis account of creation refutes all of man’s false philosophies (“isms”) concerning the origin and meaning of the world:⁸
 - a. It refutes *atheism*, the belief that there is no God, because this chapter confirms there is a God and that the universe was created by God.
 - b. It refutes *pantheism*, the belief that the universe is God, for God is transcendent⁹ (superior) to that which He created.
 - c. It refutes *polytheism*, the belief that there are many gods (e.g., Hinduism), for one God created all things. Note: It is significant that in a world saturated with polytheism at the time Genesis was written, we should be presented with the truth of Monotheism. Another testament to the authenticity of Genesis.

⁴ Ibid, pp. 17-18.

⁵ Oxford Dictionary 2021, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/cosmology?locale=en>; Viewed 1/10/21.

⁶ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan USA, 1971; pp. 27-28.

⁷ Ibid, p. 28.

⁸ List adapted from Henry Morris, pg. 38.

⁹ In relation to God, “existing apart from and not subject to the limitations of the material universe.” (Oxford Dictionary)

Begin with God - Genesis Series

- d. It refutes *materialism*, for matter had a beginning.
 - e. It refutes *dualism*, because God was alone when He created.
 - f. It refutes *humanism*, the concept that there is no God outside the created world¹⁰, because God, not man, is the ultimate reality.
 - g. It refutes *evolutionism*, because God created all things.
- C.** Many anti-creationists claim that a 'literal' understanding of Genesis is antithetical to proper science and that accepting Genesis as literal history is to regress to the dark ages. In fact, the opposite is true. Jonathan Sarfati cites Peter Harrison of the University of Oxford who wrote *The Bible, Protestantism and the rise of natural science* in 2001. In this book, he presents the contrast between the erroneous secular view and the historical reality. "It is commonly supposed that when in the early modern period individuals began to look at the world in a different way, they could no longer believe what they read in the Bible. In this book I shall suggest that the reverse is the case: that when in the sixteenth century people began to read the Bible in a different way, they found themselves forced to jettison traditional conceptions of the world." He goes on to state emphatically, "Strange as it may seem, the Bible played a positive role in the development of science...Had it not been for the rise of the literal interpretation of the Bible and the subsequent appropriation of biblical narratives by early modern scientist, modern science may not have arisen at all. In sum, the Bible and its literal interpretation have played a vital role in the development of Western science."¹¹
- D.** Sarfati further quotes Stephen Snobelen, Assistant Professor of History of Science and Technology, University of King's College, Halifax Canada who writes in a similar vein: "Recent work on early modern science has demonstrated a direct (and positive) relationship between the resurgence of the Hebraic, literal exegesis of the Bible in the Protestant Reformation, and the rise of the empirical method in modern science. I'm not referring to wooden literalism, but the sophisticated literal-historical hermeneutics that Martin Luther and others (including Newton) championed. It was, in part, when this method was transferred to science, when students of nature moved on from studying nature as symbols, allegories and metaphors to observing nature directly in an inductive and empirical way, that modern science was born. In this, Newton also played a pivotal role. As strange as it may sound, science will forever be in the debt of millenarians and biblical literalists."¹²
- E.** In reality, the pioneers of modern science were Theists, if not born-again believers. David Cloud writes, "Most branches of modern science were invented after the Reformation by men who believed in divine creation and were deeply influenced by the Bible. The following is a list of Christians who were fathers of various fields of modern science. These men believed in the God of the Bible and divine creation and

¹⁰ The system of thought that attaches prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters (Oxford Dictionary). Humanism places man at the centre rather than God.

¹¹ Cited by Sarfati, p. 67.

¹² Ibid, pp. 67-68.

Begin with God - Genesis Series

were deeply influenced by a biblical worldview. The vast majority of these were British.”¹³

1. Antiseptic Surgery (Joseph Lister)
 2. Atomic Theory (John Dalton)
 3. Calculus (Isaac Newton)
 4. Chemistry (Robert Boyle)
 5. Comparative Anatomy (Georges Cuvier)
 6. Computer Science (Charles Babbage)
 7. Dynamics (Isaac Newton)
 8. Electrodynamics (James Clerk Maxwell)
 9. Electromagnetics (Michael Faraday)
 10. Electronics (Ambrose Fleming)
 11. Energetics (William Thompson)
 12. Field Theory (Michael Faraday)
 13. Fluid Mechanics (George Stokes)
 14. Galactic Astronomy (William Hershel)
 15. Gas Dynamics (Robert Boyle)
 16. Glacial Geology (Louis Agassiz)
 17. Gynaecology (James Simpson)
 18. Hydrography (Matthew Maury)
 19. Ichthyology (Louis Agassiz)
 20. Isotopic Chemistry (William Ramsay)
 21. Model Analysis (Lord Raleigh)
 22. Natural History (John Ray)
 23. Neuropathology (John Abercrombie)
 24. Oceanography (Matthew Maury)
 25. Optical Mineralogy (David Brewster)
 26. Palaeontology (John Woodard)
 27. Pathology (Rudolph Virchow)
 28. Plasma physics (Michael Faraday)
 29. Reversible Thermodynamics (James Joule)
 30. Statistical Thermodynamics (James Clerk Maxwell)
 31. Stratigraphy (Nicholas Steno)
 32. Taxonomy (Carolus Linnaeus)
 33. Thermodynamics (William Thompson)
 34. Thermokinetics (Humphry Davy)
 35. Vertebrate Palaeontology (Georges Cuvier)
- F.** Consider four specific examples (See pg. 153-154 of Cloud’s book)
1. **Isaac Newton** (1642-1727) was a prominent figure with his theories on light, motion, gravity, calculus, and celestial mechanics. He constructed the first reflecting telescope. (The earliest known working telescope was constructed in 1608.) He established the scientific method. Newton was a Christian who opposed the restoration of Catholicism in the Church of England under King James II. In his 1687 book *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (*Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*) he wrote, “This most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being. ... Atheism is so senseless. When I look at the solar system, I see the earth at the right distance from the sun to

¹³ D Cloud, *The Bible and Western Civilization*, Way of Life Literature, pp. 150-151

Begin with God - Genesis Series

receive the proper amounts of heat and light. This did not happen by chance.”

2. **Robert Boyle** (1627-1691) the father of modern chemistry, said, “The vastness, beauty, orderliness of the heavenly bodies, the excellent structure of animals and plants; and the other phenomena of nature justly induce an intelligent and unprejudiced observer to conclude a supremely powerful, just, and good author” (*Works*, Vol. IV, p. 25).
 3. **Michael Faraday** (1791-1867), one of the fathers of modern physics, was a Christian who held the Bible to be God’s Word. He wrote, “... the Christian who is taught of God ... finds his guide in the Word of God ... and looks for no assurance beyond what the Word can give Him. ... The Christian religion is a revelation, and that revelation is the Word of God ... No revival and no temporal teaching comes between it and him. He who is taught of the Holy Spirit needs no crowd and no revival to teach him; if he stand alone he is fully taught” (*Selected Exhortations Delivered to Various Churches of Christ by the Late Michael Faraday*, Dundee: John Leng and Co., 1910).
 4. **James Clerk Maxwell** (1831-1879) a father of the science of electrodynamics, was a Bible-believing Christian who said, “I believe, with the Westminster Divines and their predecessors *ad Infinitum*, that ‘Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever’” (Lewis Campbell and William Garnet, *The Life of James Clerk Maxwell*, 1882). In his final illness, Maxwell reasserted “his firm and undoubting faith in the Incarnation and all its results; in the full sufficiency of the Atonement; in the work of the Holy Spirit. He had gauged and fathomed all the schemes and systems of philosophy, and had found them utterly empty and unsatisfying--‘unworkable’ was his own word about them-- and he turned with simple faith to the Gospel of the Saviour” (Campbell and Garnet).
- G. Illustration:** A young woman teacher shared with her class of small children that she was an atheist. She asked her class how many of them were atheists. Not really knowing what atheism was, and wanting to be like their teacher, their hands shot up into the air, that is all but one. Lucy did not raise her hand. The teacher asked why she did not raise her hand like the rest of the class and she replied: “Because I am not an atheist.” “What are you?” the teacher asked. Lucy answered, “I am a Christian.” The teacher then asked Lucy why she was a Christian. Lucy quickly answered: “Because my mummy and daddy are Christians.” The teacher then said: “That is no reason to be a Christian. What if your mummy and daddy had been fools, stupid people? What would you be then?” After a pause, Lucy answered: “I’d be an atheist!”

III. THEOLOGY

Genesis has been called the seed plot of the Bible. Every subject of major importance can be traced back to its “first mention” in Genesis. In fact, “all the foundational doctrines and morality of the Christian faith can be found

Begin with God - Genesis Series

in Genesis, at least in embryonic form.”¹⁴ As examples, consider the following 10 doctrinal disciplines that are founded upon Genesis:

A. Theology Proper: The Doctrine of God

Genesis reveals so much about God. In just the first chapter, God is mentioned 32 times in 31 verses by Name and a further 11 times by use of personal pronouns. For example:

1. We learn there is One God and yet He is Triune in nature.
 - a. The first mention of God in Genesis 1:1 comes from the Hebrew word Elohim which is a plural found in a singular setting: the uniplural name of God.¹⁵ Yet the verb “created” is singular.¹⁶
 - b. In fact, we see the Trinity in the first 3 verses of the Bible.
 - God (Vs. 1)
 - The Spirit (Vs. 2)
 - The Word (Vs. 3; John 1:1, 14)
 - c. We see the Trinity in Gen. 1:26 – “And God said, Let us make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness...”
 - d. Spurgeon’s Catechism has this question: “How many persons are there in the Godhead?” The answer is, “There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost and these three are one God, the same in essence, equal in power and glory.”
 - e. To fully understand the doctrine of the Trinity, we need to rest of Scripture but Genesis lays down the foundation from the very first chapter.
2. We learn much about God from His Names in Genesis such as:
 - a. Elohim (Gen. 1:1)
 - b. YHWH (Jehovah) (Gen. 2:4)
 - c. El Elyon – God Most High (14:18-22)
 - d. El Roi – God who Sees (16:13)
 - e. El Shaddai – God Almighty (17:1)
 - f. El Olam – Everlasting God (22:23)
 - g. Jehovah Jireh – God will provide (22:14)
 - h. God of Abraham (26:24)
 - i. God of Abraham and Isaac (28:13)
 - j. El Elohei Yisrael – God of Israel (33:20)
 - k. El Bethel – God of Bethel (Bethel = house of God) (35:7)
 - l. The Mighty One of Jacob (49:24)
3. We learn much about God’s attributes in Genesis such as the fact that:
 - a. God is Self-existent – no one made God. He is eternal. Psalm 90:2 “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even **from everlasting to everlasting**, thou *art* God.”
 - b. God is Personal – He speaks and can be known. The phrase “And God said” occurs 10 times in Genesis chapter 1. This

¹⁴ J Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, Creation Book Publishers, April 2015, p. 8.

¹⁵ I Western, *Notes on Genesis*, Golden West Baptist Church, p. 3.

¹⁶ J Sarfati, p. 71.

Begin with God - Genesis Series

refutes the Deist position that God exists but He is unknowable and distant from His creation.

- c. God is Powerful – creation is evidence of God’s mighty power. All it took was for God to speak and the universe was created “Ex Nihilo”, out of nothing. All the way through the Creation account we have “And God said...and it was so”. Psalm 33:6-9 “By **the word of the LORD** were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. **For he spake, and it was done;** he commanded, and it stood fast.”
- a. God is Creative – creation again testifies to this truth. In Genesis 1 we see God as the Master Craftsman fashioning the universe. In fact, we could say that Genesis 1 is the story of the Creator more than the story of the creation (though the creation described is literal history). “What an imagination God must have! What an artist! Six thousand varieties of beetle. No two blades of grass are the same. No two snowflakes. No two clouds. No two grains of sand. No two stars. No two faces. No two sets of fingerprints are the same. What astonishing variety and yet in harmony for it is a uni-verse.”¹⁷
- b. God is gracious – “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” (Gen. 6:8)
- c. God is merciful – “But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy...” (Gen. 39:21).
- d. God is just – the judgment of the worldwide flood upon sinful mankind and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah reveals the mind of God towards sin.
- e. God is sovereign – Joseph is an excellent example of the Providential workings of God.

B. Christology: The Doctrine of the Son

1. Genesis reveals the first prophecy of the Messiah in Genesis 3:15 – “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Here Christ is referred to as the “seed of the woman” which clearly implies that the Messiah would not have an earthly father. Thus, the truth of the Virgin Birth in embryonic form is found in the opening chapters of Genesis.
2. The Athanasian Creed: “Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation; that he also believe faithfully the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess; that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man; God, of the Essence of the Father; begotten before the worlds; and Man, of the Essence of his Mother, born in the world. Perfect God; and perfect Man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting. Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead; and inferior to the Father as touching his Manhood. Who although he is God and Man; yet he is

¹⁷ D Lyle, *A journey through the Bible*, Christian Year Publications 2017, p. 34.

Begin with God - Genesis Series

not two, but one Christ. One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh; but by assumption of the Manhood by God. One altogether; not by confusion of Essence; but by unity of Person. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man; so God and Man is one Christ.”¹⁸

C. Pneumatology: The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Genesis reveals two main truths concerning the Third Person of the Godhead:

1. The Holy Spirit was active in Creation (1:2).
2. The Holy Spirit strives against sin (6:3).

D. Bibliology: The Doctrine of the Scriptures

1. Genesis is fundamental to Bibliology as it is the first Book of the Bible. “Genesis sets the scene for the ‘big picture’ of the Bible: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration.”¹⁹
2. “The Book of Genesis is in reality the foundation of all true history, as well as of true science and true philosophy. It is above all else the foundation of God’s revelation, as given in the Bible. No other book of the Bible is quoted as copiously or referred to so frequently, in other books of the Bible, as in Genesis.” Not only is Genesis frequently referenced in the other O.T. writings but “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.”²⁰

E. Anthropology: The Doctrine of Man

Genesis makes very important contributions to the doctrine of man. Consider the following list²¹:

1. God created both male and female equally in His image (1:26); man is the result of direct creative acts and did not evolve from apelike ancestors.
2. We see from the creation of Adam (2:7) the beginning of the teaching that man has both a material aspect and immaterial aspect.
3. In mankind’s sinless original state, men and women were to marry and have children (1:28, 2:24), work (2:15), and exercise dominion over the rest of creation (1:28).
4. Man fell into sin (3:1-8). Work becomes toil (3:17-18), and male-female relationships are marred (3:16).
5. Death is the ultimate punishment for sin, which includes physical death (3:19) and separation from God (2:17, 3:19).
6. Only after the Fall are children actually conceived (4:1). And one result of the Fall is that childbearing is very painful for women (3:16). Men begin to keep animals and till the ground (4:2), build cities (4:17), make musical instruments (4:21), metal tools (4:22), and call on God’s name (4:26). After the Flood, man is commanded to execute murderers (9:5-6). This is the beginning of human

¹⁸ Cited by Sarfati, p. 75.

¹⁹ Sarfati, p. 69.

²⁰ Henry Morris. Morris has these 200 citations listed in Appendix 4 of his commentary.

²¹ Sarfati’s list, pp. 77-78 (with a few minor adaptations made).

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government, which enables the authority under which punishment to constrain sin of various types can be meted out (See Rom. 13).

7. The origin of the nations, particularly the Gentiles (Ch. 10).
8. The origin of the main language families at Babel (11:1-9).
9. The origin of the Jewish nation (10:21-31, 11:10-50:26).

F. Hamartiology: The Doctrine of Sin

1. It is impossible to understand sin without Genesis and its record of the Fall. Genesis reveals a perfect world created by a perfect God. A world in which there was no sin or imperfection. Seven times in Genesis 1 God said of his creation that it was "good". The seventh time, after God had finished the work of creation, he declared that it was "very good" (Gen. 1:31). This again refutes the notion that there before creation week there were billions and billions of years of disease, death and destruction. The stage is set for the tragedy of the fall and sin's entrance into God's perfect universe. In Genesis, the first Book of the Bible, paradise is lost, in Revelation, the last Book of the Bible, Paradise is regained.
2. In Genesis we also see the devastating results of the fall in the murder of Abel, the wickedness of the pre-flood world and its subsequent annihilation in the judgment of the world-wide flood and the evil depravity of Sodom and Gomorrah and God's judgment of fire and brimstone.
3. It is pivotal to Paul's argument in Romans 5:12-21 where he explains that death came as a result of Adam's sin. The same truth is also found in the Great Gospel chapter of 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 "For since **by man came death**, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as **in Adam all die**, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."
4. Challenge: You are either in Adam or in Christ. If you stay in Adam, you will perish for eternity in hell but if you trust Christ as Saviour, you will spend eternity in heaven with Him.

G. Soteriology: The Doctrine of Salvation

1. The truth of blood atonement and salvation by faith rather than works is seen in Abel's acceptable sacrifice (Gen. 4:4). In Abel's sacrifice we see the start of the teaching that there is no remission of sins "without the shedding of blood" (Heb. 9:22). In fact, the writer to the Hebrews picks up the truth of Abel's offering in the great faith chapter (Chap. 11). "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." (Vs. 4). Jude uses the "way of Cain" as an illustration of false teachers in Jude 1:11. Cain's way was the way of works (fruit of the ground), a bloodless way. Abel's offering was the way of faith and the shedding of blood for sin.
2. The truth of salvation by grace is seen in the account of Noah who "found grace in the eyes of the LORD." (Gen. 6:8).
3. The truth of Christ as the only way of salvation is pictured in Noah's ark. There was only one way of escape from the judgment of the flood and only one door of entrance into the ark of safety. 1 Peter 3:21 says, "when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days

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of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." Hebrews 11:7 "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."

4. The truth of justification by faith is seen in the example of Abraham who "believed in the LORD; and he counted to him for righteousness." (Gen. 15:6). This was before he was circumcised, which is a work (Gen. 17). This is foundation to Paul's argument in Romans 4. "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Vs. 1-5)
5. The truth of substitutionary atonement is seen in Genesis 22:1-13 where Abraham offers a ram for the burnt offering in place of his son Isaac. What a picture of Christ, the Lamb of God who would come and take away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36). Gen. 22:7-8 "And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."
6. Note: If there was no literal fall, what need have we for the cross?

H. Demonology: Doctrine of Fallen Angels

1. We are introduced to Satan in Genesis 3 and his role in luring man into sin. The first words Satan uttered to mankind 6,000 years ago were "Yea, hath God said?" and he has been saying the same thing ever since!
2. Many also hold the view that we are introduced to fallen angels in chapter 6 but we will discuss that in more detail when we get to that chapter.

I. Israelology: The Doctrine of Israel

1. Genesis records the formation of the Jewish nation with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
2. Genesis records the Abrahamic covenant with its promise concerning the land of Canaan and how it would belong to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 12:7; 15:18; 17:8, 24:7). The dispute over land in Palestine was settled by God Almighty thousands of years ago. The land belongs to Israel, not anyone else!

J. Eschatology: The Doctrine of Last Things

While Eschatology is not the dominant theme of Genesis, it lays the foundation for this doctrine like all other doctrines of the Bible. There is...

1. The truth of life after death. Genesis reveals that when a man dies, he is "gathered to his people". We see this reference in relation to Abraham (25:8), Ishmael (25:17), Isaac (35:29), Jacob (49:29, 33).

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In fact, God promised Abraham “And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.” (15:15) Genesis also reveals the existence of heaven as the abode of God (28:12-13).

2. The truth of the return of Christ. While not specifically mentioned in Genesis, we know from Jude 1:14 that the second coming of Christ was preached by faithful Enoch. Further, the rest of the Bible’s teaching on end times would be impossible to understand apart from Genesis which introduces us to God’s grand plan and scheme for man and the cosmos.

Conclusion:

1. Do you know Christ as Saviour? Genesis clearly reveals the reality of our sin and the remedy in Christ.
2. How is your foundation as a believer? Do you have complete confidence in God’s Word or has the devil eroded your foundation with his theories?

In the Beginning

Text: Gen. 1:1-2

Introduction:

1. Having sought to lay down a biblical framework for the study of Genesis, we now proceed to an exposition the text itself.
2. It is important to recognize that verses 1-5 describe God's creative work on day 1. Ex. 20:11 "**For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is**, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." This is important to recognise as we often say that God created light on Day 1 of creation. This is true but before He created light, He brought the universe in its basic form into existence as described in the first two verses.
3. Remember that Genesis 1 teaches us not just about the cosmos but also so much about the Creator. We see a God who works in a structured and orderly manner to bring the creation into being. We see a God of infinite wisdom, power and creativity at work. It is significant that every verse in this chapter with the exception of verse 1 and verse 27 begin with the conjunction 'and'. "This structure clearly means that each statement is sequentially and chronologically connected to the verses before and after. Each action follows directly upon the action described in the verse preceding it." (Henry Morris)
4. Genesis 1:1 is the foundational verse of the Bible. If you are prepared to accept the truth of Genesis 1:1, you won't find it difficult to believe anything else recorded in the Word of God.
5. In this message we will consider the pre-creation situation (before the beginning) and then what happened in the beginning.

I. BEFORE THE BEGINNING

We would do well to linger for a little time on the very threshold of Divine Revelation and look back towards eternity past. God back as far as the human mind can imagine, and you will find God there. What was the situation before the universe was created?

A. God was there in Reality

1. Genesis 1:1 takes the fact of God's existence for granted as though it were so obvious that only a fool could say "there is no God" (Ps. 14:1). The Bible starts with eternity past and ends with eternity future.
2. We are confronted with a choice when it comes to origins – either God is eternal or matter energy is eternal. The truth of an eternal, all knowing, all powerful, all wise Creator is far more intellectually satisfying than the belief that nothing turned into everything or that there was some primitive form of matter that exploded the universe into existence.
3. Psalm 14:1 exposes the real reason behind man's denial of the Creator – SIN! "The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. **They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is* none that doeth good.**"

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4. In Genesis 1:1, we are introduced to the first Name of God in the Bible – Elohim. It is the “Name of God which emphasises His majesty and Omnipotence. It is a plural Name with a singular meaning, a uni-plural noun.” The root meaning of the word is “power, strength and glory” (Davis).

B. God was there in Sublime Glory

1. John 17:5 “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the **glory** which I had with thee **before the world was.**” Here our Lord Jesus Christ makes reference to the glory He enjoyed with the Father before the world was in existence. Perhaps we get a glimpse of that glory in the following verse.
2. 1 Tim. 6:16 “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom *be* honour and power everlasting. Amen.”

C. God was there in Loving Communion

1. John 17:24 “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for **thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.**”
2. Before the universe was created, the Father loved the Son. God was totally sufficient and satisfied in Himself for all of eternity past. God did not create the universe to satisfy a personal need. He created it for the Son of God (“all things were created **by him and for him.**” Col. 1:16) and to display His glory.

D. God was there planning Salvation

1. Christ foreordained to be our Saviour before the world began – 1 Peter 1:18-20 “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was **foreordained before the foundation of the world**, but was manifest in these last times for you,” Christ is described in Revelation 13:8 as the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”
2. Eternal life promised us before the world began – Titus 1:2-3 “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, **promised before the world began**; But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour;”
3. We were chosen in Christ before the world began - Eph 1:4 “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:” Remember that we are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (1 Peter 1:2).
4. Salvation given to us in Christ before the world began – 2 Tim. 1:9-10 “Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, **which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began**, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour

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Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:"

5. A.W. Tozer attempts to explain, "But we are not quite ready to leave that pre-creation situation, before the foundations of the earth were laid, when God dwelt alone, the uncreated Being; the Father in love with the Son, and the Son with the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost with the Father and the Son. God is the eternal God, dwelling in a tranquillity that had no beginning and that can have no ending. Now, you may note that I have not used the expression, "the pre-creation void." Void is a good and useful word. When we do not know what else to say, we call it a void. But before the Creation, God was there and God is not a void. He is the triune God and He is all there is. In His existence before the creation, God was already there busy; busy with eternal mercies, His mind stirring with merciful thoughts and redemptive plans for mankind not yet created."

II. IN THE BEGINNING (VS. 1-2)

What happened in the beginning?

A. God Created (Vs. 1-2a)

"Verse one is the record of the first part of the work brought into being on the first day: first the heavens and the earth in a basic form as to their material, then light." (Leupold)

1. God created **TIME** – "In the beginning"
 - a. The word 'created' is the Hebrew word 'bara'. "It is a word that is only ever used in the Old Testament of the work of God. Man can make and form things but only God can create something out of nothing." (Morris) Genesis 1 teaches creatio ex nihilo, "creation out of nothing". Hebrews 11:3 "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed **by the word of God**, so that things which are seen **were not made of things which do appear.**" Psalm 33:6 "By **the word of the LORD** were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."
 - b. God is Eternal meaning He is not subject to the limitations of time. He is beyond time and outside of time. Psalm 90:2 "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even **from everlasting to everlasting**, thou *art* God." "God, having no beginning or end, is eternal, which should properly be understood not as infinite time but **beyond time.**" (Sarfati)
 - c. Henry Morris writes, "The universe is actually a continuum of space, matter, and time, no one of which can have a meaningful existence without the other two."
 - d. "Modern physics has caught up with the Bible. Einstein's General Relativity shows that time is connected with matter... Time is now known to be part of the space-time universe, and doesn't exist independently of matter and energy." (Sarfati)
 - e. In Genesis 1 we see that God established a 7-day week and the 24-hour night and day cycle.

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- f. Question: When was the beginning? To come up with an approximate date we have to turn to the chronology of the Bible. The best known and probably the most reputable chronological system based on the Biblical data is that of Archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656) who computed the date of creation as 4004 B.C. This sound incredulous and ridiculous to a generation that has been brainwashed by the so-called billions and billions of years of evolution but it was widely accepted in pre-Darwin scholarship. One writer notes, "For an educated man in the seventeenth or even eighteenth century, any suggestion that the human past extended back further than 6,000 years was a vain and foolish speculation."¹ (Colin Renfrew cited by Morris). In addition to Ussher's date, some other dates that have been computed (all in years B.C.) as: Jewish (3760); Septuagint (5270), Josephus (5555); Kepler (3993); Melanchthon (3964); Luther (3961); Lightfoot (3960); Hales (5402); Playfair (4008); Lipman (3916) and others.²
2. God created **SPACE** – "the heaven"
 3. God created **MASS** – "and the earth"
 - a. The 'earth' is the component of matter in the universe.
 - b. "At the time of the initial creation, there was no other planets, stars, or other material bodies in the universe, nor did any of them come into being until the fourth day. The word is also translated either "ground" or "land". (Morris)
 4. Summary: We live in a time, space, mass universe. We could call it a Tri-universe. This is fascinating as this reflects something of the Triune nature of the Godhead. Romans 1:20 reads, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, **even his eternal power and Godhead**; so that they are without excuse."
 5. Challenge: The same God that had the power to create the universe has the power to create in you a clean heart (Psalm 51:10) and to make you a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).
 6. Verse 2 goes on to explain several details about the earth at this point in time at the beginning of creation week.
 - a. It was "without form" meaning it was unformed. The word is used later in the Bible to describe the wilderness.
 - b. It was 'void' meaning it was empty and uninhabited.
 - c. It was dark. No evil implied. God was not yet finished with His creative work. Isaiah 45:7 "I form the light, and create darkness..."
 - d. Note: The above descriptions do not speak of imperfection but of incompleteness.

B. The Spirit Moved (Vs. 2b)

1. 'moved' = Hebrew word only occurs in two other places and is translated 'shake' (Jer. 23:9) and "fluttereth" (Deut. 32:11). "It

¹ Colin Renfrew, *Before Civilization* p. 21, cited by Henry Morris p. 44 (Genesis Record). Renfrew is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Southampton.

² Morris, p. 44.

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means to hover and seems to imply rapid back and forth motion.” (Morris) God does not do anything without a sovereign purpose so we believe the activity of the Spirit was connected to the creation of the universe.

2. “face of the deep” = the word ‘deep’ is the common biblical word for the oceans. It appears the waters covered the whole earth. (Sarfati)
3. Henry Morris gives an interesting scientific insight worthy of consideration: “It is significant that the transmission of energy in the operations of the cosmos is in the form of waves – light waves, heat waves, sound waves, and so forth. In fact (except for the nuclear forces which are involved in the structure of matter itself), there are only two fundamental types of forces that operate on matter – the gravitation forces and the forces of the electromagnetic spectrum. All are associated with “fields” of activity and with transmission by wave motion. Waves are typically rapid back and forth movements and they are normally produced by the vibratory motion of a wave generator of some kind. Energy cannot create itself. It is most appropriate that the first impartation of energy to the universe is described as the “vibrating” movement of the Spirit of God Himself. As the outflowing energy from God’s Omnipresent Spirit began to flow outward and to permeate the cosmos, gravitational forces were activated and water and earth particles came together to form a great sphere moving through space.”
4. It appears the Omnipresent Spirit was there in anticipation of and preparation for the Creation events that would follow. We see the Three Persons of the Godhead are involved in the Creation of the Universe. In the New Testament, the emphasis is placed on the Son of God as the primary Agent of Creation.
 - a. John 1:1-3 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. **All things were made by him**; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”
 - b. Col. 1:15-17 “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: **For by him were all things created**, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”
 - c. Heb. 1:1-3 “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, **by whom also he made the worlds**; Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;”
5. Another ‘moving’ of the Spirit is found in the New Testament in relation to the inspiration of the Bible. 2 Peter 1:21 “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as *they were moved* by the Holy Ghost.”

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6. What can we learn about the Holy Spirit from this first reference to His Person?
 - a. The Holy Spirit is Omnipresent.
 - b. The Holy Spirit moves in supernatural power.
 - c. The Holy Spirit does preparatory work.

Conclusion:

1. Do you know Christ as Saviour?
2. Do you believe the Word of God as a Christian? Do you trust God with every detail of your life, knowing that He is all powerful?

Six Divine Days of Creation

Part 1

Text: Gen. 1:3-19

Introduction:

1. Brief review:
 - a. The **date of creation** is approx. 4004 B.C. according to Archbishop Ussher's chronological thesis. Other pre-Darwin scholars came up with similar time frames of three to six thousand years (refer chart).
 - b. The Book of Genesis is **foundational** to the Christian faith. Remember, the debate over origins is not a matter of science vs. faith. It is the clash of two histories – God's Divine account of creation Vs. man's theory of evolution.
2. The Word of God makes it clear that God created the world in six literal, 24-hour days. Ex. 20:11 "**For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is**, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."
3. It is significant that every verse in this chapter with the exception of verse 1 and verse 27 begin with the conjunction 'and'. "This structure clearly means that each statement is sequentially and chronologically connected to the verses before and after. Each action follows directly upon the action described in the verse preceding it." (Henry Morris)
4. There is a pattern in creation week – "God forms then He fills. He made 3 spheres of activity: the heavens, the land masses and the waters; and then He filled them with the appropriate forms of life."¹
5. In this message we will consider what God did during **the first four days** of Creation week.

I. **DAY ONE: CREATION OF UNIVERSE & LIGHT (VS. 1-5)**

A. **The Creation of the Universe (Vs. 1-2)**

1. Time – "In the beginning".
2. Space – 'heaven'.
3. Mass – 'earth'.
4. C.H. Mackintosh: "God was alone in creation. He looked forth from His eternal dwelling-place of light upon the wild waste, and there beheld the sphere in which His wondrous plans and counsels were yet to be unfolded and brought out – where the Eternal Son was yet to live, and labour, and testify, and bleed, and die, in order to display in the view of wondering worlds, the glorious perfections of the Godhead."

B. **The Creation of Light (Vs. 3)**

1. The significance of light
 - a. This verse contains the first record of God speaking in the Bible. The Word of God brings light!
 - i. Vs. 1 – The Father is the source of all things.
 - ii. Vs. 2 – The Spirit is the energizer of all things.

¹ W Wiersbe, *Be Basic: Commentary on Genesis 1-11*, David Cook Publishers 2010, p. 29.

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- iii. Vs. 3 – the Word is the revealer of all things.
 - b. It is of interest that light was created on day one. Light is often used in the Scriptures as a picture of God’s holiness and glory. “...God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” (1 John 1:5) Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12, 9:5). “Literal light drives out literal darkness, and the light that is God drives out spiritual darkness, because in Him there is no darkness at all.”²
 - c. Gospel application: The same God who created the natural light, can shine the light of the truth of salvation into your heart and change you. 2 Cor. 4:6 “For God, who commanded **the light to shine out of darkness**, hath **shined in our hearts**, to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” Context of this verse is minds blinded by the god of this world “lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ...should shine unto them.”
2. The sequence of creation week
- a. The order of the creation week is most interesting. We would have placed the creation of the sun on day one but God did not. Light was a provision of God on day one until the great light-bearers were put in place.
 - b. “Since sinful man tends to gravitate from the high and pure worship of the Creator, to the base and degraded worship of the creature, we can see the wisdom of God in creating earth before the sun, moon and stars. Unbelieving peoples have often made these the object of their idolatry. While the modern evolutionary hypothesis makes the sun the “mother” of our planets, the Book of Genesis shows us earth’s uniqueness among the other heavenly bodies.”³ Interestingly, early church writers use the creation order (light on day 1 and sun on day 4) as an argument against paganism.
 - c. “Creation of light before the sun adds a hallmark of authenticity to the account. If the Bible was the product of later editors as many critics allege, then they would have surely modified this to fit their own theories and understanding. Having ‘day’ and “evening and morning” without the sun would have been generally inconceivable to the ancients.”⁴
3. The source of the light
- a. Very likely that God Himself (Shekinah glory of God) was the light source until day 4. The creation of light probably included the invisible parts of the electromagnetic spectrum such as infrared and ultraviolet light as well.
 - b. For those who scoff at this, remember that the new creation in the future also will have no sun or moon.

² J Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, Creation Book Publishers, Georgia USA, 2015, p. 115.

³ I Western, *Notes on the Book of Genesis*, p. 8.

⁴ Sarfati, p. 116.

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- i. Rev. 21:23 “And the city had **no need of the sun, neither of the moon**, to shine in it: **for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.**”
- ii. Rev. 22:5 “And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, **neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light**: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

C. The Categorization of Light (Vs. 4-5a)

1. The Division of Light from Darkness (Vs. 4)

- a. “God saw the light, that it was good” = the first of seven declarations that creation was good. Seven is the number of Divine perfection.
- b. ‘divided’ = We see God making Divine divisions all throughout creation week. God is a God of order and He established laws for the governance of His universe.
- c. N.T. application – God has also made a separation between spiritual darkness and spiritual light for His people. Separation between light and darkness was a Divine law for the natural creation and separation between light and darkness is a Divine law for the spiritual creation (the church).
 - i. Eph. 5:8 “For ye were sometimes **darkness**, but now *are* ye **light in the Lord**: walk as children of **light**.”
 - ii. 1 Thess. 5:5-8 “Ye are all the children of **light**, and the children of the **day**: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, **who are of the day**, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”
 - iii. 2 Cor. 6:14 “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and **what communion hath light with darkness?**”
 - iv. “In Scripture, light is associated with Christ (John 8:12), the Word of God (Ps. 119:105, 130), God’s people (Matt. 5:14-16; Eph. 5:8), and God’s blessing (Prov. 4:18), while darkness is associated with Satan (Eph. 6:12), sin (Matt. 6:22-23; John 3:19-21), death (Job 3:4-6, 9), spiritual ignorance (John 1:5), and divine judgment (Matt. 8:12). This explains why God separated the light from the darkness, for the two have nothing in common.”⁵

2. The Designation of Light and Darkness (Vs. 5)

- a. God names the light Day and the darkness Night.
- b. Note: In Genesis 1, God names things. In Genesis 2, man names things.

D. The Completion of the First Day (Vs. 5b)

⁵ Wiersbe, p. 30.

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1. Clear from the language that a 24-hour day is in view. The pattern is evening, morning and number all the way through the passage. The only way you get long time periods in Genesis 1 is to read something into the passage based on pre-disposition towards an evolutionary theory of origins.
2. Henry Morris writes, "In fact, it was necessary for him to be completely explicit on this point, since all the pagan nations of antiquity believed in some form of evolutionary cosmogony which entailed vast aeons of time before man and other living creatures developed from the primeval chaos. The writer not only defined the term "day," but emphasized that it was terminated by a literal evening and morning and that it was like every other day in the normal sequence of days. In no way can the term be legitimately applied here to anything corresponding to a geological period or any other such concept."⁶
3. The overwhelming majority of the use of the word 'day' (yom) in the Old Testament is to a literal, 24-hour period. There are a few occasions when the Hebrew word 'yom' refers to a longer time period (e.g., "the day of the LORD") but the Bible itself makes that clear. We should take the day in its normal, literal sense unless the Bible clearly reveals otherwise. Words travel in meaning according to context.

II. DAY TWO: CREATION OF THE ATMOSPHERE (VS. 6-8)

A. The Definition of the Firmament (Vs. 6a)

1. The word 'firmament' comes from the Hebrew word 'raqia' meaning "an expanse" or "spread out thinness". God calls this 'Heaven' in Vs. 8. It refers to what we call "the sky".
2. There are three heavens in Scripture as follows:
 - a. The Atmospheric Heaven (where the birds fly and clouds float). Jeremiah 4:25 "I beheld, and, lo, *there was* no man, and all the **birds of the heavens** were fled."
 - b. The Stellar Heaven (where the stars and planets are located). Isaiah 13:10 "For the **stars of heaven** and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine."
 - c. The Heaven of heavens (where the throne of God is located). Heb 9:24 "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are* the figures of the true; but into **heaven itself**, now to appear in the presence of God for us:" Paul referred to it as the "third heaven" (2. Cor. 12:2).

B. The Division from the Firmament (Vs. 6b-7)

1. The lower waters - these are the waters below the atmosphere on the earth.
2. The upper waters – these are waters above the atmosphere.
 - a. Some suggest this is a reference to clouds but it cannot be as these waters are "**above**" the atmosphere.

⁶ H Morris, *The Genesis Record*, Baker Book House Publishers, Michigan, 1994; p. 56.

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- b. This points to a feature of the pre-flood world. While we cannot state dogmatically what it was, Henry Morris offers a compelling theory worthy of consideration. “The ‘waters above the firmament’ thus probably constituted a vast blanket of water vapor above the troposphere and possibly above the stratosphere as well, in the high-temperature region now known as the ionosphere, and extending far into space. They could not have been the clouds of water droplets which now float in the atmosphere, because the Scripture says they were “above the firmament.” Furthermore, there was no “rain upon the earth” in those days (Genesis 2:5), nor any “bow in the cloud” (Genesis 9:13), both of which must have been present if these upper waters represented merely the regime of clouds which functions in the present hydrologic economy.”⁷
- c. Morris goes on to suggest the following conditions would prevail on earth with such a water canopy above earth’s atmosphere:⁸
 - i. It would create a global greenhouse effect, maintaining an essentially uniformly pleasant warm temperature all over the world.
 - ii. With nearly uniform temperatures, great air-mass movements would be inhibited and windstorms would be unknown.
 - iii. With no global air circulation, the hydrologic cycle of the present world could not be implemented and there would be no rain.
 - iv. The planet would have been maintained not only at uniform temperatures but also at comfortable uniform humidities by means of daily local evaporation and condensation (like dew or ground fog) in each day-night cycle.”
 - v. The vapor canopy would also be highly effective in filtering out ultraviolet radiations, cosmic rays, and other destructive energies from outer space, thus contributing to human and animal health and longevity. Genesis 5 reveals that people lived a LOT longer prior to the flood in Genesis 6.
 - vi. Later, when needed, these upper waters would provide the reservoir from which God would send the great Flood, to save the godly remnant from the hopelessly corrupt population of that day (the content of water vapor in the present atmosphere, if all precipitated, would cover the earth only to a depth of about one inch). See Gen. 7:11-12.

C. The Designation of the Firmament (Vs. 8)

1. Reference appears to be to the atmospheric heaven in particular as opposed to space in general as in Vs. 1.

⁷ Ibid, p. 59.

⁸ Ibid, pp. 60-61.

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2. No pronouncement on day two of it being good but this does not imply it wasn't as when God reviewed the whole of creation in Vs. 31, he pronounced it all as "very good". On the next day (day 3), the pronouncement is given twice in the one day.

III. DAY THREE: CREATION OF LAND, SEA & PLANTS (VS. 9-13)

A. The Gathering of the Waters (Vs. 9a)

1. "the waters under the heaven" = again highlights that the waters on the earth are being discussed rather than the waters above the firmament.
2. "be gathered together unto one place" = appears in the pre-flood world there was one main body of water. Genesis 2 speaks about a river flowing out of Eden and then dividing into four tributaries.

B. The Revealing of the Land (Vs. 9b)

1. "let the dry land appear" = up until this point it appears the waters were covering the earth. By gathering the waters into one place, it allowed the land to appear. The word translated "dry land" is the same word translated 'earth' in Vs. 1.
2. It could also imply there were certain topographical changes to the land.

C. The Naming of the Land & Waters (Vs. 10)

1. Dry land is called Earth.
2. Gathered waters are called Seas.
3. God sees that it is good.
4. God questioned Job along the theme of creation in Job 38:4-11
"Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. (5) Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? (6) Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; (7) When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? (8) Or *who* shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, *as if* it had issued out of the womb? (9) When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it, (10) And brake up for it my decreed *place*, and set bars and doors, (11) And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed?"

D. The Creating of the Plants (Vs. 11-13)

This is the beginning of biology.

1. The Classification of Plant Life.
Observe 3 ascending classifications in the vegetable kingdom:
 - a. Grass – all spreading ground-covering vegetation.
 - b. Herbs – all bushes and shrubs.
 - c. Trees – all large woody plants including fruit-bearing trees. God created plant life with the capacity to reproduce – "whose seed was in itself". "Implanted in each created organism, was a "seed" programmed to enable the continuing replication of that type of organism."⁹

⁹ Ibid, p. 63.

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- d. Plants are “God’s self-replicating solar-powered food factories.”
- e. Note: These plants were made not as seeds but as full-grown plants. God’s creation was made with functional maturity.
- 2. The Confines of Plant Life
 - a. Three times in relation to the plants we have the phrase “after his kind”. This phrase occurs 10 times in Genesis one in relation to both inanimate life (vegetation) and animate life (animal kingdom).
 - b. This is a significant and important phrase in Genesis 1 as it reveals that God has set impassable genetic barriers in the things He has made. Within each kind there is scope for lots of variation on account of the tremendous amount of information God has placed there in the DNA code. However, these variations never cross over into something entirely different. This is the complete opposite to the molecules to man evolutionary idea that suggests we go from the goo to the zoo to you!
 - c. The whole of creation week is full of Divine divisions decreed by God which can never be crossed by sinful man. While there is prolific variation within the kind, the division cannot be broken down.

IV. DAY FOUR: CREATION OF SUN, MOON & STARS (VS. 14-19)

A. The Purpose of the Heavenly Luminaries (Vs. 14-15)

- 1. To divide the day from the night (Vs. 14a)
- 2. To determine the calendar (Vs. 14b)
 - a. Signs = likely a reference to navigational signs (Job 38:31-33). They are also signs of God’s glory (Ps. 19:1).
 - b. Seasons = even though the climate would have been fairly uniform on account of the water vapor above the atmosphere, there was still discernable seasonal changes in earth’s atmosphere. Implies the earth’s axis was already tilted from Creation week.
 - c. Days = since seasons and years are literal time measures it stands to reason that “days” are also literal days.
 - d. Years = the sun enables years as a year is the time of one revolution around the sun.
 - e. Note: This would be of particular importance later on for the Jewish nation for their religious observances.
- 3. To deliver light to earth (Vs. 15)
 - a. This purpose repeated in Vs. 17.
 - b. Note: Shows that earth is the jewel in the universe as it was created by God to sustain life and would be the domain of the man created in His image. It is amazing how that not only is the earth in the optimum location in space to sustain life, it is also in the optimum location to explore the universe. We live in a wonderful observatory! In fact, recent scientific discoveries indicate our galaxy is located very much in the center of the universe. “God put us in an optimal position, not at the outmost

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rim where the Milky Way would be dim, but far enough out to see clearly into the heights of the heavens.”¹⁰

B. The Principle Heavenly Luminaries (Vs. 16-19)

1. The Greater Light – the sun.
 - a. “The sun is by far the most massive object in our solar system, about 330,000 times larger than earth. Its diameter of 1.4 million km is 109 times that of the earth, and has 1.3 million times the earth’s volume and 330,000 times the mass. Its surface is 5,778 K (5,504 degrees C) while its core is 14,000,000 degrees Celsius.”¹¹
 - b. The sun has a phenomenal power output and is the source of most of earth’s energy. “The sun’s power source is probably nuclear fusion: four extremely fast-moving hydrogen nuclei join to form one helium nucleus – this requires temperatures of millions of degrees...The sun’s power output requires four million tonnes of matter to be converted every second into energy – this is huge, but negligible compared to the sun’s enormous total mass.”¹²
2. The Lesser Light – the moon.
 - a. The moon is actually largely black, because much of its surface is basalt but it looks white in the sky on account of the fact it shines by reflected sunlight.¹³
 - b. The moon’s gravity is essential for life on earth as it is the main cause of the tides. These tides “cleanse the ocean’s shorelines and help keep the ocean currents circulating, preventing the ocean from stagnating.”¹⁴

C. The Plentiful Heavenly Luminaries (Vs. 16b)

1. Mentioned almost as an afterthought – “he made the stars also”. A reminder of the indescribable, infinite power of Almighty God.
2. There is a huge variety of stars with different colors, temperatures and sizes. Some dwarf the sun in size and power. For example, “The most massive and luminous star known is called R136a1, is in the galaxy called the Large Magellanic Cloud. This is a very violent type of star called Wolf-Rayet, a subset of blue stars, the hottest colour of stars – R136a1 has a surface temperature of over 50,000 K¹⁵, almost nine times hotter than the sun’s surface. This one is 265 times more massive than the sun, and shines 8.7 million times brighter.”¹⁶ The Apostle Paul wrote, 1 Cor. 15:40-41 “*There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.*”

¹⁰ Dr. Russell Humphreys <https://creation.com/our-galaxy-is-the-centre-of-the-universe-quantized-redshifts-show> (Viewed 15/10/21).

¹¹ Sarfati, p. 195.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid, p. 203.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Equal to 49,726.85 degrees Celsius.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 206.

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3. The stars are so numerous they cannot be numbered. In 600 B.C. the prophet Jeremiah wrote, "...**the host of heaven cannot be numbered**, nor the sand of the sea measured..." (Jer. 33:22) The first man acknowledged to have counted the stars was Hipparchus in 190-120 B.C. After making a study of the stars, he announced that there were 1,080. It is now generally accepted that without the aid of a telescope and on a very clear night, up to 4,000 stars can be seen. With the aid of modern telescopes, it is estimated that there are 10 to the power of 22 stars. That's the number 1 with 22 zeros after it! Interestingly, this number is also an estimate of the number of grains of sand on the seashores of the world. To illustrate what a vast number that is, if you could count 20 stars per second, it would take you 100 million billion years to count that many stars! Or to put it another way, if you could use a computer that could count a trillion of these every second, it would take over 300 years to count this high.
4. God not only knows the number of the stars, he knows the name of each one – "**He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.**" (Psalm 147:4)

Conclusion: We stand in awe and say with the Psalmist, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Psalm 8:4) What a wonder that such an Almighty God would make us the object of His saving love. Will let the Creator create in you a new heart?

Six Divine Days of Creation

Part 2

Text: Gen. 1:9-19

Introduction:

1. Brief review:
 - a. The **date of creation** is approx. 4004 B.C. according to Archbishop Ussher's chronological thesis. Other pre-Darwin scholars came up with similar time frames of three to six thousand years (refer chart).
 - b. The Book of Genesis is **foundational** to the Christian faith. Remember, the debate over origins is not a matter of science vs. faith. It is the clash of two histories – God's Divine account of creation Vs. man's theory of evolution.
2. The Word of God makes it clear that God created the world in six literal, 24-hour days. Ex. 20:11 "**For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is**, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."
3. It is significant that every verse in this chapter with the exception of verse 1 and verse 27 begin with the conjunction 'and'. "This structure clearly means that each statement is sequentially and chronologically connected to the verses before and after. Each action follows directly upon the action described in the verse preceding it." (Henry Morris)
4. There is a pattern in creation week – "God forms then He fills. He made 3 spheres of activity: the heavens, the land masses and the waters; and then He filled them with the appropriate forms of life."¹
5. In this message we will briefly review days 1 and 2 of creation week and then study what God did on days 3 and 4.

I. DAY ONE: CREATION OF UNIVERSE & LIGHT (VS. 1-5)

A. The Creation of the Universe (Vs. 1-2)

B. The Creation of Light (Vs. 3)

C. The Categorization of Light (Vs. 4-5a)

D. The Completion of the First Day (Vs. 5b)

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thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.”

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D. The Creating of the Plants (Vs. 11-13)

This is the beginning of biology.

1. The Classification of Plant Life.
Observe 3 ascending classifications in the vegetable kingdom:
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- b. Herbs – all bushes and shrubs.
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2. The Confines of Plant Life
- a. Three times in relation to the plants we have the phrase “after his kind”. This phrase occurs 10 times in Genesis one in relation to both inanimate life (vegetation) and animate life (animal kingdom).
 - b. This is a significant and important phrase in Genesis 1 as it reveals that God has set impassable genetic barriers in the things He has made. Within each kind there is scope for lots of variation on account of the tremendous amount of information God has placed there in the DNA code. However, these variations never cross over into something entirely different. This is the complete opposite to the molecules to man evolutionary idea that suggests we go from the goo to the zoo to you!
 - c. The whole of creation week is full of Divine divisions decreed by God which can never be crossed by sinful man. While there is prolific variation within the kind, the division cannot be broken down.

IV. DAY FOUR: CREATION OF SUN, MOON & STARS (VS. 14-19)

A. The Purpose of the Heavenly Luminaries (Vs. 14-15)

- 1. To divide the day from the night (Vs. 14a)
- 2. To determine the calendar (Vs. 14b)
 - a. Signs = likely a reference to navigational signs (Job 38:31-33). They are also signs of God’s glory (Ps. 19:1).
 - b. Seasons = even though the climate would have been fairly uniform on account of the water vapor above the atmosphere, there was still discernable seasonal changes in earth’s atmosphere. Implies the earth’s axis was already tilted from Creation week.
 - c. Days = since seasons and years are literal time measures it stands to reason that “days” are also literal days.
 - d. Years = the sun enables years as a year is the time of one revolution around the sun.
 - e. Note: This would be of particular importance later on for the Jewish nation for their religious observances.
- 3. To deliver light to earth (Vs. 15)
 - a. This purpose repeated in Vs. 17.

² Ibid, p. 63.

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- b. Note: Shows that earth is the jewel in the universe as it was created by God to sustain life and would be the domain of the man created in His image. It is amazing how that not only is the earth in the optimum location in space to sustain life, it is also in the optimum location to explore the universe. We live in a wonderful observatory! In fact, recent scientific discoveries indicate our galaxy is located very much in the center of the universe. "God put us in an optimal position, not at the outmost rim where the Milky Way would be dim, but far enough out to see clearly into the heights of the heavens."³

B. The Principle Heavenly Luminaries (Vs. 16-19)

1. The Greater Light – the sun.
 - a. "The sun is by far the most massive object in our solar system, about 330,000 times larger than earth. Its diameter of 1.4 million km is 109 times that of the earth, and has 1.3 million times the earth's volume and 330,000 times the mass. Its surface is 5,778 K (5,504 degrees C) while its core is 14,000,000 degrees Celsius."⁴
 - b. The sun has a phenomenal power output and is the source of most of earth's energy. "The sun's power source is probably nuclear fusion: four extremely fast-moving hydrogen nuclei join to form one helium nucleus – this requires temperatures of millions of degrees...The sun's power output requires four million tonnes of matter to be converted every second into energy – this is huge, but negligible compared to the sun's enormous total mass."⁵
2. The Lesser Light – the moon.
 - a. The moon is actually largely black, because much of its surface is basalt but it looks white in the sky on account of the fact it shines by reflected sunlight.⁶
 - b. The moon's gravity is essential for life on earth as it is the main cause of the tides. These tides "cleanse the ocean's shorelines and help keep the ocean currents circulating, preventing the ocean from stagnating."⁷

C. The Plentiful Heavenly Luminaries (Vs. 16b)

1. Mentioned almost as an afterthought – "he made the stars also". A reminder of the indescribable, infinite power of Almighty God.
2. There is a huge variety of stars with different colors, temperatures and sizes. Some dwarf the sun in size and power. For example, "The most massive and luminous star known is called R136a1, is in the galaxy called the Large Magellanic Cloud. This is a very violent type of star called Wolf-Rayet, a subset of blue stars, the hottest colour of stars – R136a1 has a surface temperature of over 50,000

³ Dr. Russell Humphreys <https://creation.com/our-galaxy-is-the-centre-of-the-universe-quantized-redshifts-show> (Viewed 15/10/21).

⁴ Sarfati, p. 195.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, p. 203.

⁷ Ibid.

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K⁸, almost nine times hotter than the sun's surface. This one is 265 times more massive than the sun, and shines 8.7 million times brighter.”⁹ The Apostle Paul wrote, 1 Cor. 15:40-41 “*There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: **for one star differeth from another star in glory.***”

3. The stars are so numerous they cannot be numbered. In 600 B.C. the prophet Jeremiah wrote, “...**the host of heaven cannot be numbered**, nor the sand of the sea measured...” (Jer. 33:22) The first man acknowledged to have counted the stars was Hipparchus in 190-120 B.C. After making a study of the stars, he announced that there were 1,080. It is now generally accepted that without the aid of a telescope and on a very clear night, up to 4,000 stars can be seen. With the aid of modern telescopes, it is estimated that there are 10 to the power of 22 stars. That's the number 1 with 22 zeros after it! Interestingly, this number is also an estimate of the number of grains of sand on the seashores of the world. To illustrate what a vast number that is, if you could count 20 stars per second, it would take you 100 million billion years to count that many stars! Or to put it another way, if you could use a computer that could count a trillion of these every second, it would take over 300 years to count this high.
4. God not only knows the number of the stars, he knows the name of each one – “**He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.**” (Psalm 147:4)

Conclusion: We stand in awe and say with the Psalmist, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psalm 8:4) What a wonder that such an Almighty God would make us the object of His saving love. Will let the Creator create in you a new heart?

⁸ Equal to 49,726.85 degrees Celsius.

⁹ Ibid, p. 206.

Six Divine Days of Creation

Part 3

Text: Gen. 1:20-25

Introduction:

1. The Word of God makes it clear that God created the world in six literal, 24-hour days. Ex. 20:11 **“For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”**
2. In this message we will briefly review days 1 to 4 of creation week and then study what God did on days 5 and 6.

I. DAY ONE: CREATION OF UNIVERSE & LIGHT (VS. 1-5)

II. DAY TWO: CREATION OF THE ATMOSPHERE (VS. 6-8)

III. DAY THREE: CREATION OF LAND, SEA & PLANTS (VS. 9-13)

IV. DAY FOUR: CREATION OF SUN, MOON & STARS (VS. 14-19)

On the first day God said “let there be light”. Now on the fourth day God says “Let there be lights”.

V. DAY FIVE: CREATION OF SEA & FLYING CREATURES (VS. 20-22)

Isaiah 45:18 says that God formed the earth to be inhabited. The 5th and 6th days of creation are dedicated to this final work of creation with the first living animals being created on day 5.

A. The Divine Formation of these Creatures (Vs. 20-21)

1. Creation of Aquatic Life
 - a. ‘life’ = the first time this word appears. Vegetation has life but not in the same sense as animals and humans who possess conscious life.
 - b. “bring forth” = has the idea of “to swarm or teem”. “The waters suddenly swarmed with swarming creatures.”¹
 - c. “the moving creature that hath life” = these are living animals.
 - d. “great whales” = a specific category covering the large aquatic animals. The Hebrew word is ‘taneem’ which is frequently translated ‘dragon’ in the O.T. which is the old English word for dinosaur.² So, this would also include sea monsters now extinct such as plesiosaurs. It would include the creature called Leviathan described in Job 41. “This terrifying aquatic creature

¹ H Morris, *The Genesis Record*, Baker Book House Publishers, Michigan, 1994; p. 68.

² The term ‘dinosaur’ was coined by Richard Owen (1804-1892) from the Greek words ‘deimos’ meaning “terrible, potent or fearfully great” and ‘sauros’ meaning “lizard or reptile”; hence, “terrible lizard”.

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with an impenetrable hide impervious to harpoons, fearsome teeth and a back covered in rows of shields. It even has firebrands streaming from its mouth and smoke from its nostrils.”³

- e. “every living creature that moveth” = a general category covering all other marine life such as fish.
2. Creation of Aerodynamic Life
- a. “fowl that may fly” = includes not just birds but all winged creatures. The word ‘fowl’ in Hebrew is a generic word for flying creatures. “The Hebrew classification is eminently practical – classifying creatures according to locomotion, rather than by the presence or absence of mammary glands or feathers.”⁴ Also, in old English the word ‘fowl’ had a broader scope. “A flying or winged animal; the generic name of certain animals that move through the air by the aid of wings.”⁵
 - b. “fly in the firmament of heaven” = God designed these creatures to fly in the atmospheric heaven as visible displays of His creative power.
 - c. Illustration of the Humming Bird: “The 300 species of hummingbirds vary in size from the giant hummingbird, with a length of about eight inches (20 cm), to the bee hummingbird, with a length of about two inches (5cm). The hummingbird can swivel its wings through an amazing degree of angles. The wings beat a figure eight patten which allows it to hover and fly backwards (by moving the wings in a circular path over its head), sideways, and even upside down. Its long, thin beak is designed to feed on the nectar of flowers; its tongue has two furrows that it uses to store the nectar. The tongue can go in and out at a rate of 13 times per second, and is stored by being curled up at the back of the bird’s head. Its tongue is also fringed so it can sweep insects from inside flowers. “It cannot survive on nectar alone, but also needs protein from eating insects. Without its special tongue it could never catch these.” (*A Closer Look at the Evidence*, July 14). One type of hummingbird is the fastest diving bird on earth. “A peregrine falcon diving toward its prey reaches a relative speed of 200 body-lengths per second. This is close to the 207 body-lengths that the space shuttle travels as it enters our atmosphere. Thus, the peregrine falcon was thought to easily be the fastest dare-devil bird on Earth. Scientists have now discovered that a little pink male hummingbird called Anna’s Hummingbird is the real Top Gun among the birds. As part of its mating ritual, a male hummingbird will try to impress a female with his speed and acrobatics. First, the male will fly up to about 90 feet above the ground. Then, he begins a power dive. As he nears the female he pulls up, ascending again. During that near-miss pull up he

³ <https://creation.com/media-center/youtube/leviathan-jobs-great-monster> Viewed 4/11/21.

⁴ J Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, Creation Book Publishers, Georgia USA, 2015, p. 224.

⁵ Websters Dictionary 1828, <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/fowl> Viewed 4/11/21.

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experiences more than nine times the force of gravity. His relative speed during descent is 385 body lengths per second. That's almost twice the peregrine falcon's relative speed, it's faster than the space shuttle entering the earth's atmosphere and is more than twice the relative speed of a jet fighter running with afterburners" (www.creationmoments.com).⁶ Talk about a fast courtship!

B. The Genetic Boundaries of these Creatures (Vs. 21)

1. "after their kind" = said of both categories – marine and bird life.
2. This phrase appears 10 times in this passage. It implies both scope and limitation within a particular kind:
 - a. The scope of a kind – a kind is a broader category than a species. There is room for much variation within a particular kind on account of the huge amount of information God has placed in the DNA code.
 - b. The limitation of a kind – while there is scope for much variation within a kind, there are impassable genetic boundaries. These variations never lead to one kind transitioning into another. "The actual biochemical reproductive systems of the animals were programmed to assure the fixity of their kinds...Modern genetics has shown that all replicating systems function in the framework of the marvelous information program in the DNA molecule. The DNA for each kind is programmed to allow for wide individual variations within a kind, but not beyond the structure of the kind itself."⁷
 - c. The Creationists orchard model makes much better sense of the evidence as opposed to the Evolutionists tree of life.
 - d. Illustration: Dogs – a pair of wolf-like creatures would have been sufficient for Noah to take on the ark. Evolutionists now admit that domestic dogs came from wolves only a few thousand years ago. In fact, an interesting experiment was conducted in Berlin where a female wolf and a large male poodle were mated.⁸

C. The Divine Blessing upon these Creatures (Vs. 22)

1. These creatures are clearly of a higher order in God's creation than vegetation as they receive a blessing from God. Animals would not be the object of God's love like humans but they would be objects of His care and concern (Matt. 6:26; 10:29). Leupold writes, "On the whole an entirely new type of being has come into existence, creatures that breathe and are animated and have power of their own volition to go from place to place."⁹
2. God's plan for the animal kingdom is revealed in this blessing. It was God's intention that the earth He had formed be filled with living things on the land, the water and the air. God wanted all parts of the world to be occupied by animal life. God is a God who loves life!

⁶ D Cloud, *God's Amazing Creatures*, Way of Life Literature; p. 61.

⁷ Morris, p. 70.

⁸ Sarfati, p. 237.

⁹ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, Baker Book House 1971, p. 80

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D. Summary: “Once again it is obvious that the orthodox evolutionary order is not the same as the order of creation recorded here in Genesis. Evolutionary theory says that marine organisms evolved first, then land plants, later birds. Genesis says that land plants came first, then marine creatures and birds simultaneously. Furthermore, if anything, the largest sea animals were the first, again contrary to evolutionary theory.”¹⁰

VI. DAY 6: CREATION OF LAND ANIMALS & MAN (VS. 24-31)

A. The Origin of Land Animals (Vs. 24-25)

1. The material God used. Land animals made out of the dust of the earth rather than spoken out of nothing. God could have created them out of nothing as he did with most of His other creative acts but He chose to make them out of the earth, giving them a close affinity with it.
2. The categories God made
 - a. Cattle = likely a reference to domesticable animals.
 - b. Creeping thing = all animals that crawl or creep close to the surface of the ground including insects and smaller reptiles. Likely also most amphibians and many small mammals such as moles, rats, mice etc.
 - c. Beast of the earth = the large wild animals such as lions, elephants, hippos, dinosaurs etc.
 - d. Illustration of the lion: “The lion is mentioned 150 times in Scripture...The Bible describes the lion as brave (2. Sam. 17:10), bold (Prov. 28:1), strong (Prov. 30:30), fierce (Job 28:8), stealthy (Ps. 10:9; 17:12; Lam. 3:10) and ravaging (Ps. 22:13)...A male lion can reach 3 meters (10 ft) long and weigh 180-225 kilos (400-500 pounds). A lion can leap as far as 11 meters (36 feet) and run up to 80 kph (50 mph), but it can only run that fast in a straight line and for a short distance...A male lion’s roar can be heard by humans up to 8 km (5 miles) away and has been measured at 114 decibels. One Hebrew word for lion is “shachal,” meaning the “roarer” (Prov. 26:13). The lion’s blow is one of the most powerful forces in nature. “The leg, or forearm, as it is called, measures 19 inches around, and is made up of the hardest of hard bone, with muscle and tendons as strong as the strongest wire. The foot measures 8 inches across. When this foot strikes an animal, the lion shoots out its terrible claws, which are hidden, when it walks, inside the joints of the toes. These claws are like great hooks made of yellow horn. They tear the flesh off an animal as we would strip the peel from an orange. The force with which these claws are driven is almost more than we can believe...The forearm of the lion is worked by great muscles at the shoulder, and the blow which it makes is really like the blow from a steam hammer. No wonder that it can kill a man or a big animal with ease” (The

¹⁰ Morris

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Three Strongest Things in the Animal World, *The Human Interest Library*).¹¹

- e. This would include the creature called Behemoth described in Job 40:15-24. The description fits well with a sauropod dinosaur.
- f. Note: Dinosaurs were created on Day 6 of creation, not millions of years ago. “Dr. Mary Schweitzer, although a committed (theistic) evolutionist herself, has been rocking the evolutionary/uniformitarian world with discoveries of soft tissue in dinosaur bones. These discoveries have included ligaments, blood and bone cells; flexible blood vessels; proteins like collagen, osteocalcin, actin, and histones and DNA. But under measured rates of decomposition, they could not have lasted for the presumed 65 million years since dinosaur extinction, even if they had been kept at freezing point (never mind the much warmer climate proposed for dinosaurs). As she said on a popular TV show: ‘When you think about it, the laws of chemistry and biology and everything else that we know say that it should be gone, it should be degraded completely.’ She goes on to state in a scientific paper, ‘The presence of original molecular components is not predicted for fossils older than a million years’.”¹² Even the most generous calculation, based on the fossil somehow being kept continually below freezing point at – 5 degrees C would only allow for a maximum of approx. 6.83 million years which is only about a tenth of the assumed evolutionary age of dinosaurs.¹³
- g. Note: The typical response to such evidence is to try and develop more theories to support the disproven theory!

B. The Origin of Man (Vs. 26-31)

1. “The creation of man,” writes B.H. Carrol, “is the last and highest stage in the production of organic life. Every step in creation so far is a prophecy of his coming and a preparation for it.”
2. Erich Sauer writes, “All this extravagance to provide for man a home, yea, more than a home – a university in which to learn about his loving creator! Man, as the image and glory of God, is placed in the earth as the king of creation. He walks erect, with his face uplifted to receive the radiance of God’s face. How unique Man is! Another great chasm has been crossed – the chasm between Man and Non-Man.”¹⁴
3. To be continued next message.

Conclusion: We stand in awe and say with the Psalmist, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” (Psalm 8:4) What a wonder that such an Almighty God would make us the object of His saving love. Will let the Creator create in you a new heart?

¹¹ Cloud, p. 65.

¹² Sarfati, p. 242.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ E Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, Exeter: The Paternoster Press; 1966, p. 41.

Six Divine Days of Creation

Part 4

Text: Gen. 1:26-31

Introduction:

1. Brief review of what we have covered so far in the creation week:
 - DAY ONE: CREATION OF UNIVERSE & LIGHT (VS. 1-5)
 - DAY TWO: CREATION OF THE ATMOSPHERE (VS. 6-8)
 - DAY THREE: CREATION OF LAND, SEA & PLANTS (VS. 9-13)
 - DAY FOUR: CREATION OF SUN, MOON & STARS (VS. 14-19)
 - DAY FIVE: CREATION OF SEA & FLYING CREATURES (VS. 20-22)
 - DAY 6: CREATION OF LAND ANIMALS & MAN (VS. 24-31)
2. The creation of man represents the pinnacle and climax of creation week. Man was God's special creation, designed by the Creator to bear His image on the new world He had created. "The creation of man," writes B.H. Carrol, "is the last and highest stage in the production of organic life. Every step in creation so far is a prophecy of his coming and a preparation for it." Erich Sauer writes, "All this extravagance to provide for man a home, yea, more than a home – a university in which to learn about his loving creator! Man, as the image and glory of God, is placed in the earth as the king of creation. He walks erect, with his face uplifted to receive the radiance of God's face. How unique Man is! Another great chasm has been crossed – the chasm between Man and Non-Man."¹
3. Observe three truths about the creation of man:

I. THE DESIGN OF MAN (VS. 26-27)

A. The Divine Council (Vs. 26)

1. In previous Creative acts the formula was "And God said, Let there be" but in this verse God speaks as it were to Himself. God is not speaking to the angels as man was not made in the image of angels. One member of the uni-plural Godhead was addressing another member or members. This is a council within the Godhead. God's plan to make man in His image is announced.² There are other examples of such fascinating exchanges within the Godhead in Scripture (e.g., Ps. 2:7; Is. 6:8; Ps. 45:6-7; 110:1). Man was intended by God to express His image (Vs. 26a) and to exercise dominion (Vs. 26b).
2. Man was made by a direct act of creation. He did not evolve from ape like creatures!
3. "image...likeness" = these words refer to something that is similar but not identical to the thing it represents or is an 'image' of.³ We are similar to God in that we share possess attributes such as reason, love, will and morality. We also have an eternal spirit.

¹ E Sauer, *The Dawn of World Redemption*, Exeter: The Paternoster Press; 1966, p. 41.

² Morris, p. 72.

³ Sarfati, p. 250.

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However, we do not possess such Divine attributes as Omnipotence, Omnipresence and Self-existence.

- a. Man, like God, is a moral being with an eternal spirit and has spiritual attributes. Animals on the other hand cease to exist when their bodies die (Ecc. 3:21). Henry Morris explains, "There can be little doubt that the "image of God" in which man was created must entail those aspects of human nature which are not shared by animals – attributes such as a moral consciousness, the ability to think abstractly, an understanding of beauty and emotion, and, above all, the capacity for worshiping and loving God. This eternal and divine dimension of man's being must be the essence of what is involved in the likeness of God."
- b. You were created special and unique. You are not a glorified animal! Your body was uniquely crafted to bear the image of God, not to be misused for sinful purposes. Henry Morris notes, "We can only say that, although God Himself may have no physical body, He designed and formed man's body to enable it to function physically in ways in which He Himself could function even without a body. God can see (Gen. 16:13), hear (Psalm 94:9), smell (Genesis 8:21), touch (Genesis 32:32) and speak (2. Peter 1:18), whether or not He has actual physical eyes, ears, nose, hands, and mouth. Furthermore, whenever He has designed to appear visibly to men, He has done so in the form of a human body (Genesis 18:1-2); and the same is true of angels (Acts 1:10). There is something about the human body, therefore, which is uniquely appropriate to God's manifestation of Himself, and (since God knows all His words from the beginning of the world – Acts 15:18), He must have designed man's body with this in mind. Accordingly, He designed it, not like the animals, but with an erect posture, with an upward gazing countenance, capable of facial expressions corresponding to emotional feelings, and with a brain and tongue capable of articulate, symbolic speech."⁴ In the fulness of time the Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, would be manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16) and would be "made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7), just as man had been made in the likeness of God.
4. Leupold writes, "Taking the verse as a whole, we cannot but notice that it sets forth the picture of a being that stands on a very high level, a creature of singular nobility and endowed with phenomenal powers and attributes, not a type of being that by its brute imperfections is seen to be on the same level with the animal world, but a being that towers high above all other creatures, their king and their crown."⁵

B. The Divine Creation (Vs. 27)

⁴ Morris, p. 74.

⁵ Leupold, pp. 92-93.

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1. God follows through on His Divine plan and makes man in His image. Mankind reflects the handiwork of an All-powerful, All-wise, Intelligent Creator. The atheist Richard Dawkins admits, "There is enough information capacity in a single human cell to store the Encyclopedia Britannica, all 30 volumes of it, three or four times over."⁶ Dr. Jonathan Sarfati writes, "Nowadays we would say that each of our cells – and there are about a hundred trillion in the human body – contains about three gigabytes of information."⁷
2. Both male and female are created to reflect God's image. The Word of God elevates both sexes to an equal standing right from the beginning. God designed a distinction in the roles for men and women but they were both made equal in His sight. Both the male and the female were to be image bearers of God.
3. The further man gets away from God and the Book of Genesis, the more women are mistreated. This is a fact of history. Consider the example of the treatment of women in pagan cultures without the Bible.
4. Practical implications of the truth of man being made in God's image.
 - a. **It forms the basis of the sanctity of human life.** Murder is forbidden because man is made in God's image. Genesis 9:6 "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: **for in the image of God made he man.**" This forms the basis of the value the Christian places on human life and informs his views on contemporary issues such as abortion and euthanasia. It leads towards a philosophy of seeking to preserve rather than extinguish human life. Your beliefs DO affect your behaviour!
 - b. **It solves the problem of racism** as all people groups trace their lineage back to a common ancestor designed in the image of God. While the Bible acknowledges various people groups and nations, it does not promote the idea of "races" as we know it today. Viewing each human being as made in the image of God solves the problem of racism. Differences between people groups are cultural and not racial. Acts 17:26 says, "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth...". Evolutionary theory on the other hand is inherently racist and has been the philosophical basis of some of history's greatest atrocities and injustices. For example:
 - i. The treatment of Australian Aborigines - <https://creation.com/darwins-bodysnatchers-new-horrors#NoteAddedFeb2017>
 - ii. The treatment of Ota Benga - <https://creation.com/ota-benga-the-pygmy-put-on-display-in-a-zoo>
 - c. **It answers the issue of feminism** as God made man and woman as equal image bearers of God. Both man and woman were given the command to subdue the earth and exercise

⁶ R Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker, Why the evidence of evolution reveals a universe without design*, p. 115. Cited by Jonathan Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, p. 230.

⁷ Ibid.

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dominion. In reality, the cultures that tend to treat women the worst are non-Christian cultures. The evolutionary worldview provides no basis for the correct treatment of women. In fact, if you take the “survival of the fittest” idea as a product of blind, random chance, then nature has made men stronger than women so why shouldn’t they use that strength to their selfish advantage?

II. THE DIRECTIVE TO MAN (VS. 28)

Man’s commission was to:

A. Multiply in the earth (Vs. 28a)

1. “Be fruitful and multiply” = God made man with the ability to reproduce. This is a reminder that God was the designer of the one flesh union for the marriage union. One of the fundamental purposes for marriage as God ordained it was to produce more image bearers of God. Today’s society has all but dismissed child bearing as an integral part of the marriage union.
2. Note: The command to be fruitful and multiply was reiterated after the flood so still stands even in a world under sin’s curse. Gen. 9:1, 7 “And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, **Be fruitful, and multiply**, and replenish the earth...And you, **be ye fruitful, and multiply**; bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.”
3. Psalm 127:3-5 “Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is* his reward. As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; so *are* children of the youth. **Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them:** they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.”
4. ‘replenish’ = in modern English we could mistakenly take this to mean “repopulate”. In fact, those who teach the gap theory or day age theory use this argument to defend billions of years of death before Adam. However, the argument falls apart when you define the word in old English. In old English it simply meant “to fill; to stock with numbers or abundance. The magazines are replenished with corn. The springs are replenished with water.”⁸ Even in modern English the prefix ‘re’ does not always mean ‘again’. For example, the word ‘research’ does not mean to “search again” but “search completely.” The word ‘replete’ often used today means “completely full”.
5. Note: The popular idea that the world is overpopulated is simply not true. Seven billion people could fit into an area the size of Great Britain with an average space of 33m2 each.⁹

B. Manage the earth (Vs. 28b)

Man was to exercise dominion over the whole earth:

1. Sea life – “the fish of the sea”
2. Bird life – “the fowl of the air”
3. Animal life – “every living thing that moveth upon the earth”

⁸ Webster’s Dictionary 1828, <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/replenish> Viewed 5/11/21.

⁹ Sarfati, p. 265

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4. Note: Dominion does not have to be taken in a negative way as some try and argue. Man was to be a caretaker and steward of God's creation (See Ps. 8:6-8; Heb. 2:8). He was to be a manager, not an abuser of creation. In actual fact, the evolutionary theory, if taken to its logical conclusion is anti-environment as it teaches the survival of the fittest. The worst environmental abuses have actually occurred in countries where atheistic communism has been in power.¹⁰
5. Illustration: Christian philosopher Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) said that only the Christian has the proper perspective on a tree. He respects it as a tree, created by God. He therefore does not condone chopping it down just for the sake of wantonly chopping it down. However, he is also free from pagan "sacred grove" taboos about nature, so he is quite relaxed about chopping it down to fulfil his need to build a house. At the same time, his Christian duty toward the needs of future generations means he will plant at least another to take its place.¹¹

III. THE DIET FOR MAN (VS. 29-30)

In the original, pre-fall world:

A. Humankind was to be Vegetarian (Vs. 29)

1. This was to change after the flood. The post flood decree from God allows man to now eat animal flesh for food. Gen. 9:3 "Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things."
2. We would humbly remind those who use the vegetarian diet of Eden as a case for not eating meat that we no longer live in a pre-fall, Edenic world! In fact, to forbid the eating of meat is denounced in the New Testament as a doctrine of devils (1 Tim. 4:1-5).

B. Animal kind was to be Vegetarian (Vs. 30)

1. This presents a real problem for those who want to try and fit billions of years of evolution into Genesis one supposedly based on the fossil record since the fossil record contains clear evidence of carnivory (flesh eating). This can't be the case before the fall as animals were vegetarian. Taking God at His Word makes sense. Animals became carnivorous after the fall of man and the curse of sin that came on the world.
2. Note: Edenic conditions are restored in the Millennium (Is. 11:6-9).

IV. THE DECLARATION OF GOD (VS. 31)

This declaration is:

A. The Seventh Declaration

1. This is the seventh and final time in Genesis one that God declares His creation "good".
2. Seven is the Divine number of perfection. God created a perfect world without sin and suffering. This is the truth of the Bible and to

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 253.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 255.

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try and fit evolutionary theory into Genesis one, you have to do dishonest violence to the text of Scripture.

B. The Superlative Declaration

1. This time the adjective 'very' precedes the word 'good' for further emphasis.
2. It is inconceivable that God would declare creation "very good" if He was looking billions of years of survival of the fittest evolution.

Conclusion:

1. Do you know Christ as Saviour? Sin came as an intruder into God's perfect creation and sent mankind on a destruction course in this life and ultimately eternal destruction in the after life unless he accepts God's gracious offer of salvation.
2. Already a Christian? Have lost sight of the real purpose for your existence? Is life all about you or all about Christ?

A Very Special Day in the Week

Text: Gen. 2:1-3

Introduction:

1. Let's consider several introductory points in relation to Genesis chapter 2:
 - Genesis 2 does not present a contradiction to chapter 1 but it provides further details of day 6 with an emphasis on the creation of man. This makes complete sense since man was the pinnacle and crown of God's creative work. Further details are given concerning the manner in which God made the woman out of man. Henry Morris writes, "The second chapter of Genesis describes in greater detail certain of the events of the sixth day of creation, especially of the formation of the first man and woman. It does not in any respect contradict the account of the first chapter, but instead is complementary to it."
 - Genesis 2 refers repeatedly to God as "LORD God" meaning Jehovah Elohim instead of just 'God' (Elohim).
 - Genesis 2 lays down the foundation for marriage and the Christian home.
2. In this message, we will focus on the final day of creation week – the 7th day of God's rest. We will then consider some very important applications based on the principle of this day of rest.
3. Outline for the message will be:
 - The Seventh Day Rest of God.
 - The Sabbath Day Rest of Israel.
 - The Salvation Rest for the Sinner.
 - The Sunday Rest for the Believer.

I. THE SEVENTH DAY REST OF GOD (VS. 1-3)

A. A Day of Completion (Vs. 1-2)

1. "the heavens and the earth...all the host of them" = speaks of the totality of God's creation.
2. 'finished' = God finishes what He starts! The entire creation was completed. Notice the emphasis on this in these three verses – 'finished' (Vs. 1), 'ended' (Vs. 2), 'rested' (Vs. 2,3).
3. 'rested' = does not imply weariness on the part of God. Isaiah 40:28 says, "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, *that* the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, **fainteth not, neither is weary?** *there is* no searching of his understanding." The Hebrew word is 'shabath' meaning "to cease" or "to desist"; hence God desisted from labour on this day. Notice the link between the phrase "**ended** his work which he had made" in verse 2 and the phrase "**rested** from all his work which God created and made" in verse 3.
4. Note: No mention of "evening and morning" on the seventh day perhaps suggesting that God's Sabbath rest would have no end. Sadly, man's sin was to interrupt God's rest and would mean God labouring to deal with our sin.

B. A Day of Consecration (Vs. 3)

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1. "God blessed the seventh day" = Before this point, God has pronounced a blessing upon the creatures He has made (Gen. 1:22) and a blessing upon man (1:28). He now blesses the seventh day. Notice that this is the only day that God specifically blesses which demonstrates that it was important and special to God.
2. "sanctified it" = means to set apart, make holy. Further emphasizes the significance and specialness of this day in the mind and heart of God.
3. Note: At this point, no command is given to man to observe this day. That would come later as we will see under the next point. But the principle of one day in seven set apart from the others for rest and worship is firmly established in creation week.

II. THE SABBATH REST OF ISRAEL (EX. 20:8-11)

The Jewish Sabbath day was established on the basis of the seventh day of creation. There are several facts concerning the Sabbath day we need to keep firmly in mind:

A. The Sabbath was not Revealed until Sinai (Neh. 9:13-14)

1. Neh. 9:13-14 "Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And **madest known unto them thy holy sabbath**, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant:"
2. This is important as it refutes the argument of the SDA's that the Sabbath as an official day of worship was in place from creation week. In fact, until Moses we have no record in the Bible of the seventh day being an official day of worship.

B. The Sabbath was a Sign between God and Israel (Ex. 31:12-17)

1. Exodus 31:13, 17 "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it **is a sign between me and you** throughout your generations; that ye may know that I *am* the LORD that doth sanctify you. **It is a sign between me and the children of Israel** for ever: for *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed."
2. The Sabbath was a national day of worship for Israel as a nation under the old dispensation. The church is not Israel (1 Cor. 10:32) so it is wrong to argue that the Sabbath day is for the church.

C. The Sabbath is therefore not binding upon the N.T. Believer (Col. 2:14-17)

1. Col. 2:14-17 "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; (15) *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. (16) Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of **the sabbath days**: (17) Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ."
2. The SDA's make a grave error when they use the sabbath day as a matter of judgment over other Christians. The idea that Sunday

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observance will be the mark of the beast as taught by Ellen G. White is unfounded and unscriptural and constitutes a grave violation of the command not to judge over the sabbath day.

III. THE SALVATION REST OF THE SINNER (HEB. 4:9-10)

The seventh day is a type of salvation. As God rested on the seventh day from His work of creation, the believer today rests in the completed work of Christ. Heb 4:9-10 "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath **ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his.**"

A. The Saviour's Completion of Redemption (John 19:30)

1. The rest in Eden was the rest of God's completed work. God had done all – man had done nothing. The rest into which the New Testament believer is invited is the repose of a soul on a God who has done all; who undertakes to do all.
2. Hebrews 1:3 "Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself **purged our sins, sat down** on the right hand of the Majesty on high;" Christ seated is a picture of rest. The work of redemption was completed.
3. John 19:30 "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **It is finished:** and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." You cannot DO anything for your salvation when it has all been DONE.

B. The Sinner's Invitation to Rest (Matt. 11:28)

1. Into this rest of God, the sinner is invited to shelter under the blood of Christ, to rest upon the completed work of Christ. Heb 4:9-10 "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath **ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his.**"
2. John 6:28-29 "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, **This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.**" In order to enter into God's rest, a person must accept God's work and must cease from his own work.
3. Acts 16:31 "And they said, **Believe on** the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."
4. The Word of God is unequivocal that man's works play NO part in salvation from sin. See Eph. 2:8-9 & Titus 3:5. **Salvation is received, not earned!**
5. Challenge: Have you entered into salvation rest? Has there ever been a time in your life when you have ceased from your own works and come to rest in God's finished work of salvation?

IV. THE SUNDAY REST OF THE BELIEVER (HEB. 10:25)

The New Testament Lord's Day is not the Sabbath and should not be confused as such. It is a new day of worship. C.H. Mackintosh notes that "the seventh day stands connected with earth and earthly rest; the first day of the week introduces us to heaven and heavenly rest. The seventh day appertained to Israel and to earth. The first day of the week appertains to

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the church and to heaven. Further, Israel was commanded to observe the sabbath day; the church is privilege to enjoy the first day of the week.” Wiersbe wisely observes, “The seventh day of the week, the Jewish Sabbath, symbolizes the old creation and the covenant of law: first you work, then you rest. The first day of the week, the Lord’s Day, symbolizes the new creation and the covenant of grace: first you believe in Christ and find rest, and then you work (Eph. 2:8-9).

A. The Argument for Sunday Worship

There is much evidence in the Bible and elsewhere that the early Christians met and worshiped on the first day rather than on the sabbath:

1. On the first day Jesus rose from the dead (Mk. 16:9). Every Sunday should be thrilling to us as we commemorate the fact that Jesus Christ is alive!
2. On the first day Jesus first appeared to his disciples (Mk. 16:9).
3. On the first day Jesus met with the disciples at different places (Mk. 16:9-11; Mt. 28:8-10; Lk. 24:34; Mk. 16:12-13; Jn. 20:19-23).
4. On the first day Jesus blessed the disciples (Jn. 20:19).
5. On the first day Jesus commissioned the disciples to preach the gospel (Jn. 20:21; with Mk. 16:9-15).
6. On the first day Jesus ascended to Heaven, was seated at the right hand of the Father, and was made Head of all (Jn. 20:17; Eph. 1:20).
7. On the first day the gospel of the risen Christ was first preached (Lk. 24:34).
8. On the first day Jesus explained the Scriptures to the disciples (Lk. 24:27, 45).
9. On the first day the Holy Spirit descended (Acts 2:1). Pentecost was on the 50th day after the sabbath following the wave offering (Le. 23:15-16). Thus, Pentecost was always on a Sunday.
10. The Christians met to worship on the first day (John 20:19, 26; Acts 20:6-7; 1 Cor. 16:2).
 - a. John 20:19, 26 “Then the same day at evening, being **the first day of the week**, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you. And **after eight days** again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you.”
 - b. Acts 20:6-7 “And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. And upon **the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread**, Paul **preached** unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”
 - c. 1 Cor. 16:2 “Upon **the first day of the week** let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”
 - d. Note: From just these two references we get a window into the sort of activities the early church was engaged in on a Sunday.

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Add some of the instructions from the N.T. Epistles and we have a pretty good idea what should be our focus for the Lord's Day:

- i. The Breaking of Bread (observance of the Lord's Supper). See also Acts 2:42.
- ii. The Preaching of the Word (includes preaching at night and even till late!) See also Acts 2:42 – The Apostle's doctrine.
- iii. The Giving of Offerings.
- iv. The Singing of Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual Songs (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).
- v. The Offering of Prayers (Acts 2:42; Eph. 5:20).

B. The Applications for Sunday Worship

I am not for making Sunday a day of legalistic bondage like the Pharisees did with the Sabbath of old. I am also not for trying to make Sunday a Christian Sabbath. However, I am for taking the principle of the seventh day and the spirit of the 4th commandment and applying it to the Lord's Day. What is the spirit of the Sabbath commandment? It is a complete day set aside from the usual activities of the week for worship and the things of God. We are all for keeping Sunday special!

1. Prioritize the Lord's Day
 - a. Don't forsake it (Heb. 10:25). Make it your number 1 priority! If you are missing multiple services every month, you are on a downward trajectory in your spiritual life. Can't you give one full day to the Lord? The early church met daily! (Acts 2:46; 5:42).
 - b. Treasure it – Christ walks amongst the candlesticks (Rev. 1:13, 2:1). When the church gathers, Christ is there (Matt. 18:20)! Christ purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28). The church is the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15). It is the Habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:22).
2. Prepare for the Lord's Day
 - a. **Prepare Domestically.** The evening before the Sabbath for the Jews was a time of preparation for the Sabbath (Mark 15:42). It is a good idea to start preparations for the Lord's Day the night before if you can. Try and prepare ahead for things like food and clothing for the next day.
 - b. **Prepare Physically.** Try and get a good rest the night before! Be careful about turning Saturday night into party night and then dragging into church the next morning so exhausted you can barely stay awake for the preaching. Watch out for the slack Christian who does not know the discipline of regular Sunday church attendance who will think nothing of keeping you up on a Saturday night. While they sleep in Sunday morning and forsake the assembly, you have to get up and go to church! The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit so put some care into cleaning up so you can come to the house of God clean and well groomed.
 - c. **Prepare Spiritually.** Be in prayer in the lead up to the Lord's Day and during. Prepare your heart by asking God to work in your life through the preaching of the Word. Prepare your heart and mind by pre-reading the passage of Scripture the Pastor is going to preach from (if you know). Prepare your emotions with

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genuine enthusiasm for the Lord's Day. To be in church is not boring...it is exciting! Come with a spirit of anticipation to see what God will do.

3. Participate on the Lord's Day
 - a. Participate in Singing.
 - b. Participate in Preaching. Be engaged and listen. Take notes!
 - c. Participate in Fellowship. Be others focused. Pray that God will use you to be a blessing to others at church.

Conclusion:

1. Have you entered into the rest of salvation? What are you resting in for your salvation?
2. Do you value the Lord's Day as a Christian? Do you need to adjust your priorities and give the Lord first place on a Sunday?

The Creation and Commission of Man

Text: Gen. 2:4-17

Introduction:

1. Genesis 2 does not present a contradiction to chapter 1 but it provides further details of day 6 with an emphasis on the creation of man. This makes complete sense since man was the pinnacle and crown of God's creative work. It also provides further details concerning the manner in which God made the woman out of man. Henry Morris writes, "The second chapter of Genesis describes in greater detail certain of the events of the sixth day of creation, especially of the formation of the first man and woman. It does not in any respect contradict the account of the first chapter, but instead is complementary to it." Concerning this chapter, Luther wrote, "We may note further that Moses here describes the work of the sixth day, of which he briefly spoke in 1:26-27. Now he enlarges on this report, devoting a whole chapter to man's creation. We should therefore firmly hold that God created the world in six days (and maintain this) against the delusion of Augustine and Hilary that everything was made in a moment."¹
2. The Book of Genesis often moves from the general to the particular. We are first presented with the big picture, and then the book focuses down on a detail of that picture and expands it out. After seeing all that God has made on the six days in chapter one, the Book focuses down on one species, Man, and in chapter 2 gives us the expanded details of his beginning.
3. Genesis 2 lays the foundation for chapter 3. In Genesis 2 we have Paradise formed, in Genesis 3 Paradise lost.
4. We will divide the text under four points for our expository study:

I. THE PREPARATION OF MAN FOR EDEN (VS. 4-7)

Here we have the first of eleven 'generation' statements that mark the progress of the story Moses wrote in the Book of Genesis.

A. The Revelation of the Creator (Vs. 4)

1. All through chapter 2 & 3 God is revealed as the "LORD God" (Jehovah Elohim).
2. "The reason why the two are combined in the Eden narrative is to bring together the title of the majestic, powerful 'God' portrayed in Genesis 1 with the title of the personal, intimate name 'Yahweh', of Genesis 2-3. This idea is that the transcendent God of Genesis 1 is the same as the immanent God of Genesis 2-3."²

B. The Description of the Creation (Vs. 5-6)

1. The State of Plant Life (Vs. 5)
 - a. It appears some forms of plant life hadn't grown yet because man was not yet created and available to tend to them.
"Although God created the land vegetation, certain groups had not yet sprouted at this time, just before man was created. The main reason is that man was not yet around to cultivate those

¹ J Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, Creation Book Publishers, April 2015, p. 292.

² Ibid, quote by J.D. Currid, p. 293.

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types of plants.”³ Reveals that even before the curse, God had ordained that man have a managing role over the world He had made.

- b. It is specifically noted that it had not rained upon the earth. The original hydrologic system was very different in the pre-curse, pre-flood world as the next verse reveals.
2. The Sustenance of Plant Life (Vs. 6)
 - a. The manner in which the earth was watered in the absence of rain is revealed in this verse. The earth was watered by a ‘mist’ (word means fog, vapor). This speaks of a daily water supply coming primarily from a process of local evaporation and condensation.
 - b. As discussed in our study of the firmament mentioned in Chapter 1, these conditions were on account of the water canopy above the earth that created an ideal, semi-tropical environment upon earth. This would mean ideal temperatures (Adam and Eve had no need of clothes before the fall) and ideal conditions for lush vegetation.

C. The Creation of the First Man (Vs. 7)

The narrative skips the work of the 4th and 5th days of creation and proceeds immediately to man himself.

1. The Unique Creation of Man (Vs. 7a)
 - a. Formed by the Creator – “And the LORD God formed man”
 - i. The manner of man’s creation. No other creature was fashioned in such a personal and direct way as man. The word ‘formed’ means to shape and is used in Jeremiah 18:2-4 to describe the work of the potter. As the Master Potter, God’s unseen hands personally shaped man. Man was destined to a special and privileged position in God’s Creation. His destiny was to bear the image of God and to be a friend of God. The Psalmist explained “I will praise thee for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Psalm 139:14)
 - ii. The material for man’s creation. Man was both an exalted and yet lowly creature, made from the “dust of the ground”. Man is “of the earth, earthy” (1 Cor. 15:47). Man is therefore related to the material universe through the body with its five senses (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch). God’s understanding of our essential physical make up forms the basis of his tender dealings with us as His children. Psalm 103:13-14 “Like as a father pitieth *his* children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; **he remembereth that we are dust.**” Scientific discovery again attests to the truth of the Word of God. “In modern terminology, the basic chemical elements: nitrogen, oxygen, calcium etc... were to be the basic physical elements of the human body.”⁴ (Morris)

³ Ibid, p. 296.

⁴ Morris, p. 85.

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- b. Enlivened by the Creator – “breathed into his nostrils”
 - i. Again, the manner in which God gave life to man was unique. Man was made alive by a special, personal act of God. God Himself directly imparted life and breath to man. Life cannot come from non-life and as God is the only self-existent being, life must come from him.
 - ii. “Man is formed out of the earth by God’s personal activity...A personal, vitalizing act of the Creator imparts life to man – an honor bestowed upon none of the lesser creatures.”⁵
 - iii. Note: Due to sin, we are now spiritually dead. Praise God He is able to breathe new life into us at salvation (Eph. 2:1).
- 2. The Unique Character (nature) of Man (Vs. 7b)
 - a. Man is made up of both material and immaterial parts. In fact, man is a tripartite being, reflecting the triune nature of his Creator. He is a trinity in unity. The Apostle Paul recognizes this trichotomy in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole **spirit and soul and body** be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - b. Man became a “living soul”. The same phrase is translated “living creature” in Genesis 1:24 in relation to the animals God made. The animals possess soul life but to a much lesser degree than man. “As man’s body was tremendously more complex and capable than those of animals so man’s soul was of a much higher order than the animal soul, requiring God’s direct energizing for its activation.”⁶ Man, by virtue of the way God made him, possesses not only natural life but also spiritual life. God not only gave man body and a soul (mind, will and emotions) but also a spirit. God in His pure essence is a Spirit (John 4:24) and He made man in His image. Out of all of creation, only man was endowed with a spirit and the capacity to personally know the Creator. In fact, the text reveals that man is primarily a spiritual being. He is not a body that has a spirit but he is a spirit housed in a body and there is a big difference here. While the body cannot exist without the spirit, the spirit can survive in conscious existence without the body. The spirit of man is the center of conscience (Rom. 2:15), worship (John 4:24) and intuition (Rom. 8:16).
 - c. Note: This verse refutes evolutionary theory. Man did not arrive at this stage by a long process of animal evolution. He was created by the direct action of Almighty God.

II. THE PROVISION FOR MAN IN EDEN (VS. 8-14)

The whole earth was perfect but God made a beautiful garden called Eden to be the home for the man He had created. The word ‘Eden’ means

⁵ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, Baker Book House 1971.

⁶ H Morris, *The Genesis Record*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids Michigan; p. 86.

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'delight' and the text describes a truly delightful place. Eden is called "the garden of God" in Ezekiel 28:13. Observe three details about Eden:

A. Eden's Beauty (Vs. 8-9a)

1. It's general description – 'garden'. Interestingly the New Testament Greek word 'paradise' is derived from a Persian word meaning an enclosed garden. Here we see paradise given. In Genesis 3 we will see paradise lost.
2. It's specific description – "pleasant to the sight". God filled this garden with trees that were beautiful to behold.

B. Eden's Bounty (Vs. 9b)

1. The permitted trees (Vs. 9b)
 - a. The sustenance trees – "every tree that is...good for food". God made abundant provision for man's happiness and fulfilment. Man's first impressions of God would be of One who loved Him and had generously provided for him.
 - b. The special tree – "the tree of life". It is of interest to note that this tree was included amongst those of which the man could freely eat. If eaten regularly, even after the fall, man would live forever (Gen. 3:22). The tree of life is restored in the New Jerusalem for the blessing and benefit of the glorified saints. Rev. 22:2 "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, *was there the tree of life*, which bare twelve *manner of fruits*, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations."
2. The prohibited tree (Vs. 9c)

C. Eden's Brook (Vs. 10-14)

1. The source of the river (Vs. 10a)
 - a. Evidently the 'mist' mentioned in verse 6 was not sufficient to water the garden of Eden so it was watered by a river to guarantee its ongoing fruitfulness and freshness.
 - b. According to Genesis one there was one main body of water in the original creation. Perhaps this was a large inland sea or lake somewhere in Eden that then flowed out into the river described. Or possibly the river was fed from an underground spring.
 - c. The New Jerusalem also has a beautiful river described in Revelation 22:1-2. Eden's river is long gone, the original paradise lost. But we will one day enjoy the river of life in the New Jerusalem, paradise regained.
 - d. Gospel thought: The river of life is a theme that runs through the Scriptures. The river of life has flowed in mercy from the throne of God, offering salvation for thirsty sinners who will come and drink of its purifying waters. Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: **But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst**; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:13-14)
2. The course of the river (Vs. 10b-14)

The river must have been substantial as it is said to have divided into four separate watercourses. Some further descriptions of the pre-flood topography are also mentioned.

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- a. Pison – said to encircle ('compasseth') the land of 'Havilah'. The word 'Havilah' means sandy. This land was abundant in precious minerals – gold, bdellium and the onyx stone.
- b. Gihon – said to encircle the land of Ethiopia.
- c. Hiddekel – said to go toward the east of Assyria.
- d. Euphrates – should not be confused with today's river that bears that name. Evidently these names were familiar to the survivors of the flood and were used after the flood by Noah and his descendants.
- e. Sarfati explains, "In recent history, we have seen the new towns established by British settlers in North America, Australia and New Zealand were frequently assigned names that were familiar place-names in the land they had left; e.g., Liverpool, Hamilton, Oxford, Sheffield and Brighton. Similarly, features in the post-Flood world were given names familiar to those who survived the Flood."⁷
- f. "In general, it is evident that the geography described in these verses does not exist in the present world, nor has it existed since the flood. The flood completely changed the topography of the world (2 Peter 3:6)."⁸

III. THE PURPOSE FOR MAN IN EDEN (VS. 15)

At this point it would be profitable for us to consider the commission God gave to man as the male leader in the home and society. These are God-given drives that God has placed within the male species. We note 3 main drives God has placed in men:

A. The Drive of Reproduction (Gen. 1:28)

1. Man is the initiator and leader in the sacred matter of human reproduction. While this commission was given to both the man and his wife, the seed, or offspring, is attributed throughout the Scriptures to the father rather than the mother.
2. Sadly, since the fall, this drive has been misused for countless perversions that were never God's intent. In today's culture, most men don't embrace God's plan for marriage to produce offspring, viewing this area of their lives as primarily just for pleasure. Rather than viewing his wife as the potential mother of his children, the typical man simply views intimacy as being for the fulfillment of his passions only. Conception and child bearing is all but removed out of the equation in the thinking of the average Christian couple. Rather than embracing God's plan for child bearing, most have embraced the anti-baby, humanistic philosophies of the day.
3. The very first commandment God gave to the first couple was to "Be fruitful, and multiply." This reveals the mind of God for the marriage union. Child bearing was to be central to the marriage union. How opposite to the sinful society in which we live! The culture says, "stop having children" but God's Word says "be fruitful and multiply"!

⁷ Sarfati, p. 318.

⁸ Morris, pp. 89-90.

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4. Remember, God is seeking a godly seed through your marriage. Mal. 2:15 “And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? **That he might seek a godly seed.** Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth.”
5. If ever there was a time for Christian couples to go back to the Bible and re-embrace God’s original intent for marriage, it is in today’s pornographic society that is producing a generation of men (and even women) with a warped view of sex.

B. The Drive for Dominion (Gen. 1:28; Vs. 15)

There are three Bible words that describe different aspects of this:

1. **Dominion** – “have dominion” (Gen. 1:28) This commission was given to both sexes but the drive is most predominant in the male. As the God-ordained leader over his home, he must know where he fits in any authority chain. In order to exercise dominion, he must have a certain defined territory over which to rule.
2. **Subdue** – “and subdue it”. This God-given instinct in man, motivates him to harness the forces of nature, and bring it under his control. Inventiveness is a particularly male trait. By this drive, man brings to heel those threatening aspects of nature such as disease (this side of the fall).
3. **Tend** – “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it...” Adam was given the commission to work before sin entered into the world. God made man to serve. His service would have been completely enjoyable and blissful as his body was not under the effects of the curse but it was service nonetheless. Work became toil after the fall. Henry Morris writes, “It is noteworthy that, even in the perfect world as God made it, work was necessary for man’s good. The ideal world is not one of idleness and folic, but one of serious activity and service. Even in the new earth to come, after sin and the curse have been completely removed, Scripture says that “his servants shall serve him (Rev. 22:3).”⁹ Through this God-given drive to work, a man received a great amount of self-worth. In contrast to this, a woman receives much of her self-worth through bearing and nurturing children. This drive to tend, involves provision for his wife and family and upkeep and development of his territory.

C. The Drive of Protection (Vs. 15)

1. “and keep it” = the word has the idea of “to guard”. The KJV translators wisely used the word ‘keep’ in this context as sin had not yet entered the world. In this context it reinforces the concept of man being commissioned to oversee and manage God’s creation. He was to “keep it” in the sense of looking after it. Henry Morris writes, “Adam was told to “keep” the garden. The word means actually to “guard” it. There was no thought of protecting it from external enemies, of which there were none, but rather that of exercising a careful and loving stewardship over it, keeping it beautiful and orderly, with every component in place and in

⁹ Ibid, p. 92.

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harmonious relationship with the whole. The charge of certain latter-day evolutionary ecologists that the concept of man's dominion has led to exploitation of earth's resources is patently absurd. God's command was to keep the ecology, not to destroy it; and those who believe and understand the Bible have always taken it that way."¹⁰

2. The fall of Satan meant that man would soon need to exercise the guardianship aspect of this word. We could ask the question, "where was Adam when Eve was being tempted to take the forbidden fruit."
3. In relation to God given drives, man has a strong drive to protect his own persons and property. He will not hesitate to lay down his life for his spouse and dependents, and will always have a careful eye for their safety. This is a very vital part of the man's role this side of the fall when the Christian home is threatened by multiple spiritual and even physical dangers.
4. Note: One of the best things you can do as a wife and helpmeet is to encourage your husband in the right exercise of those God given drives. Encourage his fatherhood, encourage his headship (authority) in the home, encourage him in his work, encourage him as the protector of the home.

IV. THE PROHIBITION TO MAN IN EDEN (VS. 16-17)

A. What Man was Free to Do (Vs. 16)

1. We tend to focus in on the one restriction God placed on the man He created and forget the overwhelming bounty and provision God had graciously made for man's perfect satisfaction, fulfillment and happiness. God is a God who delights to abundantly bless His children, not a hard-hearted task master as some misrepresent Him.
2. It is significant that when Eve was tempted, she saw that the tree was "good for food" and "pleasant to the eyes" (Gen. 3:6) but God had already provided an abundance of trees that were "good for food" and "pleasant to the eyes" (Gen. 2:9). It is the devil's way to focus our attention on that which is forbidden rather than that which is freely ours to enjoy from God.

B. What Man was Forbidden to Do (Vs. 17)

1. Before the fall, there was only one command for man to obey. After sin entered, there would need to be so many more commands for God's people to govern their behavior.
2. These two important trees were in the center of the garden, representing the continual choice before man to choose either the way of life or the way of death.
3. Man was given a free will to choose to love and obey God. Freedom of the will is essential for true love. If God was to create man, He had to give him the choice of loving God or of not loving God. Without this possibility, men would be "mere passive toys of His sovereignty, mere creatures governed by instinct, in reality nothing more than highly gifted and more complexly controlled

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 92-93.

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animals. There could be no more talk of a nobility of man. Their 'morality' would in truth be a forced, only apparently moral mechanism, and they would be nature-bound beings without a will, puppet-like, living morality machines. The holy nature of God could never have glorified itself, and with this the chief object in the creation of man would have been missed."¹¹

4. "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" = evil can be defined as rejection of God's will. Disobedience to His will is therefore participation in, and experimental knowledge of, evil. Man already had knowledge of good. Everything God had made was described as "very good". Partaking of the fruit would give Adam a knowledge of evil as well as an understanding of the distinction between good and evil.¹²
5. "thou shalt surely die" = God is the source of life so to be separated from God is the essence of death. Man would die spiritually the very day he took the forbidden fruit and the principle of decay and death would begin to operate in his body immediately that would eventually result in physical death.
6. Illustration: If a branch is chopped off a tree and it falls onto hard concrete, one can say that it's already dead, cut off from the source of life. But the process of physical death takes some time – the cells in the leaves will continue to photosynthesize for several hours at least. Similarly, when Adam sinned, he immediately cut himself off from the Source of life, but the dying process took 930 years.¹³
7. Leupold puts it this way, "For a fact, after the commission of sin man at once stepped upon the road of death."

Conclusion: Bible history begins with a beautiful garden in which man sinned but the story ends with a glorious garden city (Rev. 21-22) in which there will be no sin. What brought about the change? The answer is found in a third garden that stands between the two called Gethsemane where Christ surrendered to the Father's will and went to the cross to die for the sins of the world to make our reconciliation with God possible. The only way you will see the garden city in eternity is if you repent now and received God's offer of forgiveness. Will you do that today?

¹¹ E Sauer, *The King of the Earth*, Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1967; p. 58.

¹² Morris, p. 94.

¹³ Illustration from Peter Sparrow (Creation Bus Ministry Australia), cited by Sarfati, p. 320.

The Creation of Love & Marriage

Text: Gen. 2:18-25

Introduction:

1. Genesis is absolutely foundational to Christian morality and marriage is no exception. Failing to accept the historicity of Genesis leaves the Christian church without any real basis for Christian marriage and the home.
2. In our last message, the emphasis of the text was upon the creation of the man. Now the text focuses upon the creation of the woman and God's welding her and the man together into one unit.
3. It is significant that the institution of the home was the first formed by God before human government and the church. The home is the fundamental building block of the nation and the church. Destroy the home and the inevitable consequence will be the demise of both the nation and the church. No wonder Satan has focused so much of his attacks against the Christian home.
4. The home in Australia is in dire straits with the rise of de facto couples, single parent households, rampant divorce and the introduction of same sex marriage at the end of 2017. If ever there was a time when the Christian church needs to reaffirm the teaching of the Word of God on this subject, it is today.
5. In this message, we will explore the creation of marriage and the home in the beginning and seek to re-affirm the Biblical foundations the Word of God presents for Christian marriage.

I. THE CONTEXT OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE (VS. 18-20)

Observe the setting of the stage for the first marriage in these verses.

A. The Declaration of Man's Need (Vs. 18)

1. The Deficiency of Man (Vs. 18a)
 - a. For the first time in the Creation week God announces that something is not good. This doesn't mean "not good" in a moral sense as God created a perfect universe without sin and error but "not good" in the sense that there was something incomplete.
 - b. Unless specially gifted and called by God to a life of singlehood, the majority of men don't fair well on their own! A single female can experience loneliness and can sense a need for a companion but it won't be to the same degree as a male.
2. The Help for Man (Vs. 18b)
 - a. God saw that the man he had made needed help and so made a help meet (helper suited) for him. The word 'help' is used elsewhere in the O.T. to describe God as being our help (e.g., Ps. 33:21, 70:5, 115:9-11, 122:2). If the term is applied to God, then we could never arrive at the idea that the term implies inferiority to the woman.
 - b. The creation of the woman to be a helper to the man reveals God's model for marriage and the home. The woman was to be a completer, not a competitor to her husband. The marriage unit

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was intended to be complimentary rather than competitive. There is no question as to the woman's equality of standing as she was also created in God's image and given the dominion mandate alongside the man (Gen. 1:27-28). God ordained a distinction, not in equality, but in roles for men and women. The distinction is in function, not in standing.

- i. Illustration: Citizens of our country are said to have equal standing before the law. The fact that authority structures exist, does not imply inferiority. The Prime Minister of Australia is vested with more authority than any other citizen in the country and yet he is of equal standing with the rest of the country.
- ii. Illustration: The authority structure of the Trinity.
- c. **The role of the husband** was to take a leading role in carrying out the dominion mandate. He, not Eve, was specifically tasked with the tending and keeping of the garden, the first home of the first couple. From this, and the testimony of other key Scriptures on the subject, we understand that the man is to lead the family unit and be its primary provider and protector. The husband's role could be summarized as follows:
 - i. Leader (Gen. 2:15, Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 11:3). Biblical examples: Abraham (Gen. 18:19) & Joshua (Josh. 24:15).
 - ii. Progenitor (Gen. 1:28). Illustration: Obededom (1 Chr. 26:4-5; See also Ps. 127:3-5; 128:3-4).
 - iii. Provider (Gen. 2:15; 1 Tim. 5:8). Illustration: Boaz (Ruth 3:15).
 - iv. Lover (Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19). Illustration: Christ (Eph. 5:25).
 - v. Protector (Gen. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:7). Joseph (Matt. 2:13-15).
- d. **The role of the wife** was to be a helper to her husband, to assist and support him in his God-given role. With her help, he could reach his full potential and excel in the role God had given him. The wife's role could be summarized as follows:
 - i. Follower (1 Tim. 2:12-13; Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18). Illustration: Sarah (1 Pet. 3:6).
 - ii. Helper (Gen. 2:18). Illustration: Prov. 31 woman; Rebekah (Gen. 24:19-20).
 - iii. Home-maker (1 Tim. 5:14; Titus 2:5; Prov. 31:10-31). Illustration: Abigail (1 Sam. 25:41).
 - iv. Mother/Nurturer (1 Tim. 5:14). Illustration: Hannah (1 Sam. 1-2; note 2:19 in particular).
 - v. Lover (Tit. 2:4). Illustration: The Shulamite bride (Song 2:6-7; 3:5).
- e. Question: I am still single. Where do I fit in and what can I do? The Apostle Paul answers that question for you in 1 Corinthians 7:33-34. While single, you have a unique opportunity to give more attention to the service of God before the pressures of family become a reality for you.

B. The Demonstration of Man's Need (Vs. 19-20)

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It appears there were two main purposes for Adam's naming of the animals:

1. To begin exercising his God-given dominion. While the woman also received this mandate, Adam's naming of the animals highlights that he was to take a leading role in the carrying out of the dominion mandate. The intelligence of the first man is highlighted in this account. Note: Some raise an objection here saying that it would be impossible for Adam to name all the animals in one day. This argument falls apart when you consider:
 - a. The number of "kinds" was much smaller than the number of today's "species". Adam would have been naming the original pairs of animals, not all the variations that would come later over time.
 - b. The text does not claim that Adam names all living creatures but rather to "every beast of the field" (compare with "beast of the earth" in 1:25) and "every fowl of the air". Sea creatures are excluded as well as the "creeping things" (1:25). Jonathan Sarfati outlines a possible scenario; "Combining both facts – that 'kinds' are broader than species, and that there was only a small subset of all kinds – there were probably only a few thousand animals involved at most. Even if we assume that Adam had to name as many as 2,500 kinds of animals, if he took five seconds per kind, and took a five-minute break every hour, he could have completed the task in well under four hours."¹
 - c. Further, God brought them to Adam, he did not have to go looking for them.
 - d. Finally, Adam's mental capacities were not yet affected by the fall meaning he would have had an extremely high IQ, unmatched by anything any one possesses today. The naming of the animals evidently did not take him long.
2. To further highlight to Adam his aloneness and to heighten his desire for a companion of his own – "but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him". Presumably, the animals came to Adam in pairs, giving him a sense that something was missing in relation to himself. Leupold writes, "The bringing of the creatures before man was to arouse man to the awareness of his not having a mate as the other creatures had. Such an awareness makes him appreciate God's gift the more."² Jonathan Sarfati cites J. McKeown; "The parade of the animals before the human would highlight their dual sexuality – male and female – and thereby accentuate the loneliness of the human being."³

II. THE CREATION OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE (VS. 21-23)

A. The Method of Eve's Creation (Vs. 21-22)

1. The Specialness of it (Vs. 21)

¹ J Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, Creation Book Publishers 2015, p. 327.

² H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, p. 130.

³ *Ibid*, p. 322.

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- a. Whereas Adam was made out of the dust, the woman was made out of the man. She was destined to be a part of him, bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh. She was not made to be separate from him but to be one with him, welded to him by the deepest bonds of love and intimacy.
 - b. The unique manner in which God created the woman highlights her elevated and special status. The Word of God exalts women to their rightful place alongside men. The word 'made' is the Hebrew word 'banah' which means "to build, construct and even fashion." "Build", says Leupold, "applies to the fashioning of a structure of some importance; it involves constructive effort. Both of these factors are in evidence in the case of the creation of woman."
 - c. The account of the creation of the woman also totally dismantles the theory of theistic evolution. 1 Tim. 2:13 says, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve" and 1 Cor. 11:8 states, "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man."
2. The Substance for it (Vs. 21b-22a)
- a. The anesthesia – God causes Adam to sleep deeply.
 - b. The Surgeon – God performs the first surgery, taking a rib from Adam's side.
 - c. The significance – the ribs are close to the heart and are located on the upper part of the man's body. She was to be his equal, his counterpart and to be loved with every beat of his heart. Matthew Henry writes, "The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal to him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved."
 - d. **Snapshot from Science:** The Genesis account inspired the Scottish Obstetrician, Sir James Young Simpson (1811-1870) to pioneer the use of anesthesia. He was the first to use chloroform in obstetrics to ease the suffering of women in childbirth. He fought strongly for doctors to wash their hands thoroughly between helping women to prevent the deadly disease of puerperal fever that killed many women after childbirth.⁴
3. The Sequel to it (Vs. 22b)
- a. Having taken the rib from the man, presumably with some of his flesh (See verse 23), God forms the body of the woman.
 - b. God then brings her to Adam. God is the Supreme Matchmaker who brings couples together if we remain surrendered to him and sensitive to His guidance in this matter. Proverbs 19:14 says, "...a prudent wife is from the LORD." Mark 10:9 says, "What therefore **God hath joined together**, let not man put asunder." (See also Matt. 19:6)
4. The Significance of it (the type)
- a. Adam is a type of Christ, the second Adam. Adam slept, and from his wounded side, his bride was formed. In like manner,

⁴ Ibid, p. 328.

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Christ's side was wounded after he slept in death, and from his wounded side, the church, his bride, was formed.

- b. M.R. DeHaan explains, "Adam is a picture of the Lord Jesus, who left His Father's house to gain His bride at the price of his own life. Jesus, the last Adam, like the first, must be put to sleep to purchase His Bride the Church, and Jesus died on the cross and slept in the tomb for three days and three nights. His side too was opened after He had fallen asleep, and from that wounded side redemption flowed. I believe that in the creation of Eve, Adam gave his literal blood. God opened his side and this implies a wound and blood-shedding. Here then at the very dawn of creation even before man had fallen, we have an implied reference to a new creature taken from the side of a man and becoming a part of him, even of his flesh, and of his bones."⁵
- c. Henry Morris adds, "These thoughts, of course, immediately remind us again of the One whose side was pierced on Calvary as He entered the "deep sleep" of death, of whose body not a bone was broken, but from whose side "forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:34-36). From the "life" of Adam (the blood sustaining his bones and his flesh) God made Eve, his bride. In like manner, we who constitute the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7) have received life by His blood (John 6:54-56). Thereby we become "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Eph. 5:30)."

B. The Marvel at Eve's Creation (Vs. 23)

1. Adam's reaction to Eve (Vs. 23a). According to Hebrew experts, there is a tone of excitement in the grammatical structure of Adam's words. Christian marriage is a glorious and marvelous thing!
2. Adam's designation of Eve (Vs. 23b). Again, we see the leadership function of Adam in his naming of Eve. Naming is a function of authority.
3. The great poet, Milton, gives a moving description of God's creation of Eve:

Under His forming hands a creature grew,
Manlike, but different sex, so lovely fair,
That what seem'd fair in all the world, seem'd now
Mean, or in her summ'd up, in her contain'd
And in her looks, which from that time infused
Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before,
And into all things from her air inspired
The spirit of love and amorous delight.

III. THE CHARACTER OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE (VS. 24-25)

A Divine pronouncement over the first couple is made by God Almighty. We know that it was God who spoke these words from the Lord Jesus' reference to them when responding to the divorce question. "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them*

⁵ M.R. DeHaan, *Portraits of Christ in Genesis*, Zondervan Michigan, 1966, p. 33.

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at the beginning made them male and female, **And said**, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Matt. 19:4-6) This Divine Utterance forms the bedrock of Christian marriage and is quoted by both Christ and the Apostles in the New Testament. There are some key pillars to marriage in the Divine declaration. There is:

A. A Separation – ‘leave’ (Vs. 24a)

1. God’s design is that marriage establish a new family unit under the leadership of the husband. There is no set rule in the Scriptures as to the ideal age for marriage but what is clearly implied is that a couple needs to be of sufficient maturity to be able to stand independently on their own.
2. There is an adjustment that takes place in the child-parent relationship when one is married. While honouring one’s parents is a lifelong duty, a child is no longer under their parents’ authority once they are married. They have the liberty to make their own decisions before the Lord as a separate family unit. Parents may offer council to their married children but it should always be remembered that it is council and not commands. A couple is not under any obligation to submit to their parents’ wishes once they are married. Beware of the “interferer in law” model that sometimes damages good marriages.

B. A Consummation – ‘cleave’ (Vs. 24b-25)

1. The principle of a ceremony and a covenant (vows) preceding the consummation of the marriage bed is also established in the Scriptures. A physical relationship alone does not constitute marriage otherwise there would be no such thing as fornication and adultery.
 - a. The principle of a formal ceremony is found right here in Genesis. We have God bringing the man and woman together and the making a formal pronouncement over the couple.
 - b. The principle of a covenant is also found in the Scriptures. According to Malachi 2:14, a wife is a man’s ‘companion’ and “the wife of his covenant”. According to Proverbs 2:17, the strange woman has forgotten “the covenant of her God”.
2. God’s intent is that the marriage be consummated in the one flesh union of the newly married husband and wife. This is the ONLY appropriate context for intimacy between a man and a woman. The word ‘cleave’ means “to stick like glue”. In fact, this is the word from which the modern Hebrew word for glue is derived.⁶ Sexual intercourse was created and ordained by God for the marriage union before the fall and fell under the banner of the all-encompassing endorsement of the Almighty – “behold, it was very good” (1:31).
3. The Mathematics of Marriage is $1 + 1 = 1$. This refutes the unscriptural marriage models often seen such as:

⁶ Sarfati, p.

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- a. The suppression model which looks something like this: 1 (Husband) + 1 (Wife) = 1. This often the case in pagan and non-Christian cultures. Marriage under early Roman law conformed to this model. C.L. Brace, in his book *Gesta Christi*, writes; “As a wife, the husband had, under old Roman law, power of life and death over her, and absolute control of her property. When she passed *in manum* – into the power – of her husband, she became not his equal, but his adopted daughter or ward. The law considered her as a sister of her own children; all her property became that of her husband; all her earnings were his. Like children and slaves, she was not, while *in manu*, a person in her own right.”
- b. The Partition model which looks something like this: 1 + 1 = 1. In this model of marriage there is a great degree of separation between the parties. She has her friends, he has his friends, she has her bank account and he has his bank account. There is only a very shallow interface between them, and multiple divorces and break-ups are the result. This was the model of later Roman times as C.L. Brace again notes, “But side by side with the ancient marriage, sprang up another form, of 'Free marriage,' - a re-action from the former and in the interest of the woman, as that had been entirely in favour of the man.... Under it the children were submitted to the 'paternal power,' and the woman lived with her husband, but she possessed her own property, worshipped her own gods, and was still connected with her own family. There was, under this form, entire separation of property between husband and wife, and they could even bring a civil action against one another in the courts... The 'Free marriage' naturally gave rise to the utmost freedom of divorce. Separation could be legally caused by either party, by a desire to divorce expressed in writing... Women made use of this even more than men... Seneca speaks of ' *quotidiana repudia*,' daily divorces, and in another well-known passage, of the illustrious and noble-born women who reckon their years not by the number of the consuls, but by that of their husbands... Even the calm philosophers, like Seneca, felt the deep depravity of the time. Woman he stigmatizes as a foolish, wild creature, unable to control her lusts.”⁷

C. A Summation – let’s consider a summary of what we learn about marriage from the Genesis account.

- 1. Marriage was instituted and designed by God.** It is not man’s institution to tamper with and adjust according to his sinful whims.
- 2. Marriage involves a distinction in roles for husband and wife.**
- 3. Marriage is the coming together of two distinct genders – a male and a female.**
- 4. Marriage is monogamous, the coming together of one man and one woman.** This rules out polygamy and polyandry.

⁷ C.L. Brace, *Gesta Christi*, Hodder & Stoughton London, p. 20-24

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5. **Marriage involves the establishment of a new, separate family unit.**
 6. **Marriage includes the making of a covenant together before God.**
 7. **Marriage is the consummation of two (the husband and wife) into one unit.**
 8. **Marriage was designed by God to be permanent, severable only by death.**
- D. A Refutation** – the truth of marriage in the Word of God exposes the perversions of man in this area. Luther wrote, “It is God’s order and institution that a man and woman should unite (in marriage) in a proper way, which Moses here indicates by saying that the Lord God, that is, God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, brought the woman to the man. Let us therefore learn from these words to defend marriage against the wicked blasphemies of those who revile it.”
1. The Perversion of Immorality (1 Cor. 6:9, 13-20; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3)
 - a. Fornication. This is still a sin in God’s eyes, despite the searing of the conscience of millions through sexualized media. Even the Pope in a recent interview went softly on this sin.⁸
 - b. Incest.
 - c. Prostitution. Intimacy is a sacred thing that is to be given freely within the context of a loving marriage bond. It is not something to be bought and sold.
 2. The Perversion of Pornography (Matt. 5:27-28). This sin falls under the category of fornication as the word pornography is derived from the Greek word ‘porneia’.
 3. The Perversion of Polygamy. While there are cases of polygamy recorded in the Scriptures, they were never blessed of God. The accounts themselves bear testament to the fact this was not God’s design for marriage. Heartache and strife characterized the polygamous unions in the Bible.
 4. The Perversion of Adultery (Ex. 20:14).
 5. The Perversion of Sodomy (Lev. 18:22; 1 Cor. 6:9).
 6. The Perversion of Transgenderism.
 7. The Perversion of Bestiality (Lev. 18:23).

Conclusion:

1. **To the married:** Make sure you fight for your marriage and stay true to God’s model for it. Have you embraced the Biblical roles for husband and wife in your marriage or is your mind still full of unbiblical ideas and philosophies?
2. **To the single:** Resolve to wait on God and do things His way in relation to a spouse. Seek God’s choice for you. If marriage evades you, use your single state to serve God passionately. Focus on your relationship to your heavenly husband, Christ.

⁸ The Australian Newspaper, <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/world/the-times/vatican-city-dont-sweat-about-sins-of-the-flesh-says-pope/news-story/1ffb49e80e871794dd095bbe0132c23d> - Viewed 10.12.21.

The Darkest Day in History

The Origin of Sin

Text: Gen. 3:1-10

Introduction:

1. There are different claims as to which day was the darkest in human history or the darkest for a particular nation. For example:
 - a. Winston Churchill, in his “finest hour” speech on the 16th of June 1940, described the collapse of France following the German invasion as “the darkest hour in French history”.
 - b. The battle of the Somme River, 1st July 1916, has been described as the darkest day in British military history when within 12 hours, 19,240 British soldiers were killed in about a 25 square mile area.
 - c. The battles of Fromelles and Pozieres in World War 1 have been called Australia’s darkest day when in a single night our young nation suffered 5,533 casualties – 1,917 died, 3,146 were wounded and 470 were taken prisoner. The Australian toll at Fromelles was equivalent to the total Australian casualties in the Boer War, Korean War and Vietnam War put together.
2. In reality, the darkest day in human history is recorded here in Genesis 3 where we have the Divine record of the Fall of Man. Jonathan Sarfati writes, “Genesis 3 is the most tragic chapter in the whole Bible. Here all the horrors of the world began: death, disease, suffering pain – and worst of all, sin, the progenitor of all these.”¹
3. If there is no literal fall as described in this passage, then the rest of the Bible makes no sense and the cross of Christ becomes meaningless. Wiersbe writes, “If Genesis 3 is a myth/fable then the Christian faith is built upon fables, not fact, and Jesus suffered needlessly on the cross.”² The New Testament writers clearly believed in a literal fall (e.g., Christ & the Apostles).
4. In this message we will study the fall of man in its three phases:

I. THE TEMPTATION (VS. 1-5)

A. The Deceiver (Vs. 1a)

1. His History – the devil appears abruptly on the scene in Genesis so we might pause to consider for a moment how he came to be in the garden. Somewhere between God’s pronouncement that everything He had made was “very good” and the entrance of Satan into the garden, Satan had fallen.
 - a. The Creation of Lucifer – not specifically stated in Creation week but must have been made at some point during creation week (Ex. 20:11; Job 38:7; Col. 1:16).
 - b. The Fall of Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:13-15; Luke 10:18). There was a fall in the higher spiritual world before there was a fall in the lower earthly world.
2. His Identity – ‘serpent’

¹ J Sarfati, *The Genesis Account: Commentary on Genesis 1-11*, p. 341.

² W Wiersbe, *Be Basic: Commentary on Genesis 1-11*, p. 67.

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- a. Satan is a Deceiver – ‘serpent’.
 - i. Rev. 12:9 “And the great dragon was cast out, that old **serpent**, called the Devil, and Satan, which **deceiveth the whole world**: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”
 - ii. 2 Cor. 11:3 “But I fear, lest by any means, as **the serpent** beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”
 - b. Satan is a Counterfeiter – “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14).
 - c. Satan is Liar – “he is a liar, and the father of it” (John 8:44).
 - d. Satan is a Murderer – “murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44).
3. His Subtilty – “more subtil than any beast”. Satan employs a subtle disguise, making use of a literal snake which was naturally shrewder and wiser than any other land animals God had made. The Hebrew word for ‘serpent’ literally means “shining one”. The word is similar to the Hebrew word for bronze so evidently the original serpent was a very beautiful, dazzling creature. Appears from the curse in verse 14 that initially the serpent carried itself in a more erect manner. Satan is a master of disguise, a master of veiling his true character (2 Cor. 11:14).

B. The Deception (Vs. 1b-5)

Look at how the devil works on Eve to get her to disobey God. The method he used in the beginning he is still using today so beware of his tactics!

1. He casts doubt upon the Word of God (Vs. 1b-3)
 - a. The devil’s Question (Vs. 1b)
 - i. “Yea, hath God said” = the very first recorded words of the devil in the Bible. According to Keil and Delitzsch, there is a tone of surprise in the Hebrew.
 - ii. Satan came with a ‘yea’ (yes) but then quickly added “hath God said?” This is how sin approaches. “Yes...but is that what the Word really means?” “Yes...but aren’t you taking this in a too literal sense; perhaps God didn’t quite mean what He said?” From the beginning Satan’s attack has been on the Word of God. The Word of God was protection for Adam and Eve. So long as they lived within the boundaries of God’s Word, they would be safe and secure from sin and sin’s consequences, living in the bliss of innocence and unbroken fellowship with God. Satan knew that before he could lure man into sin, he had to first topple their confidence in the Word of God.
 - iii. Note: We still hear the whisper of Satan “hath God said” today with the attack of modernists, liberals and many neo-evangelicals upon the historicity of Genesis. To cast doubt upon God’s Word is to do the work of the devil! We also see Satan’s continuing attack against the Word of God with the modern versions (perversions) of the Bible which all sow doubt and confusion upon the Word of God.

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- iv. “ye shall not eat of every tree” = Satan’s question had the effect of making Eve focus on the one prohibition God had put in place. This is Satan’s way. He tempts you to focus on what God has forbidden rather than on His overwhelming goodness, provisions and blessings He has made available to us.
- b. The Woman’s Reaction (Vs. 2-3).
The devil’s method clearly impacts Eve as she:
 - i. Subtracts from God’s Word – she omits the word ‘freely’, thus minimizing God’s goodness. Un-thankfulness is a precondition for temptation, the fertile soil in which sin grows. Satan cannot penetrate into a heart filled with gratitude to God (Rom. 1:21).
 - ii. Adds to God’s Word – she adds the words “neither shall ye touch it”, thus magnifying God’s restriction on them and making it seem harsher than it actually was.
 - iii. She made God appear less generous and more demanding than He really was. It is always dangerous to alter God’s Word by deletion (e.g., modern liberals and textual critics) or by addition (e.g., modern cultists and charismatics). God can always be trusted to say exactly what He means!
- 2. He denies the Word of God (Vs. 4).
 - a. The devil now moves from doubt to denial. Once you begin doubting God’s Word, it is only a matter of time before you begin denying God’s Word.
 - b. It is interesting that the first doctrine the devil denied concerned God’s promised judgment upon sin and disobedience. Essentially the devil was saying “God won’t judge you for this!” The same lie abounds today, deceiving multitudes into believing that God will never administer justice for their sins. Satan promised the exact opposite to God. God said they would die the day they ate the fruit, Satan promised that not only would they not die, they would actually become gods!
- 3. He defames the Goodness of God (Vs. 5a).
 - a. Having questioned the Word of God, the devil now questions the goodness of God, insinuating that God was selfishly withholding something good from them.
 - b. This is the deceitfulness of temptation. We suspect that God is withholding something good from us. Remember that God does not withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly! (Psalm 84:11).
- 4. He declares his own lie (Vs. 5b)
 - c. Do you discern the sequence? Having effectively removed Eve’s foundation on the Word of God, he now substitutes the truth with a lie.
 - d. The devil’s promise to Eve was a deceptive mix of truth and error. This is how Satan works, he mixes truth and error

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together. Leupold writes, "As in all temptations, the devil's beguilements are an inextricable tangle of truth and falsehood."³

- i. The Truth – "your eyes shall be opened". This was true and happened just as he promised (See Vs. 7a) but their eyes were not opened in a positive way as he implied. That they would become knowledgeable of both good and evil was also true but "Satan left out the material part of the truth, that they should know good, without the power to do it; and that they should know evil, without the power to avoid it."⁴
- ii. The Lie – "ye shall be as gods". Satan's aspiration to "be like the most high" was what led to him being cast out of heaven (Is. 14:13-14). He now promises Eve the same status which he knew himself he could never attain. In effect, once you reject God's Word, you are really setting yourself up as god to decide for yourself the standards of truth and righteousness.

II. THE TRANSGRESSION (VS. 6-7)

A. The Course of the Transgression (Vs. 6a)

Genesis chapter 3 is the most tragic chapter in the Bible and verse 6 is the most tragic verse. There is a sequence from temptation to transgression. James 1:15 expresses it this way, "Then when lust hath **conceived**, it **bringeth forth sin**: and sin, when it is finished, **bringeth forth death**." The union of lust and the will brings about sins conception which is then birthed in sinful actions. Look at the three-fold allurements of sin in the verse (see 1 John 2:16):

1. The lust of the flesh – "good for food". Temptation appeals to the bodily appetites. The bodily appetites themselves are good and God-given if exercised in the way God intended. The world, the flesh and the devil tempt us to use bodily appetites independent from God's commands and hence in a sinful way. Take the God given drive for procreation as an example. God's Word says that within the context of marriage, it is good, right and pure. Heb. 13:4 "Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." The devil tells you, "Don't worry about marriage, just go ahead and do it!"
2. The lust of the eyes – "pleasant to the eyes". Temptation appeals to the emotions. Don't underestimate the power of images upon the heart and mind. The world and the devil have a way of making sin look so beautiful, attractive and desirable.
3. The pride of life – "desired to make one wise". Temptation appeals to the mind and the spirit. It promises prestige, success and position but in reality, it delivers defeat and shame.
4. Note: Satan used the same three-pronged attack against our Lord and He defeated each one with the Words, "It is written". We need to learn to fight temptation with the Sword of the Spirit.

³ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, p. 151.

⁴ C.H. Mackintosh, *Notes on the Book of Genesis*, p. 44.

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B. The Consequences of the Transgression (Vs. 6b-7)

The saddest moment in human history now occurs as Eve, having been deceived by the devil, reaches out her hand and picks the forbidden fruit and takes the first bite. The consequences flowed in rapid succession, plunging our first parents into the darkness and depravity of sin. The history of the human family has been one sad story of sin's destructive influence ever since. Look at the flow on effects of Eve's sin:

1. Sin Defiled her Husband (Vs. 6b)
 - a. We do not know what transpired between Adam and Eve that lead to his taking the fruit but we do know he was influenced by her words from what God said to Adam in verse 17 – “And unto Adam he said, Because thou **hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife**, and hast eaten of the tree...” Eve used her influence as a wife to lead her husband into sin. Ladies, never underestimate the tremendous power you have to influence for good or evil.
 - b. Your sin always affects others. Achan is an illustration of this (Josh. 7:24-25). Joshua 22:20 “Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on all the congregation of Israel? and **that man perished not alone in his iniquity.**”
 - c. There was a very important difference between Adam and Eve's transgression that the Bible notes. There was an element of deception with Eve whereas with Adam there was not. He made a full, rational and conscious decision to disobey God. 1 Tim. 2:14 “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.”
 - d. Consequently, the responsibility for plunging the human race into sin is attributed to Adam, not Eve. Adam sinned as head of the human race. As our federal head and representative, we sinned in Adam and the sin nature has been passed down ever since.
 - i. Romans 5:12 “Wherefore, as by **one man** sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”
 - ii. 1 Cor. 15:22 “For **as in Adam all die**, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”
2. Sin Defiled their Hearts (Vs. 7)
 - a. Their shame (Vs. 7a). Their eyes were opened and they began to see things in a different way. Whereas before, they were “naked...and not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25) now they are ashamed of their nakedness. Before they were totally innocent with no knowledge of sin, now they become aware of their sinful potential. Sin takes the blush from the cheeks. Jeremiah 6:15 “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? **Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush:** therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.”
 - b. Their vain solution (Vs. 7b)

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- i. The “fig leaves” symbolize man’s works, his own attempt to make himself acceptable in the sight of God. But they were totally insufficient to cover man’s sin. Man had the power to go into sin, but he had no power to get himself out of it.
- ii. Isaiah 64:6 “...But we are all as an unclean thing, and **all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;**”
- iii. Question: What are some of the leaves you have sown into your apron of self-righteousness? Church attendance, prayers, Bible reading, religion, penance, baptism, a quick prayer without true sorrow for sin and repentance?

III. THE SEPARATION (VS. 8-10)

A. Man Cowered from God’s Presence (vs. 8, 10)

1. “walking in the garden = appears that this was an established time of regular, daily fellowship Adam and Eve had with their Creator. This is what we call a Christophany, a preincarnate appearance of the Second Person of the Godhead. God clothed Himself in human form to communicate with those whom He had created in His own image. Before sin entered, mankind enjoyed unbroken fellowship with His Maker. But now sin had disrupted this union and man was separated from his Maker.
2. “cool of the day” = mid-afternoon or early evening.
3. Note: The essence of death is separation. Adam and Eve died spiritually the very day they sinned – they were separated from God. While they did not die physically the very same day, the process of physical decay began from that moment that would eventually lead to their death.

B. God Called them into His Presence (Vs. 9)

The account that follows man’s sin, while in no way making light of sin, is full of God’s grace and mercy towards sinners. Consider three acts of God’s grace to restore estranged sinners to Himself:

1. The Plea of a Seeking God (Vs. 9)
 - a. Man in his natural state does not seek after God: Psalm 10:4 “The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, **will not seek after God**: God is not in all his thoughts.”
 - b. God seeks the sinner: Luke 19:10 “For the Son of man is come **to seek and to save** that which was lost.” The question “Where art thou” proved two things – that man was lost and that God had come to seek. It proved man’s sin and God’s grace.⁵
2. The Promise of a coming Saviour (Vs. 15)
 - a. This has been appropriately called the dawn of world redemption and is the first promise of the Messiah who would come.
 - b. What mercy and grace that God Himself would come to be our Saviour!
3. The Provision of a bleeding Substitute (Vs. 21)

⁵ Ibid p. 47.

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- a. This is the first time there is the death of the innocent for the guilty and is the first picture of the substitutionary death of Christ which was to come.
- b. The garment of fig leaves was insufficient to cover man's sin. They needed a covering provided by God. This is a picture of imputed righteousness. The filthy, tattered garment of our own righteousness will never make us fit to stand in God's presence. We need the seamless, perfect robe of God's righteousness. It cannot be earned; it must be received as a gift by faith.
- c. Isaiah 61:10 "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with **the garments of salvation**, he hath covered me with the **robe of righteousness**, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels."

Conclusion:

1. Where are you dear sinner? Will you exchange your filthy rags for Christ's robe of righteousness today?
2. Where are you dear saint? Are you falling into the trap of the devil as a Christian?

Paradise Lost

Text: Gen. 3:9-24

Introduction:

1. In this section we continue with the chapter on the fall of man. We see God's justice at work in dealing with sinful man but at the same time, His grace shines through the darkness of the hour as God makes the way possible for mankind's reconciliation with Himself.
2. We will note the curse that came upon the cosmos which will help us to make better sense of the suffering we see in Creation.
3. For this study, we will divide the text under four headings.

I. THE EXAMINATION (VS. 9-13)

The first trial in human history is conducted by God Almighty. Note how God deals with sinners to bring them to a realization of their sinfulness. God only asks questions, four in total. God knows all things so the purpose in the questioning was not for information but to seek to bring his estranged children to a place of confession.

A. God Questions Adam (Vs. 9-12)

1. Where are you?
 - a. This question highlights the spiritual death that had occurred. Adam and Eve were now separated from God because of their sin. In this respect, they died the very day they ate the fruit. The process of physical death also commenced this day that would lead to their eventual death.
 - b. Man has been a fugitive ever since:

*I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes, I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.* (Francis Thompson)
 - c. Illustration: If a branch is chopped off a tree and it falls onto hard concrete, one can say that it's already dead, cut off from the source of life. But the process of physical death takes some time – the cells in the leaves will continue to photosynthesize for several hours at least. Similarly, when Adam sinned, he immediately cut himself off from the Source of life, but the dying process took 930 years.¹
 - d. Leupold puts it this way, "For a fact, after the commission of sin man at once stepped upon the road of death."
2. Who told you? God does not wait for man to answer this question but immediately follows it up with the next question.

¹ Illustration from Peter Sparrow (Creation Bus Ministry Australia), cited by Sarfati, p. 320.

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3. What have you done?
 - a. God asks Adam plainly if he has broken His law. It is instructive to note that God does not ask any “why” questions. A “why” question can tend towards providing the guilty an opportunity to excuse his transgression.
 - b. Adam’s response is to try and shift the blame for his transgression. This is a feature of the fallen nature of man. He usually will not admit to his wrong to begin with but will rather seek to pass the buck to someone else. We see this aspect of man’s depraved nature on full display in our “victim culture” today where everyone is a victim and not responsible for his/her actions.
 - i. Adam blames God – “the woman whom **thou** gavest to be with me”. This amounts to an accusation of God Himself. How many people today still point the finger at God and try to blame Him for what they have done.
 - ii. Adam blames Eve – “**the woman**...she gave me of the tree”. Some men are always trying to hide behind their wives rather than take responsibility!
 - iii. Illustration: Saul is another example of someone who tried to blame others rather than confess his own guilt. 1 Samuel 15:15 “And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for **the people spared** the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed.”

B. God Questions Eve (Vs. 13)

1. The question (Vs. 13a). Again, the Lord asks a “what” rather than a “why” question.
2. The response (Vs. 13b). Like Adam, Eve seeks to shift the blame rather than offer an unqualified confession of her sin. Unlike Adam, she does not seek to implicate the Creator. There was also an element of truth that she was deceived. Nonetheless, the confession was insufficient and did not go far enough.

II. THE CONDEMNATION (VS. 14-19)

God Almighty now passes sentence on each person involved in the fall, following the same chronological order in which the participants were involved in the fall (Serpent – Woman – Man).

A. The Curse upon the Serpent (Vs. 14-15)

1. The penalty upon the literal serpent (Vs. 14)
 - a. The degree of the curse (Vs. 14a)
 - i. It is important to recognize that the curse did not just fall upon the serpent but upon all the creation. Romans 8:22 “For we know that **the whole creation groaneth and travaileth** in pain together until now.”
 - ii. The serpent was cursed “above” the other creatures because of its role in the fall.
 - b. The details of the curse (Vs. 14b)

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- i. The snake's locomotion – “upon thy belly shalt thou go”. This possibly indicates that the snake originally moved in a more erect posture.
 - ii. The snake's humiliation – “dust shalt thou eat”. This does not mean that the snake's food would be dust but it does mean it would be in that position of humiliation in the dust. It is also true that the snake uses its tongue to help it smell. Jonathan Sarfati explains, “In the roof of a snake's mouth there is an organ called the *vomer nasal organ* (VNO) or *Jacobson's Organ*. Like the sense of smell, it is a system designed to detect many different kinds of chemicals. But the VNO specializes in non-volatile chemicals, so requires direct physical contact. The snake achieves this with its forked and constantly flicking tongue. This picks up dust on the points of the fork, then carries the samples to the matching pair of sensory organs inside the mouth.”²
2. The penalty upon the Satanic Serpent (Vs. 15)
- The focus now clearly shifts to Satan, the personage behind the serpent. This verse has been called the protoevangelium, that first Gospel proclamation in the Bible. The verse also predicts the conflict of the ages between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman. There would be a conflict in two senses:
- a. A conflict in a general sense (Vs. 15a)
 - i. ‘enmity’ = hostility. This hostility is God's doing – “I will put enmity”. This verse speaks of the unrelenting war of this age – the war between Christ and Satan.
 - ii. “thee and the woman” = significant that the serpent overcame the woman, but it would be the woman's seed that would overcome the serpent.
 - iii. “between thy seed and her seed” = the conflict would polarize the souls of men – the seed of the woman against the seed of the serpent.
 - iv. Note: It is most significant that the reference is not to the seed of the man but to the seed of the woman. Usually, the seed is attributed to the male in the Scriptures. In fact, it is the biblical norm to trace genealogies through the fathers (e.g., Gen. 5, 11; 1 Chr. 1-9; Matt. 1:1-17; Lk. 3:23-38). The prophecy clearly points to the miraculous conception and virgin birth of Christ. Isaiah 7:14
“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, **a virgin shall conceive**, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”
 - v. “The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin of her substance: so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the

² J Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, p. 362.

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Godhead and the manhood, were joined together in one Person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man.”³

- b. A conflict in a specific sense Vs. 15b)
 - i. The conflict would culminate in a show down between the woman’s seed (Messiah) and Satan. The Messiah would be wounded in the conflict but the serpent would be dealt a mortal blow to the head from which he would never recover. This took place at the cross. Christ was pierced through His feet, wounding his heels as this verse predicted but as He died, He triumphed over Satan and crushed his head. The final defeat of Satan is yet future (Rev. 20:10) but it is guaranteed because of Christ’s finished work on the cross.
 - ii. Col. 2:15 “*And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, **triumphing over them in it.**”

B. The Curse upon the Woman (Vs. 16)

She would experience:

- 1. Sorrow in Motherhood (Vs. 16a)
 - a. The curse is not multiple conceptions as some of the family banning people would like to argue as the testimony of the rest of Scripture is clear that children are a blessing from God. The curse is that the process would be beset with pain, especially in the birthing process.
 - b. Mary Kassian, in her book “Women, Creation and the Fall” discusses the pain experienced by women in childbirth. “Childbirth is painful. I had read about it and believed it before the birth of my first child, yet nothing could have prepared me for the intense agony of labour. Labour pain is simply inexplicable to one who has not experienced it. Dr. Ronald Melzack, a leading expert in the field of pain, has recently completed research on the intensity of labour pain. He found, that on average, labour pain ranks amongst the severest. According to his study, it may be exceeded only by the suffering of some terminal cancer patients and often is worse than having the finger amputated without anaesthetic.”⁴
- 2. Struggle in Marriage (Vs. 16b)
 - a. Again, this verse is not teaching that male headship was a result of the fall. We have already seen from the creation order that God ordained for the husband to take a leadership role.
 - b. However, after the fall, there would be a tendency for the man, without God, to become harsh and suppressive towards the woman. The woman would be more vulnerable to suffering, because she has the greater natural affection for the man, than the man does for the woman.

³ The Thirty-Nine Articles, excerpt from Article 2.

⁴ Cited by Jonathan Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, p. 368.

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- c. It is only the Gospel, salvation and submission to God's model for marriage as outlined in passages such as Ephesians 5 that provides a solution to this problem. The proper treatment of women is something that is only found where a culture has been deeply influenced by the Word of God.

C. The Curse upon the Man (Vs. 17-19)

1. He would battle with the ground (Vs. 17-19a)
 - a. Growing food from the ground would involve hard labor. Sweat speaks of the intense struggle against a hostile environment. He would no longer be able to just eat from plants growing naturally but would need to farm, growing crops for his sustenance.
 - b. Growing food from the ground would involve obstacles (thorns and thistles).
 - c. Significantly, the text says that the ground was cursed "for thy sake". In a sinful world, hard work would be good for the man. This is true. A decent work routine has a way of keeping even an unsaved individual out of trouble. It is no coincidence that the suburbs with the highest crime rates are usually the suburbs with the highest concentration of unemployed. In this fallen world, it is God's will for a man to work and work hard!
2. He would be buried in the ground (Vs. 19b). Eventually he would succumb to death and be buried in the very ground with which he had struggled his entire life. This verse again reinforces the truth that death came after man sinned and not before. There would be no point to the punishment if death was already in existence.
3. Note: Consider Christ as the Son of Man and second Adam and what He suffered for our Redemption:⁵
 - a. Christ suffered the curse for us (Gal. 3:13).
 - b. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Is. 53:3).
 - c. He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears (Heb. 5:7).
 - d. His sweat was as great drops of blood (Lk. 22:44).
 - e. He was wounded, bruised and chastised for us (Is. 53:5).
 - f. He bore a crown of thorns, the very symbol of the curse upon His brow (Matt. 27:29; Mk. 15:17; Jn. 19:2, 5).
 - g. He died an actual death (Ps. 22:15; Rom. 5:8).

III. THE PROVISION (VS. 20-21)

A. A New Beginning (Vs. 20)

1. Adam originally called his wife "Woman" (Gen. 2:23). He now calls her 'Eve' which means life giver. This shows a wonderful reconciliation between them that only true repentance and faith in God could accomplish. It appears that Adam believed in the promise of God concerning the coming seed who would bring salvation.
2. Eve is called the "mother of all living". In other words, this means that all human beings trace back to this first human couple. Interestingly, modern DNA discovery confirms that all people

⁵ Adapted from Henry Morris' commentary "The Genesis Record".

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originate from a common ancestor. Sarfati explains, “Most of the DNA we inherit from our parents comes from the nucleus. But the ‘powerhouse’ organelles of our cells, the mitochondria, have their own limited set of DNA. This DNA is generally inherited only through the mother’s line, because it seems that the sperm cells can’t pass it on, although there is some debate about this. In the 1980s, geneticists analyzed mitochondrial DNA from all around the world. They came to a startling discovery (for evolutionists): the similarities indicate that all people on earth are descended from a single human female. Even evolutionists have called her ‘Mitochondrial Eve’... Evolutionists claimed that they had clear proof against the biblical account, because ‘Mitochondrial Eve’ supposedly lived about 200,000 years ago. However, recent evidence shows that mitochondrial DNA mutates far faster than previously thought. If this new evidence is applied to ‘Mitochondrial Eve’, it indicates that she would have lived only 6,000-6,500 years ago. Of course, this is perfectly consistent with the biblically indicated age of the “mother of all living”, but an enigma for evolution/long age beliefs.”⁶

3. Interestingly, there is a parallel account with males: evidence from the Y-chromosome is consistent with all people being descended from a single man. He is referred to as ‘Y-chromosome Adam’.⁷

B. A New Covering (Vs. 21)

1. In response to their faith, God graciously provided a covering for their nakedness.
2. This is the first time there is the death of the innocent for the guilty and is the first picture of the substitutionary death of Christ which was to come. Perhaps Adam and Eve witnessed the shedding of blood to provide the coats of skin for them.
3. The garment of fig leaves was insufficient to cover man’s sin. They needed a covering provided by God. This is a picture of imputed righteousness. The filthy, tattered garment of our own righteousness will never make us fit to stand in God’s presence. We need the seamless, perfect robe of God’s righteousness. It cannot be earned; it must be received as a gift by faith.
4. Isaiah 61:10 “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with **the garments of salvation**, he hath covered me with the **robe of righteousness**, as a bridegroom decketh *himself* with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth *herself* with her jewels.”
5. Fruchtenbaum writes, “Physically, He clothed their nakedness, but spiritually, He also covered their sin by making for them their first atonement. The lessons to be drawn from this verse are as follows. First, to approach God, one must have a proper covering. Second, the man-made covering was not acceptable. Third, God Himself must provide the covering. Fourth, the proper covering required the

⁶ Sarfati, p. 385.

⁷ Ibid, p. 386.

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shedding of blood. Fifth, God's grace provided for them, for the covering was given before the actual expulsion from Eden."⁸

6. Note: This verse also teaches the practical truth that in a fallen world, it is God's will for us to be modestly covered. Clothing for sinful mankind was God's idea! A culture of nakedness and immodesty is not a sign of a progressive but a degenerate culture. Let's keep the necklines up and the hemlines down!

IV. THE EXPULSION (VS. 22-24)

A. Banished from the Garden (Vs. 22-24a)

1. There is another council within the Godhead recorded for our instruction and benefit. God would not allow sinful man to have access to the tree of life lest he live forever. A casual reading of this might leave us with the wrong impression that this was a cruel thing to do on God's part. But in reality, it was God's mercy not to allow sinners to live forever in their sinful condition! Also, the penalty of sin which is death had to be executed.
2. Evidently, the garden of Eden continued to exist for an unknown length of time after the departure of Adam and Eve, hence why they needed to be denied access to it.
3. Note: Since that day, mankind lost access to the tree of life. But for those who are saved, our access to it will be restored in the new Jerusalem (Rev. 22:2).

B. Barred from the Garden (Vs. 24b)

Two obstacles were put in place to bar Adam and Eve from the garden:

1. The Divine Personages. The Cherubim are a special class of angels associated with the throne and presence of God in the Bible (See Ps. 80:1; 99:1). Significantly, the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant was overshadowed by two golden representations of the cherubim. It was here that once a year the high priest sprinkled the blood on the Day of Atonement. Morris comments that "by analogy, it may well be that it was here, between the cherubim guarding the way to the tree of life, that God continued at intervals to meet with Adam and those of his descendants who desired to know Him."⁹
2. The Divine Presence. A flaming sword – this was not a sword in the hands of the Cherubim but a manifestation of the Shekinah glory of God in the shape of a sword. Leupold explains, "This is best taken as meaning a flame, swordlike in appearance and continually rotating or even, perhaps, moving zigzag like flashes of lightning; at any event, a sight effectually deterring man from attempting to enter, so effectually, no doubt, that he did not even venture to approach the garden from any other side."¹⁰
3. Note: It appears that God's manifest presence was maintained at the at the garden's entrance and was the likely place where offerings were brought.

⁸ Cited by Sarfati, p. 387.

⁹ H Morris, *The Genesis Record*, p. 132.

¹⁰ H C Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, p. 184.

Faith Vs. Works (Cain & Abel)

Text: Gen. 4:1-16

Introduction:

1. The period from the Fall to the Flood, has been commonly called *the age of conscience*. Sauer prefers to call it *the period of general Divine revelation*, because this describes God's method of communication to man before the Law was given at Sinai. This period commenced with one family (Adam's) and ended some 1600 or so years later with one family (Noah's).
2. Of all the sons and daughters that Adam begat in his 930 years (Gen. 5:3-4), the Bible focuses on three important men; Cain, Abel and Seth. The first section of the chapter (Vs. 1-16) focuses upon Adam and Eve's first two sons – Cain and Abel. They would become significant characters in the Bible. In the New Testament, Abel is referenced 4 times (Matt. 23:35; Lk. 11:51; Heb. 11:4, 12:24) and Cain 3 times (Heb. 11:4, 1 Jn. 3:12; Jude 1:11).
3. Conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman was predicted in Gen. 3:15 and we see that tragically play out within the very first family. Cain was of that wicked one, a child of the devil (1 John 3:12) but Abel was a child of God.
4. We also see two competing approaches to God that would continue down to the present time. The way of faith and the blood sacrifice versus the bloodless way of human works.
5. It is important to recognize that there was an appointed time ("in the process of time"), place ("an offering unto") and way (blood sacrifice) in which man was to approach God after the fall. Evidently Adam and Eve had taught their sons that God was to be approached by means of a blood sacrifice. After all, that pattern was established by God Himself who performed the first sacrifice in order to provide Adam and Eve with an acceptable covering (Gen. 3:21).

*We will trace the drama that unfolded between Cain and Abel under **3 points**. We observe that there are:*

I. **TWO OFFSPRING DESCRIBED (VS. 1-2)**

Adam and Eve's first two children are briefly described in these verses.

A. **The Birthing of the Two Boys (Vs. 1-2a)**

1. Eve conceives and bears Cain (Vs. 1)
 - a. The *naming* at his birth. The name 'Cain' means "gotten" and is closely related to the word 'gotten' used by Eve. It is like Eve said, "I will call him **gotten** because I have gotten him from the Lord." There is that echo in the Hebrew language. The practice of giving names to children associated with some specific event is also found multiple times in Genesis (E.g., Gen. 4:25, 5:29, 17:5, 41:51 etc.).
 - b. The *reaction* to his birth. Evidently Eve was a woman of faith as she viewed this son as being a gift from God. Little did she know then that this son of hers, the very first child to be born on earth by natural generation would break and shatter her maternal heart grievously. Her enthusiasm may indicate that she was

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hopeful that he was even the promised seed of Genesis 3:15. Whatever the case may be, Eve clearly knew the Lord and had faith in His promise of a coming Saviour. Luther writes, "Though Eve was mistaken in her hope, her words show that she was a pious woman who believed the promise of the coming salvation by the blessed Saviour."¹ Tragically, Cain would turn out to be a murderer, not the Messiah.

2. Eve conceives and bears Abel (Vs. 2a)
 - a. The name 'Abel' means 'vapor' or 'vanity'. The same word is used frequently in the Book of Ecclesiastes. For example, "**Vanity of vanities**, saith the Preacher, **vanity of vanities**; all is **vanity**." (Ecc. 1:2) This indicates that by the time Abel was born, Adam and Eve had come to terms in a greater way with the vanity of the world in which they lived under the curse.
 - b. As it would turn out, Abel's name would go down in biblical history with honor on account of His godliness and faith whereas Cain's would forever be shrouded in infamy and shame.

B. The Business (occupation) of the Two Boys (Vs. 2b)

No two siblings are alike in a family and that is demonstrated by the different occupations pursued by these two boys.

1. Abel became a Herdsman.
2. Cain became a Husbandman.
3. Note: There was nothing wrong with either of these occupations. The point of the passage is not to teach that Cain chose and ungodly occupation but rather to demonstrate that there was only one way to approach God and Cain willfully and knowingly rebelled against that way, choosing to pursue his own approach to God.

II. TWO OFFERINGS DEDICATED (VS. 3-7)

A. Abel's Offering of Faith (Vs. 4)

1. The Attributes of the Offering (Vs. 4a) Each feature of Abel's offering was a beautiful picture of Christ the Lamb who would come. Four words describe this offering:
 - a. **Spotless** – Abel gave of the "firstlings of his flock". The 'firstlings' were the first-born lambs. This means he gave the best of his flock picturing the perfection of the Lord Jesus who would be described in the New Testament as the "lamb without blemish and without spot." (1 Pet. 1:19).
 - b. **Suffering** – the innocent suffers on behalf of the guilty. 1 Peter 3:18, "For Christ also hath once **suffered** for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:" Isaiah 53:3-4 "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of **sorrows**, and **acquainted with grief**: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he is despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our **griefs**, and carried our **sorrows**: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

¹ Cited by Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, pp. 408-409.

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- c. **Substitute** – the innocent takes the place of the guilty. Jesus Christ took our place! Isaiah 53:5 “But he was **wounded for our transgressions**, *he was bruised for our iniquities*: the chastisement of **our peace** was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Romans 5:8 “But God commendeth his love **toward us**, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died **for us**.”
 - d. **Slain** – the blood of the innocent shed for the guilty. The blood is the only way back to God for guilty sinners. Lev. 17:11 “For **the life of the flesh is in the blood**: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for **it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul**.” Hebrews 9:22 “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and **without shedding of blood is no remission**.”
 - i. We are purchased by the blood (Acts 20:28).
 - ii. We are justified by the blood (Rom 5:9).
 - iii. We are redeemed by the blood (1 Pet. 1:18-19; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Rev. 5:9).
 - iv. We are forgiven by the blood (Eph 1:7, Col 1:14).
 - v. We are sprinkled with the blood (1 Pet. 1:2).
 - vi. We are washed in the blood (1 Jn. 1:7; Rev. 1:5; 7:14).
 - vii. We have remission through the blood (Matt. 26:28).
 - viii. We are made nigh by the blood (Eph. 2:13).
 - ix. We have eternal redemption by the blood (Heb. 9:12).
 - x. We have peace by the blood (Col 1:20).
 - xi. Praise God because of the blood, we are saved (Rom. 5:9)! As they hymn puts it so well, “Glory I’m saved!”
2. The Acceptance of the Offering (Vs. 4b)
- a. God accepted Abel – “the LORD had respect unto Abel”. The word ‘respect’ means “to gaze, regard with favor”. Why did God accept Abel? Because he came in faith by God’s appointed way, the way of the blood. If you come in faith by the way of the cross, you too will be forgiven and accepted by God.
 - b. God accepted Abel’s offering – “and to his offering”. God’s acceptance of Abel was inseparably linked to his offering of faith. The blood sacrifice formed the ground of his acceptance before God.
 - c. Heb. 11:4 “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, **by which he obtained witness that he was righteous**, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.”
 - d. C.H. Mackintosh writes, “In other words, he (Abel) entered, by faith, into the glorious truth, that God could be approached by sacrifice; that there was such a thing as a sinner’s placing the death of another between himself and the consequence of his sin, that the claims of God’s nature and the attributes of His character could be met by the blood of a spotless victim – a

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victim offered to meet God's demands, and the sinner's deep necessities."²

B. Cain's Offering of Works (Vs. 3, 5-7)

1. The Character of Cain's Offering (Vs. 3) Observe three features of Cain's offering:
 - a. It was **works-based** – Cain was a “tiller of the ground” and he brought “the fruit of the ground”, what He had produced through his own labour and efforts. No doubt the offering looked impressive from man's point of view but it would be found wanting by God.
 - b. It was **bloodless**. Cain rejected the way of the blood for the way of human works. He became the pioneer and founder of works-based religion which has dominated the world since then.
 - c. It was **manmade** – Cain evidently believed that man could make up his own way to come to God. Millions believe the lie that “all roads lead to heaven/God”. As Jude denounces false teachers in his fiery, one chapter Epistle, he describes them as having followed “the way of Cain”. Jude 1:11 “Woe unto them! for they have gone in **the way of Cain**, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.” Man's way is the way of death (Prov. 14:12; 16:25) but God's way of life is through Christ (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 16:31).
 - d. C.H. Mackintosh writes, “Cain has had many millions of followers, from age to age. Cain-worship has abounded all over the world. It is the worship of every unconverted soul, and is maintained by every false system of religion under the sun. **Man would fain make God a receiver instead of a giver.**”³
 - e. Note: Do not fall for the misconception that this was an unfair situation where two brothers innocently brought their offerings and Abel just happened to get the luck of the draw with the right offering and Cain didn't like some kind of lottery! God's merciful appeal to Cain plainly shows that Cain was making a rebellious choice to not bring the offering God required (See Vs. 6-7).
2. The Rejection of Cain's Offering (Vs. 5)
 - a. God rejected Cain's works-based approach to Him, revealing His Eternal Mind and Character on the matter. God will never reconcile guilty sinners to Himself on the basis of works (Rom. 11:6; Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5). God's Word is clear, “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22).
 - b. Cain responded with wrath towards God rather than repentance. This inner anger manifested itself on Cain's countenance – “and his countenance fell”. The word ‘wrath’ has the idea of “to kindle, to burn hot”. Cain boiled with rage against God's rejection of his works. Man in his natural, sinful state revolts against the cross of Christ as the only way of salvation.
3. The Appeal after Cain's Offering (Vs. 6-7)
 - a. God reasons with Cain (Vs. 6-7a)

² C.H. Mackintosh, *Notes on the Book of Genesis*, p. 61.

³ C.H. Mackintosh, p. 60.

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- i. Despite Cain's rebellious response, God still offers mercy, an opportunity for Cain to submit to God's way of salvation. The first two questions God asked were rhetorical and required no answer. They were "designed to show Cain that he had no cause to be angry at God; rather, God had every cause to be angry at Cain, but was still merciful."⁴
 - ii. "if thou doest well" = a clear reference to the need to bring the right offering.
 - iii. "shalt not thou be accepted" = God would accept Cain just as He had accepted Abel. The ground of acceptance was not anything in the individuals. It was all contingent upon the right sacrifice.
 - iv. "And unto thee shall be his desire..." (Vs. 7b) = if Cain chose the right way, he would be included in the godly line that would eventually lead to the Messiah and would maintain his position as firstborn in the family with a measure of authority over Abel.
- b. God warns Cain (Vs. 7b)
- i. God adds a note of warning to His compassionate appeal – "sin lieth at the door". This is the first time the word 'sin' occurs in the Bible and it has the basic meaning of "to miss the mark". Sin is pictured as a ferocious beast, lying outside the door, ready to pounce on the unsuspecting victim. The same imagery is used in Gen. 49:9 – "couched as a lion". Leupold writes, "Sin has become a menacing threat. It is likened to a wild beast crouching at the door. And as promptly as such a beast immediately at hand would seize a man going out at the door, so promptly will sin leap upon one and hurt him."⁵
 - ii. The warning is clear. Cain is in a very dangerous position. He stands on a knife edge between restoration or destruction. As it turned out, sin did pounce on Cain due to his refusal to repent and he murdered his own brother.

III. TWO OUTCOMES DETAILED (VS. 8-16)

A. The Persecution of godly Abel (Vs. 8)

1. Abel's Message to Cain (Vs. 8a)
 - a. The details of Cain and Abel's conversation is not recorded but we have cause to believe that Abel reasoned his brother as the New Testament references Abel as the first prophet. At its heart, a prophet is one who speaks God's Word to others. Abel not only believed in God's appointed way through the blood sacrifice but was also a proclaimer of this truth.
 - b. Luke 11:50-51 "That **the blood of all the prophets**, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this

⁴ Sarfati, p. 414.

⁵ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, p. 201.

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generation; From **the blood of Abel** unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.” (See also Matt. 23:34-35).

2. Abel's Murder by Cain (Vs. 8b)
 - a. The location of the murder – “when they were in the field”.
 - b. The reason for the murder. The New Testament provides the answer in 1 John 3:12, “Not as **Cain**, *who* was of that wicked one, and **slew his brother**. And wherefore slew he him? **Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.**” Cain killed Abel because he was convicted and exposed by his life and lips. Cain's anger and hatred lead to murder. Anger and hatred is the attitude and emotion of murder.
 - c. Note: History has been soaked with the blood of the martyrs since then. True believers have been subjected to vicious attack by the followers of the “way of Cain”. Works based religion has always been a violent persecutor of the way of faith. From Roman colosseums to Roman Catholic inquisitions, those who have followed in Abel's footsteps have been slaughtered.

B. The Expulsion of ungodly Cain (Vs. 9-16)

God now cross examines Cain and gives him Divine justice. Notice the steps:

1. Cain is Examined (Vs. 9-10)
 - a. Where is Abel? Cain responds with the first outright human lie in the Bible.
 - b. What have you done? God cuts through Cain's charade and provides evidence of his crime. God could hear the voice of Abel's blood, crying to Him from the ground. Lev. 17:11 reminds us that “the life of the flesh is in the blood”. The blood speaks to God.
 - i. The blood of martyred Abel spoke to God. The death of the saints is precious in God's sight (Ps. 116:15).
 - ii. The blood of Christ speaks to God. Hebrews 12:24 “And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and **to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.**” Praise God the blood of Christ speaks for me before the throne of God. It tells me I am forgiven and made righteous in Christ, pleading the mercy of God for me. It dispels the lies and accusations of the devil, declaring my sin record cleansed. It shields me from wrath and judgment, covering all my sin.
2. Cain is Sentenced (Vs. 11-12)

Cain is condemned to:

 - a. A life of hardship (Vs. 11-12a). Up until this point, Cain had been successful as an agriculturalist, now the ground would no longer yield a good crop for Cain. He would have to work harder than others just to survive. Because he spilt the blood of righteous Abel on the ground, it would no longer produce food for Cain.
 - b. A life of a fugitive (Vs. 12b). This is a secondary consequence from the first. As he would not be able to eke out a sufficient

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subsistence in one place, he would be condemned to the life of a desolate nomad, seeking to survive by moving about from place to place. Regarding the two words 'vagabond' and 'fugitive' Wiersbe explains them as follows: "A vagabond has no home and a fugitive is running from home."

3. Cain is Marked (Vs. 13-15)
 - a. Cain responds with remorse (Vs. 13-14). Cain is not repentant over his sin but is merely sorry about the consequences of his sin. He recognizes the severity of punishment in four ways:⁶
 - i. "driven...from the face of the earth" – Cain knows he has now lost his profession of farming.
 - ii. "from thy face shall I be hid" – loss of fellowship between God and Cain. Cain would now lose even the fellowship that had been possible at the place of sacrifice.
 - iii. "I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond" – Cain would now have no permanent abode.
 - iv. "every one that findeth me shall slay me" – the one who so viciously took his brother's life would be in fear of his own life. How ironic. The murderer fears being murdered!
 - b. God responds with a mark (Vs. 15). God put a visible mark on Cain that would be identifiable to others so they would know not to murder him. A punishment seven times more severe than Cain's would be meted out to any who killed him.
 - c. Note: In one sense this was a merciful act of God and in another sense, it was an act of judgment. It was merciful inasmuch as Cain's life was preserved. It was an act of judgment in the sense that Cain would be marked for life and remembered as the first murderer. Later, the death penalty for murder would be instituted by God (Gen. 9:6). Cain was consigned to a kind of living death as a warning to others of the sin of murder. "God's intention was clearly to impress the sanctity of human life and the enormity of the sin of murder upon mankind."⁷
4. Cain is Expelled (Vs. 16)
 - a. Cain is separated from God's presence, which is the essence of spiritual death. God is Omnipresent so this means that Cain departed from the Shekinah glory, the visible manifestation of God's presence at the gardens entrance.
 - b. All those who try to earn salvation by their good works will, like Cain, be eternally separated from God. 2 Thess. 1:9 "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction **from the presence of the Lord**, and from the glory of his power;"

Conclusion: What are you relying on for your salvation? Is it faith in the finished work of Christ or are you trusting in your own good works?

⁶ Sarfati, p. 419.

⁷ Leupold, p. 207.

Light Vs. Darkness

The ungodly line of Cain vs. the godly line of Seth

Text: Gen. 4:16-5:32

Introduction:

1. The period from the Fall to the Flood, has been commonly called *the age of conscience*. Sauer prefers to call it *the period of general Divine revelation*, because this describes God's method of communication to man before the Law was given at Sinai. This period commenced with one family (Adam's) and ended some 1600 or so years later with one family (Noah's).
2. The conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman was predicted in Gen. 3:15 and we saw that tragically play out within the very first family. We saw two competing approaches to God, faith vs. works.
3. The conflict between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman continues in this section with the development of two family lines – one godly and one ungodly. "Cain's family tree ends with the family of Lamech, an arrogant murderer whose 3 sons manufactured things for this world. Seth's line ends with Noah ("rest") whose sons gave the world a new beginning after the flood." (Wiersbe) Tragically, by the time Noah, his sons and their wives stepped on the ark, the two lines were indistinguishable. The only godly remnant that would remain would be Noah and his family.

We will trace the development of these two lines and learn some significant spiritual lessons along the way.

I. THE GODLESS LINE OF CAIN (GEN. 4:16-24)

Less space is given to the ungodly line and the Messianic line is given greater emphasis in the text. What were the distinguishing characteristics of Cain's line? We can answer that question by studying the main characters in the genealogy. The Cainites were:

A. Builders (Cain) (Vs. 16-18)

1. Cain removed himself from God (Vs. 16)
 - a. Sadly, Cain chose to go his own way rather than repent of his sin and be reconciled to God.
 - b. He "went out from the presence of the LORD", meaning he departed from the place where God's presence was manifested, a likely reference to the presence of God at Eden's entrance.
2. Cain rebelled against God (vs. 17)
 - a. Cain's attempt to build a city were an attempt to thwart God's justice in his life. God had sentenced him to a life as a fugitive and a wanderer. Cain attempts to establish himself in one place.
 - b. Significantly the place Cain relocated to (Nod) means 'wanderings'. Also, Cain ends up naming the city after his son Enoch, indicating that very likely it was his son who completed the city, not Cain. Henry Morris notes, "The Hebrew is indefinite – "was building", suggesting that he did not complete the city,

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probably leaving it to his son Enoch to finish and begin the true Cainite civilization.”

c. Note: When men reject God, all they are left to is an aimless wandering of heart in this life. There is no real purpose.

3. Cain reproduced apart from God (Vs. 18)

B. Inventors (Lamech's sons) (Vs. 19-22)

1. Jabal (wanderer) – Pioneer of Agriculture (Vs. 20). The word ‘father’ is used in the sense of “founder, originator”. He invented the tent which meant he and his followers had portable homes which would help with their shepherding lifestyle. He also was the pioneer of the domestic animal trade. Abel was a keeper of sheep but Jabal pioneered the cattle trade. The word ‘cattle’ includes camels, asses, goats, kine and perhaps others. (Morris)
2. Jubal (sound) – Pioneer of Musical Instruments (Vs. 21). He was a skilled inventor, pioneering both stringed and wind musical instruments. The harp was likely a ‘lyre’ while the ‘organ’ an instrument of reed pipes (Sarfati). No doubt these appealed to the sensual Cainites and were used in connection with their ungodly lifestyles. Jubal likely also profited financially from their sale.
3. Tubal-cain (half-brother to the other two) – Pioneer of Metallurgy (Vs. 22). He pioneered metallurgy with both brass and iron and also trained other craftsmen (“artificers”). This would include things like farming tools and weapons. He also had a significant sister named Naamah. The inclusion of a woman in the genealogy is unusual. Why she is included, we are not told.
4. Warren Wiersbe writes, “In the city of Enoch, they had everything but God.”
5. Note: Such advancements are not sinful in and of themselves. In fact, inventiveness and creativity are God-given endowments in mankind. The issue is when man pursues his own advancement without reference to God. When God is removed from the picture, mankind uses his inventive skills in rebellion against God. History bears abundant testament to this fact and it is the same today. Technological advancements can be used for good and God’s glory or for evil.
6. Concerning the Creation Vs. Evolution debate, Henry Morris points out, “Once again, it is significant to note that the element which modern evolutionary archaeologists and anthropologists identify as the attributes of the emergence of evolving men from the stone age into true civilization – namely, urbanization, agriculture, animal domestication, and metallurgy – all were accomplished quickly by the early descendants of Adam and did not take hundreds of thousands of years.”¹

C. Transgressors (Lamech) (Vs. 19, 23-24)

Moral degeneration can be seen in the Cainite line, culminating in deep depravity in Noah’s day (See Gen. 6:5). Two words summarize this moral slide:

1. Vice – Lamech’s Polygamy (Vs. 19)

¹ H Morris, *The Genesis Record*, pp. 146-147.

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- a. This is the first reference to polygamy in the Bible and marks a sad deviation from God's original design for marriage. Lust and selfishness are the underlying motives of polygamy. When men live apart from God, the breakdown of marriage and morals is the sad and inevitable result.
 - b. The Bible does not endorse polygamy as some suggest but rather exposes it for what it is with candid depictions of those who engaged in the practice. It was never intended by God nor was it blessed of Him. Christ reinstated and re-emphasized God's original design for marriage during His earthly ministry.
2. Violence – Lamech's Poem (Vs. 23-24)
This is the first recorded poem in the Bible. It has the features of Hebrew poetry which is called parallelism. Sadly, we see the arts being misused by the Cainites (music and poetry) in a corrupt and God-dishonoring way.
- a. Lamech is **bragging** about the fact he has murdered someone (Vs. 23). He follows in the footsteps of Cain, the head of this ungodly line. Violence increased up until the flood to the point where "the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6:11).
 - b. Lamech is **blasphemous** towards God (Vs. 24). He arrogantly claims that Cain would be avenged sevenfold, he would be seventy and sevenfold if someone tried to hurt him. This was a presumptuous claim on Lamech's part and may also include a tone of mocking at what God had pronounced concerning Cain.
 - c. Note: Lamech's reference to Cain's judgment from God reveals that the account was well preserved and had been handed down.

II. THE GODLY LINE OF SETH (Gen. 4:25-5:32)

A. Some Important Points about the Genealogy

1. The Genesis 5 genealogy is vital for tracing the Messianic line from Adam to Christ. This is demonstrated in Luke's genealogy of Christ (Luke 3:23-28). Take note of the names from Genesis 5 in Luke's genealogy.
2. The Genesis 5 genealogy records the first 1600 years of history from Creation to the Flood. That is a significant junk considering the fact there is only approx. 4,000 years from creation to the times of the New Testament. Bible genealogies provide a lot of the data necessary for understanding the Bible's timeline and chronology.
3. The Genesis 5 genealogy reveals the antediluvian patriarchs would have had ample opportunity for corroboration of the events recorded in the early chapters in Genesis due to the generational overlap. Adam dies in Lamech's 56th year. That means that only Noah and his sons from the pre-flood civilization would not have known Adam.
4. The Genesis 5 genealogy reveals that early record keeping was a part of early, pre-flood civilization. "This is the **book** of the generations of Adam" (5:1) This was probably an ancient scroll or clay tablet.

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5. The Genesis 5 genealogy demonstrates early on the truth of death as the fruit of sin entering the world. C.H. Mackintosh writes, "In full confirmation of the foregoing section, we may run the eye over the contents of Chapter 5 and find therein the humiliating record of man's weakness, and subjection to the rule of death. He might live for hundreds of years, and "beget sons and daughters;" but, at last, it must be recorded that 'he died'." Since the fall, mankind has been under the power of death. In our natural state we therefore have no basis for fellowship with God. It is only possible through new spiritual life given to us by God.
6. The Genesis 5 genealogy reveals that the antediluvians lived far longer (about 10 times more than the average person today) on account of the pre-flood environment being more favorable for life. Life spans dramatically reduce after the flood.

B. Some Important People in the Genealogy (Gen. 4:25-5:32)

There are 10 generations recorded in this Genealogy from Adam to Noah. The Sethites stand in sharp contrast to the Cainites. "There is a marked change of emphasis in the record of the descendants of Adam through Seth. No more do we read of human accomplishments and boasting, but, rather of men "calling upon the name of the LORD". (Morris) Their emphasis was on the simple walk of faith. Theirs was an eternal value system as opposed to the temporal mindset of the Cainites. The majority we know very little about apart from their names, lifespan and the fact they "begat sons and daughters". Let's survey this godly line. Four names will stand out in particular:

1. Seth – the provision of faith (Gen. 4:25-5:8). Seth was 105 when his Seed son was born and lived another 807 years, dying at 912.
 - a. Eve's Faith (4:25). Eve believed that God gave her Seth to replace godly Abel who had been murdered by Cain. The name 'Seth' means "substituted, appointed" and is closely related to word 'appointed' in the verse. She was right! The future of the godly seed hinged on this one boy Seth.
 - b. Adam's Faith (5:3). Adam agreed with Eve's choice of the name 'Seth' so evidently, he shared her view that this boy was God's provision for the continuation of the godly line.
2. Enos – the organization of faith (4:26). Enos was 90 when he fathered Cainan, lived another 815 years, then died at age 905.
 - a. The name 'Enos' means "mortal frailty" and bears testament to Seth's humble attitude of dependence upon God, a clear contrast to Lamech's pride and self-sufficiency.
 - b. In Enos' time men began to "call upon the name of the LORD", the beginnings of public worship. While not the church, this does represent the first formal assemblies in the Old Testament for the worship of the One true God. Before this point, the worship of God was on the family and individual level only, as illustrated in Cain and Abel's offerings. Perhaps Enos was instrumental in encouraging spiritual revival in his generation? While the worldly Cainites were pursuing temporal things, Seth's family was seeking God.

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- c. This was not the church as some Reformed theologians would have us believe. The church was still a mystery at this point (Eph. 3:3). However, the principle of believers assembling together is not new. It is God's established way and will for His people.
3. Cainan-Jared – the continuation of faith (Gen. 5:12-20). Beyond their names, lifespans and the fact they reproduced, we know nothing more of these saints of old. But they are still important as they were “living links in the great generational chain that reached from Seth to the birth of Jesus Christ” (Wiersbe). We may get a clue here or there from the meanings of their names:
 - a. Cainan – means ‘smith’. Fathered Mahalalel at 70 then lived for 840 more years, dying at age 910.
 - b. Mahalalel – means “praise of Elohim”. Fathered Jared at 65, lived 830 more years, dying at 895.
 - c. Jared – means ‘descent’. Fathered Enoch at 162, then lived for 800 more years, reaching the second longest lifespan at 895 years.
4. Enoch – the illustration of faith (Gen. 5:21-24). His name means ‘dedication’. He had the same name as Cain's son. Cain's son was dedicated to the new city he was building in rebellion against God whereas Jared was dedicating his son to God.
 - a. **Enoch's Testimony (Vs. 21-24a; Jude 14-15)**
 1. **The Testimony of his Walk (Vs. 21-24a)**
 - i. The **Commencement** of his Walk (Vs 21-22a). Enoch's earnest walk with God commenced at the time of the birth of Methuselah. The fatherly sense of responsibility at the sight of his first child coupled with his God given insight into the fact that God's judgment would be sent at the death of Methuselah, stirred Enoch's heart to fervently walk with God. And walk with God he did! It is stated twice that he walked with God (Vs. 22 & 24). Enoch was the seventh from Adam in the godly line of Seth. What a contrast his life was to Lamech, the seventh from Adam in the line of Cain (Gen. 5:23-24). C.H. Mackintosh writes, “And oh! How much is involved in these three words, “walked with God!” What separation and self-denial! What holiness and moral purity! What grace and gentleness! What humility and tenderness! And yet, what zeal and energy! What patience and long-suffering! And yet what faithfulness and uncompromising decision! To walk with God comprehends everything within the range of the divine life, whether active or passive.”
 - ii. The **Consistency** of his Walk (Vs. 22b). Enoch walked with God for 300 years! Imagine maintaining a godly testimony for so many years in a world of spiritual and moral decline! It should encourage us that with God's grace it is possible to live “soberly, righteously and godly in this **present** world” (Titus 2:12). By God's grace you

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can start well, continue well and finish well in the Christian race. You don't have to be the next statistic!

- iii. The **Context** of his Walk (Vs. 22c). Enoch walked with God in the context of family life – “Enoch walked with God...and begat sons and daughters”. This is a significant statement. Home and family are where the rubber meets the road in the Christian life (the wheel of theory meets the road of reality!). Family life is one of the greatest tests of the fabric of one's spiritual life. “...I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.” (Psalm 101:2)
- iv. The **Climax** of his Walk (Vs. 24b). Enoch was “translated that he should not see death” (Heb. 11:5). The phrase “he was not” comes from one Hebrew word meaning ‘disappeared’. How? “God took him”. The climax and consummation of our Christian walk is to enter the presence of Christ whether through death or at the rapture.

2. The Testimony of his Words (Jude 1:14-15)

He boldly proclaimed the truths of:

- i. The **Soon Coming** Deluge. Enoch named his son ‘Methuselah’ which means “when he dies it shall be sent”. It is no coincidence that Methuselah died the same year the flood came. There are other examples in Scripture where children were given prophetic names to communicate God's revelation (e.g., Hosea 1). He was also the longest living Patriarch, reaching almost 1,000 years (969 years). The length of his life was a testament to the truth of God's longsuffering. So long as Methuselah lived, there was opportunity to repent before judgment came. (See 2. Pet. 3:9)
- ii. The **Second Coming** of Christ (Jude 14-15). Enoch was a prophet who boldly preached the return of Christ to the sinful generation in which he lived. He was enabled by God to not only see the coming flood but down the corridors of time to the second advent.
- iii. The **Sinfulness** of Man (Jude 14-15). Enoch was not 21st century, wine sipping, TV watching, rock music loving, Hillsong style, cream puff preacher. He boldly and courageously thundered against the ungodliness of his generation in plain and unmistakable language. He preached against the ungodly lifestyles and mouths of his generation (“deeds” & “speeches”). He preached that God would “execute **judgment**” upon the ungodly.
- iv. Enoch's close walk with God enabled him to be a true “Seer”. He saw the coming flood and named his son Methuselah, which means, “When he is dead it is sent.” In the very year that Methuselah died, the flood came. (See chart) Enoch also saw right past the church age to the second coming of our Lord. His heart, made

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sensitive by the long years of communion with God, could detect the falsehood and apostasy of the professing believers of the last days. He felt righteous indignation in his heart toward all those hard speakers who had spoken against his God and Friend. He was an earnest contender for the faith in a day of unparalleled apostasy. Any man who walks with God must earnestly contend for the faith! He must stand for purity of doctrine as well as life. (Jude 3)

b. Enoch's Translation (Vs. 24b, Heb. 11:5)

1. The Specialness of it. Elijah the only other man who was raptured to heaven without seeing death (See 2. Kings 2:1-11). Interestingly, the word 'took', used to describe the rapture of Enoch is the same word used of Elijah's translation – "take away" (2. Kings 2:3, 5). "It is significant that Enoch prophesied about midway between Adam and Abraham and Elijah about midway between Abraham and Christ. Both ministered in times of deep apostasy." (Morris)
2. The Symbolism of it. Enoch's rapture before the judgement of the flood is a picture of the rapture of the church which will be raptured prior to the outpouring of God's wrath and judgment in the tribulation.
5. Noah – the preservation of faith (Gen. 5:25-32)

To be continued

Conclusion: Which side of the conflict are you on? Are you on the side of truth and right or are you on the moral and spiritual slide of our evil generation?

Where did Cain get his Wife?

(And other questions)

Text: Genesis 4:16-5:32

Introduction:

1. The period from the Fall to the Flood, has been commonly called *the age of conscience*. This period commenced with one family (Adam's) and ended some 1600 or so years later with one family (Noah's).
2. In our last lesson we traced the development of two family lines – the ungodly line of Cain and the godly line of Seth. The ungodly line of Cain was known for its pursuit of secular advancements in contrast to the godly line of Seth which is noted in several places for its spiritual pursuits. In Cain's family, we see moral and spiritual decline. In Seth's family, a humble faith and walk with the One True God.
3. In this message we want to pause and take the opportunity to answer several questions that arise from the study of these passages. God willing in our next message we will commence the exposition of the passages that deal with Noah's flood.
4. We will consider four questions in today's message:

I. **WHERE DID CAIN GET HIS WIFE FROM? (Gen. 4:17)**

One of the most frequent questions asked is "if God made Adam and Eve as our first parents, where did all the people come from?" Or as it is commonly asked, "where did Cain get his wife?"

A. **The Explanation**

1. The simple answer is that Cain married one of his sisters. Genesis 5:4 informs us that Adam and Eve "begat sons and daughters". Genesis 3:20 states categorically that Eve "was the mother of all living". That rules out the proposal that there were other people on earth God made from which Cain chose a wife. The Bible is clear that we all trace back to Adam and Eve. Since Adam lived to 930 years it is likely that he had many children.
2. Prior to the Mosaic covenant, this was allowed. Other examples are:
 - a. Noah's grandchildren would have married brothers and sisters, or first cousins as there were no other people after the flood (Gen. 7:21-22; 1 Pet. 3:20).
 - b. Abraham married his half-sister (Gen. 20:2, 12).
 - c. Isaac married Rebekah, the daughter of his cousin Bethuel (Gen. 24:15, 67).
 - d. Jacob married his cousins Leah and Rachel.

B. **The Objections**

The objections to this proposal fall into two categories – moral and biological.

1. The moral objection – doesn't this represent incest and therefore is immoral?
 - a. Morality is defined by the Creator. It is true that marriages with close relations was forbidden by God but that was under the

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- Mosaic covenant, approximately 2,500 years after God created Adam and Eve. Marriages with close relatives is now forbidden.
- b. Lev. 18:9 “The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, *whether she be* born at home, or born abroad, *even* their nakedness thou shalt not uncover.”
 - c. Lev. 18:11 “The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she *is* thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.”
 - d. Some contest that this makes God inconsistent in His moral laws. This is not true. There were certain moral laws that have been in place since the beginning of time (e.g., it is wrong to murder). These laws were imprinted on the heart of man even before Sinai and the giving of the law. Other laws were put in place as time passed for man's good and benefit as human civilisation progressed and other problems on account of sin and the curse arose.
 - e. Dr. Don Batten in *The Creation Answers Book*, explains it in a very helpful manner:

This sometimes causes people to ask if that makes God inconsistent – isn't He changing His standards? Imagine a shepherd looking after his flock on an open meadow. There are no wild animals around, and the only danger to the sheep is at one end of the meadow, where there are some cliffs from which they could fall down. So the shepherd builds a fence, but only around the cliffs. That fence represents a law, a “Thou shalt not”. There is no need to fence the rest of the meadow.

Some time later, wolves move into the district. Now there is a new danger to the sheep; if they stray beyond the sight of the shepherd, they risk being killed and eaten. So a new set of rules is called for, a new “Thou shalt not,” and the shepherd now puts a fence around the entire meadow.

The shepherd's standards have not changed; his loving care for the flock is the same as always. But times have changed, and a new law is called for in order to express that loving care.

In the same way, having permitted intermarriage between close relatives in order to commence humanity from one man (and one woman who also came from that one man), a point was reached where God clearly chose to institute a new law which was, like in the case of the sheep, a benefit to them, for their own protection.”¹

2. The biological objection – isn't it unwise to marry a close relative due to the likelihood of having deformed offspring?
 - a. This is true for us today and reinforces the wisdom of God's command as given under Moses in Leviticus 18. God knew about the problems of copying mistakes (mutations) in DNA long before modern genetics.
 - b. The question then arises, well what about the practice of marrying close relatives before the Mosaic legal code? The study of genetics provides some clues for solving this perceived dilemma:

¹ Cited by Jonathan Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, pp. 427-428.

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- i. God made Adam and Eve perfect which means they started with no genetic defects.
 - ii. This means their children would have had very few genetic defects.
 - iii. The long age spans of our pre-flood ancestors indicate they were also much more mutation free than we are now. Mutations in the human genome accumulate and multiply over time.
 - iv. "It seems that only by the time of Moses, mutations had accumulated to such a degree that brother-sister marriages involved a significant risk of defective offspring. So for our good, God prevented such unions."²
 - v. Illustration: Dog inbreeding diagram (refer slide).
- c. DNA Discovery now supports the argument that all human beings trace back to one man and one woman.
- i. Eve is called the "mother of all living". In other words, this means that all human beings trace back to this first human couple. Interestingly, modern DNA discovery confirms that all people originate from a common ancestor. Sarfati explains, "Most of the DNA we inherit from our parents comes from the nucleus. But the 'powerhouse' organelles of our cells, the mitochondria, have their own limited set of DNA. This DNA is generally inherited only through the mother's line, because it seems that the sperm cells can't pass it on, although there is some debate about this. In the 1980s, geneticists analyzed mitochondrial DNA from all around the world. They came to a startling discovery (for evolutionists): the similarities indicate that all people on earth are descended from a single human female. Even evolutionists have called her 'Mitochondrial Eve'... Evolutionists claimed that they had clear proof against the biblical account, because 'Mitochondrial Eve' supposedly lived about 200,000 years ago. However, recent evidence shows that mitochondrial DNA mutates far faster than previously thought. If this new evidence is applied to 'Mitochondrial Eve', it indicates that she would have lived only 6,000-6,500 years ago. Of course, this is perfectly consistent with the biblically indicated age of the "mother of all living", but an enigma for evolution/long age beliefs."³
 - ii. Interestingly, there is a parallel account with males: evidence from the Y-chromosome is consistent with all people being descended from a single man. He is referred to as 'Y-chromosome Adam'.⁴

² Sarfati, p. 427.

³ Sarfati, p. 385.

⁴ Ibid, p. 386.

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- iii. Think about it. What makes more sense? We are all descendants from an original pair of human beings or we evolved out of pond scum?!

II. WHY DID THE PATRIARCHS LIVE SO LONG? (Gen. 5)

A. The Length of their Lifespans

- a. As the chart shows, our antediluvian ancestors lived much longer than we do today.
- b. Noting that they all “begat sons and daughters”, even into their later years, we can get a sense for the size of the pre-flood population. In their classic book, *The Genesis Flood*, Dr. John C. Whitcomb and Dr. Henry M. Morris suggest the population to have been approx... one billion by the time of the flood. They state that “the present rate of world population increase is...approximately 2 per cent per year.” By computing the population of the earth during the pre-flood days at only 1.5 per cent, they arrive at the one billion figure.⁵ This is a very conservative estimate. The population could have been much higher than this given the longevity of the people in the pre-flood era.

B. The Logic of their Lifespans

1. Some scoff at the idea of such long-life spans. It should be noted that ancient myths put lifespans of ancient peoples in terms of thousands of years rather than hundreds compared with the Bible’s much more realistic lifespans of hundreds of years.
2. Safarti explains, “There were much longer lifespans claimed in extrabiblical sources. The most famous is the Sumerian King List, from Sumer in Mesopotamia, dated to 2,000 B.C. This has eight kings with an average reign of 30,150 years totaling 241,200 years, compared to the average lifespan of the biblical patriarchs of 858 years and a sum of 8,575 years for their full lives.”
3. There are at least two reasons for the longevity of the patriarchs:
 - a. Biological – as explained above, there were much fewer mistakes in the human genome at this point in history. This would mean the aging process would take much longer.
 - b. Environmental – the pre-flood environment was very different to the post-flood environment as explained in our messages on Genesis 1 (the firmament). After the flood, the environment became a lot harsher and more inhospitable to life.

III. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE GENEALOGY? (Gen. 5)

A. Some Important Points about the Genealogy

1. The Genesis 5 genealogy is vital for tracing the Messianic line from Adam to Christ. This is demonstrated in Luke’s genealogy of Christ (Luke 3:23-28). Take note of the names from Genesis 5 in Luke’s genealogy.
2. The Genesis 5 genealogy reveals the antediluvian patriarchs would have had ample opportunity for corroboration of the events recorded in the early chapters in Genesis due to the generational

⁵ Cited by John Butler in *Noah the Ark Builder*, p. 13.

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overlap. Adam dies in Lamech's 56th year. That means that only Noah and his sons from the pre-flood civilization would not have known Adam.

3. The Genesis 5 genealogy reveals that early record keeping was a part of early, pre-flood civilization. "This is the **book** of the generations of Adam" (5:1) This was probably an ancient scroll or clay tablet.

B. Some Important People in the Genealogy (Gen. 4:25-5:32)

There are 10 generations recorded in this Genealogy from Adam to Noah. Let's survey this godly line. Four names will stand out in particular:

1. Seth – the provision of faith (Gen. 4:25-5:8).
2. Enos – the organization of faith (4:26).
3. Cainan-Jared – the continuation of faith (Gen. 5:12-20).
4. Enoch – the illustration of faith (Gen. 5:21-24).
5. Noah – the preservation of faith (Gen. 5:25-32)
 - a. Methuselah (Vs. 25-27). His name means "when he dies, it shall be sent" a clear reference to the coming flood. Methuselah dies the same year as the flood. Methuselah was 187 when Lamech was born and lived 782 more years, dying at 969. His record lifespan a testament to the longsuffering of God.
 - b. Lamech (Vs. 28-31). His name means "warrior" or "conqueror" but unlike the wicked Lamech in Cain's line, he was righteous. He had his Seed son (Noah) at age 182. He lived another 595 years after fathering Noah. He died at 777, the lowest recorded lifespan to date. He was outlived 5 years by his father (Methuselah). Importantly we note that by the time we reach Lamech, the account of man's sin and God's subsequent curse upon the ground was well preserved. Adam was alive until Lamech's 56th year which means Lamech likely knew Adam and would have had opportunity to hear Adam's account of beginnings as recorded in the first 4 chapters firsthand.
 - c. Noah (Vs. 32). His name means 'comfort'. His father Lamech was given insight from God to discern that his son Noah would become a significant man of God.

IV. WHO WERE THE SONS OF GOD IN GENESIS 6?

There are two main viewpoints on this:

A. Viewpoint 1: Fallen Angels

1. Points in favor of this view.
 - a. Old Testament Evidence.
 - i. The phrase "sons of God" is only found 3 other times in the Old Testament, all in the Book of Job. They all refer to angels without exception. Job is the oldest Book in the Bible chronologically.
 - ii. Whenever angels materialize in the Old Testament, they have the appearance of men. Seemingly they can also imitate at least some human functions such as eating as in the case of the angels that visited Abraham before destroying Sodom.

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- b. New Testament Evidence. There are two passages in the New Testament that refer to demonic activity in the pre-flood world.
- i. 2 Peter 2:4. Peter uses three examples from the early chapters of Genesis – the rebellious angels, the old world of Noah’s day and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. This group of demons is now incarcerated in a section of hell. The Greek word translated ‘hell’ in this verse is ‘tartaros’. Peter seems to regard Tartarus as a place of preliminary detention for these angels rather than the final place of punishment. It should be noted that it simply states that these angels “sinned” and doesn’t elaborate as to what that sin was specifically. It is unlikely to be a reference to the fall of Satan and his demons as many of them still roam the world freely whereas this group of angels is incarcerated and awaiting future judgment.
 - ii. Jude 1:6. Jude references the same group of angels, adding some additional detail.
 1. Passively – *“kept not their first estate”*. “Kept not” denotes a specific failure on their part to guard or preserve something. (Hiebert) The phrase “first estate” means beginning, dominion, position. So they failed to protect the position God had ordained for them.
 2. Actively – *“left their own habitation”*. They ‘left’ which means to depart or forsake. The word ‘habitation’ means place of dwelling, home or house.
 3. Note: The sin of these fallen angels is further highlighted by the example that follows in verse 7. Jude 1:7 **“Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”** In the case of the Sodomites, they went after strange flesh in that they pursued relations with those of the same gender. In the case of the angels they pursued human flesh which was contrary to them.
 4. Summary: These angels deliberately abandoned their proper place to invade another sphere. They failed to keep the station and function assigned to them by God. Because they are bound, these angels must be distinguished from other fallen angels who are now unbound and active against mankind (Luke 8:31; Rom. 8:38; Col. 2:15). (Hiebert)
- c. Church history evidence. This interpretation was the common one amongst both ancient Jewish and Christian writers. This does not make it true but is a point worthy of consideration. The Herald of Hope has a convincing article in favor of this view.⁶

⁶ <https://www.heraldofhope.org.au/the-sons-god-were-giants/> - Viewed 22/1/.22.

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2. Points in opposition to this view.
 - a. The principle objection is found in Christ's words in Matt. 22:30 "For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but **are as the angels of God in heaven.**"
 - b. Proponents of this view will answer this by noting that the verse refers to godly angels in heaven, not fallen angels on earth. They further argue that angels always materialize as men in the Bible and seem to be able to engage in some bodily functions such as eating (Gen. 18:8 – Angels eat with Abraham).
 - c. That said, this interpretation raises some serious questions. Can fallen angels really produce offspring with a human being? Nowhere in the Bible are they said to possess such a function. Were the offspring half man and half angel?

B. Viewpoint 2: Intermarriage between the Cainites and Sethites

1. The points in favour of this view.
 - a. The context of Genesis 6 is the two family lines – the godly line of Seth and the ungodly line of Cain. The argument is that this represents a breakdown in separation between the two family groups. The "sons of God" are therefore interpreted as being the godly line of Seth and the "daughters of men" the Cainite women.
 - b. This interpretation seems to fit much of the natural wording of the chapter itself. It certainly seems to describe marriages between literal men and women.
 - c. Christ's words in the New Testament appear to rule out angels being able to marry and carry out a biological function.
2. The points in opposition to this view.
 - a. This view takes the New Testament concept of one being a "son of God" and applies it here in Genesis 6. This is somewhat of a strain considering the fact that within the Old Testament context, the phrase "sons of God" are only ever used of angels outside of Genesis 6 as discussed above.
 - b. This view ignores the evidence from 2 Peter 2 and Jude 1:6 that clearly speak of a group of pre-flood angels that have been incarcerated by God for a special sin, awaiting the judgment of God. There seems to be little to no attempt to explain the identity of this group of angels or their sin. The argument that they represent the angels of the original fall is untenable as previously explained.

C. Viewpoint 3: A hybrid of the two

1. This view combines elements of both whilst seeking to resolve some of the difficulties.
2. In this view, real men marry women but under the influence and possession of demonic spirits. Thus we have an explosion of demonic activity just prior to the flood and an attempt by Satan to interfere with human sexuality in order to produce ungodly offspring and thereby thwart the seed of the woman from producing the promised Messiah.
3. This allows the "sons of God" to be fallen angels, although they accomplish their perverted purposes through actual men. It

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removes the ghastly concept of fallen angels entering into physical union with women which runs into some difficulty with Christ's comment on angels not marrying or giving in marriage in the Gospels. This was some kind of demonic interference with human reproduction.

4. This view also incorporates the two New Testament passages (2 Peter 2 and Jude 7) which speak of this group of fallen angels.
 5. Dr. Henry Morris proposes this view in his classic commentary, "The Genesis Record".
- D. Is this a separation issue?
1. Without diminishing the importance of this passage or the need to study it diligently to arrive at a conclusion, I do not believe it should be a test of fellowship between believers. There are good, doctrinally sound, fundamental men on both sides of this debate who are in unity on other fundamental doctrines.
 2. We have to remember we are looking back in time at the pre-flood civilization that was wiped out in the global flood. God in His sovereignty and wisdom has chosen not to give us any more details or explanation of these matters than what is revealed in the Scriptures.
 3. At the end of it all, God's Word is clear that He destroyed the earth with the flood because of the depravity of mankind. If there was demonic activity (and I believe there was), it was accomplished with cooperation on the part of man, thus adding to the enormity of his crimes against God. The demon spirits involved were also judged for their part in corrupting the pre-flood world. They are being held in a remand center, a place of torment, awaiting final judgment.
 4. One great benefit of chapters such as Genesis 6 is they encourage the use of sound principles of Bible interpretation and encourage a more diligent and careful study of the Scriptures.

Conclusion: The challenge for us is to walk with God, as men like Enoch and Noah did of old, in a world that is increasingly like the days of Noah. See Matthew 24:36-42.

The Days of Noah

Text: Gen. 6:1-8 (Read also Matt. 24:37-38)

Introduction:

1. Chapters 6-9 are the great flood chapters in Genesis. They describe the lead up to the flood (chap. 6), the flood itself (chap. 7-8), and the events immediately after the flood (chap. 9).
2. The first part of chapter 6 documents the moral degeneracy and depravity of the antediluvian civilization and God's determination to judge man's wickedness. "Moral and spiritual conditions in the antediluvian world had deteriorated with the passing years, not only among the Cainites but eventually among the Sethites as well. Materialism and ungodliness abounded, except for a small remnant connected with the line of the promised Seed, along with those few who may have been influenced by the witness of such men as Enoch." (Henry Morris)
3. Godly Noah is the prominent character of these chapters. Noah is a significant character in the Bible, being mentioned at least 58 times by name in the Scriptures. Only two men lived longer than Noah – Methuselah (969 years) and his great-great grandfather Jared (962 years). Noah lived 950 years.
4. The Bible's description of Noah's day is of great significance to us as the New Testament predicts that as the second coming of Christ draws near, the climate will be very much like that of Noah's day.
5. In this message, we will consider three truths the text unfolds concerning the world of Noah's day.

I. THE WICKEDNESS OF NOAH'S DAY (Vs. 1-2, 4-5)

We can summarize the evil of Noah's day under three headings. The pre-flood generation was characterized by:

A. Evil Marriages (Vs. 1-2)

1. The setting of these marriages (Vs. 1)
 - a. These were days when the population was dramatically increasing on earth. Noting that the antediluvians (chap. 5) all "begat sons and daughters", even into their later years, we can get a sense for the size of the pre-flood population. In their classic book, *The Genesis Flood*, Dr. John C. Whitcomb and Dr. Henry M. Morris suggest the population to have been approx.... one billion by the time of the flood. They state that "the present rate of world population increase is...approximately 2 per cent per year." By computing the population of the earth during the pre-flood days at only 1.5 per cent, they arrive at the one billion figure.¹ This is a very conservative estimate. The population could have been much higher than this given the longevity of the people in the pre-flood era.
 - b. Note: There was nothing evil about multiplying as it was God's express will that this take place (Gen. 1:28). However, where you have the multiplication of people who are living apart from God, you have a corresponding multiplication of depravity and

¹ Cited by John Butler in *Noah the Ark Builder*, p. 13.

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sin. Leupold writes, "Where mankind comes to be of great numbers, somehow the places where they congregate together thickly become the scenes of the development of evil on a greater scale."

2. The spirits behind these marriages (Vs. 2a)
 - a. As studied in our last message, we believe there was an explosion of demonic activity in the pre-flood world as indicated by the New Testament passages of 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 1:6. We do not take the view that fallen angels literally married women and produced offspring. Rather, we believe it was likely a form of demon infestation and a resultant interference in the reproduction of the antediluvians in an attempt to thwart the promised seed of Genesis 3:15. It would be something akin to the demon possession described in the New Testament.
 - b. Significantly, there will be an increase in demonic activity in the end times (See 1. Tim. 4:1; Rev. 9:20).
3. The sensuality of these marriages (Vs. 2b)
 - a. On the human side, these marriages were based on sensual, physical appeal rather than godliness and spirituality. The word 'fair' means beautiful. The outward looks became the primary criteria for a marriage partner in Noah's time.
 - b. An overemphasis and fixation on physical attraction is a feature of a society in spiritual and moral decline. In fact, there are really two words that summarize the wickedness of Noah's day:
 - i. **Vice** – Lamech's polygamy an example (4:19).
 - ii. **Violence** – Lamech's murder an example (4:23-24).
 - c. Our day has become like Noah's where outward feminine beauty is being used to fuel moral corruption on an alarming scale with the online pornography industry, the advertising industry, the Hollywood movie industry and so on. The majority of marriages and relationships are based on lust and passion rather than purity and truth.
 - d. Note: Physical beauty and attraction, though created by God and not evil in itself within the marriage context, is a very fragile foundation for a marriage. If physical beauty was the key to a lasting and happy marriage, then Hollywood stars and starlets should have the lowest divorce rates in the world. The opposite is true. Make sure you are marrying for reasons deeper than the attractiveness of your prospective spouse! Marry a woman who possesses inward beauty as a priority. Prov. 31:30 gives some wise instruction on this topic, "Favour *is* deceitful, and beauty *is* vain: *but* a woman *that* feareth the LORD, she shall be praised." "Absolute consecration to Jesus is the strongest bond between human hearts." (J.N. Darby)
 - e. Leupold notes, "When God's children lose sight of such basic distinctions and look about only for the pretty faces and the shapely forms, then, surely, degeneracy has set in."

B. Evil Men (Vs. 4)

These men were:

1. Fearsome Men (Vs. 4a)

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They are described as:

- a. **Giants.** The word 'giant' literally means "fallen one". It has the sense of 'tyrant', 'attacker', 'bandit' (Leupold). The same word is used in Numbers 13:33 to describe the giants in Canaan in the days of Joshua.
 - b. **Mighty Men.** The word 'mighty' means "powerful; by implication warrior, tyrant" (Strong's concordance). In light of the reference in verse 2 to the "sons of God", it could be the devil was the source of their might and strength. Undoubtedly these men played a leading role in the violence of those days as described in verse 11-13.
2. Famous Men (Vs. 4b)
 - a. These men are also described as men of 'renown'. Interestingly the Hebrew word is often translated 'name'. E.g., "and called his **name** Seth" (Gen. 5:3). So, these men had made a 'name' for themselves; they were men of notoriety in the ancient world. "The world certainly did not in those days, even as it does not now, esteem godly men highly. Only the wicked were renowned or had a name." (Leupold)
 - b. Sadly, like Noah's day, the world idolizes evil men rather than godly men. Today, the most famous people in the world tend to be the godless, immoral stars of the music and movie industries.
 - c. Note: Who your heroes are says a lot about the kind of Christian you are. Do you highly esteem the godly or ungodly?

C. Evil Minds (Vs. 5)

1. Depraved Actions (Vs. 5a)
 - a. "God saw" = mankind's wickedness does not go unnoticed by God. What a contrast to what God saw in Genesis 1:31 at the end of creation week.
 - b. "wickedness...was great" = evil was rampant and widespread. The elevation of evil men as heroes a major contributor to world at that time being overtaken by wickedness (See Vs. 4).
2. Depraved Imaginations (Vs. 5b)

Mankind's imaginations had become:

 - a. Completely Evil – "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart".
 - i. Given the fixation on physical beauty it is not hard to see how the world became so corrupt. Their minds were "in the gutter."
 - ii. "every imagination" = the imagination is the image generating faculty of the mind. It is "the faculty of imagining, or of forming mental images or concepts of what is not actually present to the senses." The same Hebrew word is translated 'formed' in Gen. 2:7. The heart is "the thought-workshop" (Leupold). The imagination is a God-created, God-given gift which can be exercised in a God-honoring manner. However, because of the fall of man, it is often used in a depraved manner. It is staggering just how much wickedness the depraved mind of man is capable of inventing.

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- iii. Prov. 6:18 God hates, “An heart that deviseth **wicked imaginations**, feet that be swift in running to mischief,”
- iv. Rom. 1:30 “Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, **inventors of evil things**, disobedient to parents,”
- b. Constantly Evil – “evil continually”.
 - i. Further emphasizes the previous statement. This is not a mind that occasionally indulges in an evil thought. This describes a mind totally given over to the pursuit of evil things.
 - ii. The “great wickedness” was the fruit of these sinful thoughts. Evil actions are first conceived in the heart before they are committed in three dimensions.
 - iii. Jesus Christ put His Divine finger on the heart being the source of sinful actions. Mark 7:21-23 “For **from within, out of the heart of men**, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: **All these evil things** come from within, and defile the man.” Our thought life is the fountain of our conduct. We are products of what we think (Prov. 23:7).

II. THE WITNESS IN NOAH’S DAY (VS. 3, 9; 2. Pet. 2:5)

The pre-flood world was not without God’s witness. God provided the antediluvians with light from at least three sources. There was:

A. The Voiceless Witness of the Spirit’s Striving (Vs. 3)

This verse reveals that God was active in the Person of the Holy Spirit, seeking to bring the pre-flood inhabitants to a place of repentance. It also reveals that while God graciously strives with man, His longsuffering and patience have a limit. There is:

- 1. A time limit on God’s pleading with man (Vs. 3a)
 - a. This is the second reference to the Holy Spirit in Genesis and points to one of His major functions as the third Person of the Godhead. He strives with the hearts and consciences of lost sinners, seeking to bring them to repentance (See John 16:8-9). The Spirit’s striving was probably through the preaching of Enoch and Noah as well as His direct appeal to the conscience.
 - b. But there is a warning in the verse. God warns that His Spirit will not “always strive with man”. The convicting, drawing ministry of the Spirit is not to be taken for granted.
 - c. Note: This verse refutes the Calvinistic thesis that men are irresistibly drawn to salvation. If the Calvinist view of sovereign election were true, then we should ask why the Holy Spirit was striving with those who were already ordained to destruction as the non-elect! Evidently God strove with them because they were being offered a real opportunity to repent. The reality is that mankind was created with the freedom to choose (freewill) and he can choose to either accept or reject God’s offer of salvation.

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2. A time limit on God's longsuffering with man (Vs. 3b)
 - a. The reference to 120 years appears to be a reference to the time remaining before the judgment of the flood would be sent as opposed to a reference to the expected lifespan of man.
 - b. This is a testament to the longsuffering of God that he would give another 120 years for men to repent before the flood would be sent. God had also provided a warning in the name of Methuselah which means "when he is dead it is sent".
 - c. 1 Peter 3:20 "Which sometime were disobedient, when once **the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing**, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."
 - d. Sadly, evil men often misinterpret God's longsuffering and rebel rather than repent (Ecc. 8:11; Rom. 2:4).

B. The Verbal Witness of Noah's Preaching (2 Pet. 2:5)

1. The theme of his preaching – 'righteousness'. Noah was a herald for righteousness in an unrighteous world. May God help us to follow his example!
2. The timeframe of his preaching – the Bible does not specifically state how when Noah started preaching but it may have been around the same time as when he built the ark. How long he took to build the ark is not stated specifically but it was probably around 100 years given the fact Noah's age is mentioned in Gen. 4:32 as being 500 years and then 600 years when he entered the ark and the flood came in Gen. 7:11.
3. The triumph of his preaching – from a human standpoint, Noah's preaching was a failure. From a Divine and spiritual standpoint, it was a success.
 - a. The world was lost. I wonder how many mission boards would continue supporting someone after 100 years of preaching with no visible results? The fact is, God still wants men to hear the truth, even if He knows they are not going to respond. From the spiritual standpoint, Noah was a success as he was faithful to the Lord over many decades irrespective of the hardness of heart around him.
 - b. His family was saved. There was fruit for all that labor and witness. Noah's family all got on the ark!
 - i. Heb. 11:7 "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, **prepared an ark to the saving of his house**; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith."
 - ii. 1 Peter 3:20 "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, **wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.**"

C. The Visual Witness of Noah's Living (Vs. 9)

1. Noah Walked with God.
 - a. The context of his walk – Noah walked with God in the midst of a wicked, immoral, violent and depraved world. What a

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testimony! By the grace of God, he did not allow the floodtides of iniquity into his heart and home. Noah's family was the only remnant of godliness left by the time the flood came.

- b. The consistency of his walk – except for a sad episode of drunkenness towards the end of his life, Noah lived for hundreds of years in an upright and God-honouring manner.
2. Noah Worked for God.
 - a. Imagine what a testimony the building of the ark was to the antediluvians. No doubt boat building wasn't new but a ship of this size was undoubtedly the biggest in history to date. The massive structure stood as a towering reminder to all that saw it that time was running out.
 - b. Every blow of Noah's hammer ringing out from the ship yard and every rasp of his saw were sermon sounds of warning that judgment was coming.
 - c. Alexander Whyte expresses it powerfully, "Not only did Noah preach his best and his most earnest as the end drew near...but every tree that fell in the forest, and every plank that was laid in the ark; every axe-stroke and echo of every hammer was a louder and ever louder call to men of that corrupt and violent day to flee from the wrath to come."

III. THE WILL OF GOD FOR NOAH'S DAY (VS. 6-8)

These verses record God's Divine response to the wickedness of mankind. God determines:

A. The Destruction of Mankind (Vs. 6-7)

1. The reaction of God to the sinfulness of man (Vs. 6).
 - a. It repented Him – this does not mean that God decided He had made a mistake. God's character does not change but His dealings with mankind change depending on whether he is obedient or disobedient.
 - i. Jonathan Sarfati explains it well, "God actually does not repent from His own perspective (1 Samuel 15:29) – He is unchanging. However, from a human perspective, God changes his actions because of a change in the subjects of His actions...Indeed in the same chapter of Samuel, we see that God repented of making Saul king (Vs. 11, 35). The resolution is simple: God made Saul king when he was obedient, and removed Saul's kingship when he was disobedient (Vs. 23, 28). God's standards do not change; He merely reacts to man in different ways, depending on whether man obeys or disobeys Him."
 - ii. Henry Morris adds, "Indeed, it is exactly because God does not repent, that He must seem to repent when man "changes his mind." God's attitude toward man is conditioned by man's attitude toward Him."
 - b. It grieved him – the word 'grieved' has the idea of "to hurt, cause pain". God's heart was moved with grief over the sinfulness of man. Because evil filled the thoughts of man's heart God was "grieved at his heart". Are we grieved by sin?

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2. The ruling of God concerning the sinfulness of man (Vs. 7).
 - a. The severity of the judgment (Vs. 7a).
 - i. "I will destroy man" = the word 'destroy' means to erase, to wipe out, blot out, erase totally. The same root word is frequently translated "blot out" in the Old Testament (Deut. 9:14, 25:19, 29:20; 2 Kings 14:27, Ps. 51:1, 9; 69:28; 109:13, 14, Is. 43:25, 44:22, Jer. 18:3). It is also translated 'wipe in 2 Kings 21:13 where God says, "...I will **wipe** Jerusalem as a man **wipeth** a dish, **wiping** it and turning it upside down." So, God is literally saying "I will wipe out mankind".
 - ii. "whom I have created" = it is God's sovereign right to judge man since God made him. "The Giver of life is the Supreme Lord over life and death." (Leupold)
 - b. The scope of the judgment (Vs. 7b)
 - i. The judgment would also fall on the animal kingdom. Three specific categories of animals are mentioned – beast, creeping thing and fowls of the air. God still showed mercy on the animal kingdom by preserving at least two of each kind on the ark (7:2-3).
 - ii. Note: No mention of sea creatures as some would survive the flood.
 - c. The sense of the judgment (Vs. 7c). The reason for the judgment is reiterated, "for it repenteth me that I have made them."

B. The Deliverance of Noah (Vs. 8)

1. The basis of Noah's salvation – grace.
 - a. This is the first mention of that wondrous word 'grace' in the Word of God. "Grace! 'tis a charming sound Harmonious to my ear; Heaven with the echo shall resound, And all the earth shall hear." Against the dark backdrop of the depravity of man and the gathering storm clouds of God's wrath, grace shines forth like a pure ray of light. "Though Satan had managed to corrupt the whole world, the one man whom he wanted most of all to destroy, was under the invulnerable, protecting shield of the grace of God." (Morris)
 - b. Notice that this grace was unmerited. Noah did not "earn" grace in the eyes of the LORD, he "found grace" in the eyes of the LORD. Note the order in verse 8-9:
 - i. Noah found grace in the eyes of God.
 - ii. Noah was a just man (justified).
 - iii. Noah perfect (complete, mature, godly) in his generations.
 - iv. Noah walked with God.
 - c. God's method of salvation has been the same from the beginning of time. It is by grace alone through faith alone to the glory of God alone! (See Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5)
2. The means of Noah's salvation – the ark.
 - a. There was only one way of salvation from God's judgment and only one door to enter it.

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- b. Christ is the only way of salvation. Have you entered the ark of God's grace?

Conclusion:

1. What is the state of your thought life? How do you live in the secret chambers of your imagination where no one but God sees?
2. Have you received God's free gift of grace like Noah did?

Noah Walked with God

Text: Gen. 6:8-13

Introduction:

1. Chapters 6-9 are the great flood chapters in Genesis. They describe the lead up to the flood (chap. 6), the construction of the ark (chap. 6), the flood itself (chap. 7-8), and the events immediately after the flood (chap. 9).
2. Godly Noah is the prominent character of these chapters. Noah is a significant character in the Bible, being mentioned at least 58 times by name in the Scriptures.
3. The second half of this chapter (chap. 6) provides a brief statement concerning Noah's godliness, a repeated description of the wickedness of Noah's day and then the instructions for and preparations of the ark that would save Noah and his family from God's judgement. The details about the ark revealed in the Word of God itself is the best answer to the shallow-minded attacks of the sceptics.
4. We will divide the account into three sections for our study:
 - Noah's Walk with God (Vs. 8-10)
 - Noah's World before God (Vs. 11-13)
 - Noah's Work for God (Vs. 14-22)

I. NOAH'S WALK WITH GOD (VS. 8-10)

Consider three facets of Noah's godly walk:

A. The Start of His Walk (Vs. 8)

1. Noah's walk started with the first step of salvation. His salvation was all of grace, not of works.
 - a. Romans 4:4-5 "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."
 - b. Eph. 2:8-9 – "For by grace are ye saved through faith..."
 - c. Titus 3:5 "Not by works of righteousness which we have done..."
 - d. Illustration: The Apostle Paul. Phil. 3:4-9 "Though I might also have confidence in the flesh.."
2. You must be reconciled to God before you can walk with God and work for God. You must belong to God before you can live for God. A new life comes from a new heart.
3. Have you taken the salvation step?

B. The Sanctification of His Walk (Vs. 8)

1. It was the grace of God that saved Noah and made him a child of God. But it was also the grace of God that preserved Noah in his walk from the influences of a wicked world around him. The only way to be saved is by the grace of God and the only way to live a truly sanctified life is by the grace of God!
2. One definition of grace is this, "the Divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life."
3. Barnhouse writes, "Noah was no different from any other son of Adam. If the grace of God had not restrained him, the evil in his

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heart, which was just as great as the evil in the other hearts that were destroyed, would have manifested itself in a wickedness as great as theirs.”¹

C. The Specifics of His Walk (Vs. 9a)

1. The Terms – “just man and perfect”. Two words are used to describe godly Noah in this verse. This refers to Noah’s conduct in relation to man.
 - a. A just man – the word ‘just’ means righteous. Noah was:
 - i. Positionally righteous before God because of salvation. He was made just, justified on the basis of the free grace of God (Vs. 8).
 - ii. Practically righteous before men because of salvation. “Goodness comes after grace, not before grace. Grace comes before we read of Noah being a just man and walking with God. Noah’s goodness was a result of grace. Grace was not a result of his goodness.”² “Noah’s righteousness didn’t come from his good works; his good works came because of his righteousness. His righteousness was God’s gift in response to his personal faith.” (Wiersbe)
 - b. A perfect man – the word has the idea of whole, complete, mature. It does not describe a man who is sinless but a man who is blameless. It speaks of “an all-sided life, well rounded out in all its part, with no essential quality missing” (Leupold). Maclaren writes, “His whole nature is developed, and all in due symmetry and proportion; no beauty wanting, no grace cultivated at the expense of others. He is a full man, not one-sided and therefore a distorted one.”³
2. The Time – “in his generations”. This is a different word to the word ‘generations’ at the start of the verse. It is a reference to a generation in the sense of an age, a time period. A significant statement considering the moral climate of his day. Barnhouse writes, “It is possible to grow a lily in a manure pile. No circumstances of this world are too low for God to produce therein faith and holiness.”⁴ Titus 2:11-12 “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation...”

D. The Secret of His Walk (Vs. 9b)

You might ask, “how did Noah live a righteous and godly life in such an evil generation?” The answer is found in the words “and Noah walked with God”. This was Noah’s conduct in relation to God. Noah’s walk with God was the secret behind the godly life he lived outwardly before his generation. We cannot overemphasize the importance of walking with God in the Christian life. It is the key to everything! The Word of God has much to say about what this walk looks like. The believer is to:

1. Walk after the LORD (Deut. 13:4; 2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chr. 34:31).

That’s followership.

¹ J Butler, *Noah the Ark Builder: Bible biography series number twenty-three*, p. 32.

² Ibid, p. 33.

³ A Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture volume 11*, p. 49.

⁴ Cited by Butler, pp. 36-37.

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2. Walk before the Lord (Gen. 17:1; 1 Kings 8:23, 25; 2 Chr. 6:14; 7:17). **That's faithfulness.**
3. Walk with God (Gen. 5:22, 24; 6:9). **That's fellowship.**
4. Walk in God's ways (Deut. 10:12; 11:22; 19:9; 28:9; 30:16; Josh. 22:5; 1 Kings 2:3; 8:58; 11:38; 2 Chr. 6:31; Ps. 119:3; Jer. 7:23).
5. Walk uprightly (Ps. 84:11; Prov. 2:7).
6. Walk with a perfect heart (Ps. 101:2).
7. Walk in the way of good men (Prov. 2:20).
8. Walk in the old paths (Jer. 6:16).
9. Walk humbly with God (Mic. 6:8).
10. Walk worthy (Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12).
11. Walk in love (Eph. 5:2).
12. Walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8).
13. Walk circumspectly (Eph. 5:5).
14. Walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25).
15. Walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4).
16. Walk honestly (Rom. 13:13; 1 Thess. 4:12).
17. Walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7).
18. Walk in good works (Eph. 2:10).
19. Walk in Christ (Col. 2:6).
20. Walk in the light (1 Jn. 1:7).
21. Walk as Christ walked (1 Jn. 2:6).
22. Walk after Christ's commandments (2 Jn. 2:6).
23. Walk in truth (3 Jn. 1:4; Ps. 86:11).
24. Note: The Bible also has much to say about how we are **not** to walk as well.

II. NOAH'S WORLD BEFORE GOD (VS. 11-13)

The wickedness of pre-flood world is documented in these verses and God's pronouncement against it. It provides a sharp contrast to the description of the godly life of Noah and also forms a natural basis for God's instructions to Noah concerning the ark.

A. The Depravity of Noah's World (Vs. 11-12)

These verses contain God's Divine assessment of the world's condition – "corrupt **before God**". God is the one who sets the moral standards for His creatures. He is the one who defines what is good and what is evil. The world of Noah's day was:

1. A Corrupt World – 'corrupt'. The word 'corrupt' is used 3 times in these verses to describe the antediluvian world. It is a strong word often translated 'destroy'. It means "gone to ruin". Mankind had destroyed itself through depravity. As man ruined the earth, God will ruin man. "Sin is death in the making; death is sin finished."⁵
2. A Cruel World – 'violence'. The word is used twice to describe the antediluvian world.
 - a. The source of the violence. The violence was a byproduct and fruit of the world's corruption. Note the order of the wording in verse 11. When men walk according to the depravity of their hearts, it inevitably leads to injuring others.

⁵ Maclaren, p. 53.

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- b. The scope of the violence. The whole earth was “filled with violence”. Violence was widespread and abundant.
- c. Psalm 11:5 “The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and **him that loveth violence his soul hateth.**”

B. The Decree for Noah’s World (Vs. 13, 17)

God now communicates His mind with Noah directly. This is the first of 7 times that God would speak with Noah (Gen. 6:13, 7:1, 8:15, 9:1, 8, 12, 17), each time in fellowship and blessing to Noah and his family. The judgment that was to be unleashed on the earth was truly awesome. Observe:

1. The Magnitude of God’s Judgment (Vs. 13).
 - a. The termination of longsuffering – “the end of all flesh is come before me”. The day of grace eventually runs out. “There come times in the events of this world when God’s gracious dealings with men are definitely terminated. **Such times come only when grace has been offered in richest measure.**”⁶
 - b. The termination of life – “destroy them with the earth”
 - i. Mankind would be destroyed.
 - ii. Mankind’s habitat and environment would be destroyed.
2. The Means of God’s Judgment (Vs. 17). God would send a world-wide flood that would destroy all living creatures with the breath of life on the earth. We know the flood was universal because of:
 - a. **The unique words the Bible uses for Noah’s flood.** The Word of God uses unique words for Noah’s flood in both Hebrew and Greek that are not used of other floods in the Bible.
 - i. The Hebrew word is ‘mabbul’ and is preceded by the definite article – “the flood”. This Hebrew word is only used in relation to the world-wide flood in the Old Testament.
 - ii. The Greek word is ‘kataklusmos’ (κατακλυσμος). Our English word ‘cataclysm’ comes from this word. A ‘cataclysm’ is “A large-scale and violent event in the natural world.”⁷
 - b. **The plain statements of Scripture.**
 - i. Isaiah believed in a literal Noah and a literal flood: Isaiah 54:9 “For this **is as the waters of Noah unto me**: for as I have sworn that **the waters of Noah** should no more **go over the earth**; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.”
 - ii. The Apostle Peter believed in a universal flood: 2. Peter 3:5-6 “For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being **overflowed with water, perished.**” The word ‘overflowed’ means “to wash down, to deluge.” The root word is translated “raging of the water” (Lk. 8:24) and “wave of the sea” (James 1:6).

⁶ H C Leupold, pp. 268-269.

⁷ Oxford Dictionary, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/cataclysm>, Viewed 18/2/22.

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- iii. The writer to the Hebrews believed in a universal flood: Heb 11:7 “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”
- iv. The Lord Jesus Christ believed in a universal flood: Luke 17:26-27 “And as it was in the days of **Noe**, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, **and the flood came, and destroyed them all.**”
- v. Shame on Christian institutions of higher education which go to great lengths to undermine the truths of the Word of God on Genesis and other fundamental Bible doctrines!
- c. **The colossal size of the ark (Gen. 6:15).** If the flood was only local, why build a ship this size?! Clearly it was built to be able to withstand something much larger than a local flood. If it was a local flood, all Noah, his family and the animals would need to do is migrate to safety. The ark would have been around 138m (L) x 23m (W) x 14m (H). In terms of Feet, that would be 450ft x 75ft x 45ft. This would result in a volume of about 44,400 m³.⁸ To put that in perspective, that would be equivalent to the capacity of over 340 semi-trailers. The Ark would be wider than a six-lane U.S. interstate highway.
- d. **The flood account itself (Gen. 7:17-24).** This clearly describes a universal flood.

To be continued...

Conclusion:

1. Have you accepted God’s gift of grace? Have you entered the ark of salvation? Are you sheltering under his atoning blood? Will you come to Christ today and escape the coming wrath and judgment of God?
2. How important is it to you to walk with God as a Christian? Are you surrendered to obeying God fully in your life? Is consecration to Christ and all His ways important to you?

⁸ J Safarti, *The Genesis Account*, pp. 499-500.

The Ark of Salvation

Text: Gen. 6:14-22

Introduction:

1. In our last message we considered the description of Noah's walk with God and the condition of the world in which He lived. We now come to the details of the ark itself.
2. In this message we will consider the enormous size of the ark and how that it had more than sufficient capacity for Noah's family and the animals. We will also see how the ark is a wonderful picture of salvation.
3. We have divided the account into three sections for our study:

I. NOAH'S WALK WITH GOD (VS. 8-10)

We considered four facets of Noah's godly walk:

- A. The Start of His Walk (Vs. 8)**
- B. The Sanctification of His Walk (Vs. 8)**
- C. The Specifics of His Walk (Vs. 9a)**
- D. The Secret of His Walk (Vs. 9b)**

II. NOAH'S WORLD BEFORE GOD (VS. 11-13)

The wickedness of pre-flood world is documented in these verses and God's pronouncement against it. It provides a sharp contrast to the description of the godly life of Noah and also forms a natural basis for God's instructions to Noah concerning the ark.

A. The Depravity of Noah's World (Vs. 11-12)

The world of Noah's day was:

1. A Corrupt World – 'corrupt'.
2. A Cruel World – 'violence'.

B. The Decree for Noah's World (Vs. 13, 17)

III. NOAH'S WORK FOR GOD (VS. 14-22)

God now gives Noah detailed instructions concerning the building of the ark.

A. The Plan of the Ark (Vs. 14-15)

1. The Master Planner of the ark (Vs. 13). "And God said" – in a sense this was not Noah's ark, it was God's ark. God designed it and revealed it to Noah as the instrument whereby he would be spared the coming flood waters. The ark is a testament to the wisdom of God in every way. God designed the way of escape, the way of salvation from the coming judgment. In like manner, the Gospel reflects the manifold wisdom of God. No manmade method will save. It is God's way of salvation alone!
2. The Meaning of the Ark (Vs. 14a). The word would later be used to describe the much smaller vessel in which Moses' mother placed him when he was a baby (Ex. 2:3-5). The word 'ark' appears to be

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derived from an Egyptian word meaning “box” or “chest”. Moses, as author of the Pentateuch would have been fluent in Egyptian.¹

3. The Materials for the ark (Vs. 14b)
 - a. The wood – Gopher wood. The word ‘Gopher’ is a transliteration rather of the Hebrew word as it is the only occurrence of the word in the Bible. Its identity is unknown but we can be sure it was the right kind for the job! It was likely a dense hard wood of some kind. For centuries ships were built of wood. Steel has only been used in the last couple of centuries for the construction of ships.
 - b. The sealant – pitch. This was a form of tar to make the ark water tight. Recent experiments also indicate that the resinous coating would also provide very strong impact resistance.² It was likely made from a resinous substance of some kind rather than a bituminous material. The pitch was to be applied both within and without the ark.
 - i. “Critics often attack the Genesis account on this point. They claim that this is modern pitch made from petroleum...But a more likely explanation is that pitch need not be made from petroleum at all. For centuries, the pitch making industries in Europe made pitch from pine resin mixed with charcoal.” This is documented by Encyclopedia Britannica.³
 - ii. Interestingly, this same Hebrew word is frequently translated ‘atonement’ in the Old Testament. The word means “a covering”. So Noah was to “atone” the ark inside and out. This would provide a barrier of protection between the waters of judgment and Noah’s family inside the ark. “Just as the tar covered the ark and kept the inhabitants of the ark safe through the flood of Divine judgment, so the blood keeps the soul safe from the judgment of God on sin.”⁴
4. The Measurements for the ark (Vs. 15). The ark was an ocean-liner-sized vessel, not the cartoon ark shown in so many children’s books and illustrations. It is important to note that ark was “designed for capacity and floating stability rather than for speed or navigability.”⁵
 - a. Definition of a cubit. The Biblical cubit is approx...18 inches (45.7cm). It is the typical length between the elbow and the fingertips. The ark was to be 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide and 30 cubits high.
 - b. This means the ark would have been around 138m (L) x 23m (W) x 14m (H). In terms of Feet, that would be 450ft x 75ft x 45ft. This would result in a volume of about 44,400 m³.⁶ To put that in

¹ Sarfati, p. 495.

² Sarfati, p. 499.

³ Ibid, pp. 498-499.

⁴ Butler, p. 47.

⁵ H Morris, *The Genesis Record*, p. 181.

⁶ J Safarti, *The Genesis Account*, pp. 499-500.

Begin with God - Genesis Series

perspective, that would be equivalent to the capacity of over 340 semi-trailers. The Ark would be wider than a six-lane U.S. interstate highway.

- c. The ark's carrying capacity. According to Henry Morris, "the volumetric capacity of the Ark is equal to the volumetric capacity of 522 standard livestock cars such as used on modern American railroads. Since it is known that about 240 sheep can be transported in one stock car, a total of over 125,000 sheep could have been carried in the Ark."⁷ We will consider the question of how all the animals could fit on the ark in greater detail below.
- d. The ark's seaworthiness (floating stability). The ark's size and shape made it ideal for a floating vessel. "Ship builders have discovered that the best dimensions for a floating vessel are a length ten times its height and six times its width – the exact proportions of the ark."⁸ In fact, a study was conducted by a group of Korean naval architects in 1994 and they confirmed "that a barge with the Ark's dimensions would have optimal stability. They concluded that if the wood were only 30cm (1 foot) thick, it could have navigated sea conditions with waves higher than 30m (100 feet). Compare this with a tsunami ("tidal wave"), which is typically only about 10m high."⁹

B. The Particulars of the Ark (Vs. 14b, 16)

1. Its rooms (Vs. 14b). The word refers to a chamber. The word is also translated elsewhere in the Old Testament as 'nest'. These chambers would be for Noah and his family and for the many animals that would also be on the ark.
2. Its window (Vs. 16a). Appears from the construction of the text that this opening was right along the length of the ark. Henry Morris writes, "Although the phraseology is difficult, most authorities understand that this "window" was to consist of a one-cubit opening extending all around the Ark's circumference, near the roof, as provision for light and ventilation."¹⁰ This would make sense from the perspective of the need for both ventilation and lighting. Imagine how unbearable it would be with stale air and stench from all those animals if there was no window!
3. Its door (Vs. 16b). The door was to be made in the ark's side. There was only one door into the ark! In like manner, Christ is the only door to salvation from sin. Jesus said, "**I am the door**: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." (John 10:9) See also John 14:6 & Acts 4:12. In fact, the ark is an amazing type of Christ. This mighty vessel was the design of God and not man. Its three decks remind us of the nature of the Triune God. Its one door reminds us of Christ (Jn. 10:9). Its timbers sealed with pitch (Heb. Atonement) speaks of the blood of Christ

⁷ Morris, p. 181.

⁸ Butler, p. 47.

⁹ Safarti, p. 503. See also official article @ <https://creation.com/safety-investigation-of-noahs-ark-in-a-seaway>, Viewed 18/2/22.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 182.

Begin with God - Genesis Series

covering the sinner and sealing out the waters of judgment. This vessel was a refuge for sinners against the great day of God's wrath. When God said, "Come", sinners were not only invited into safety but into fellowship, for God was pleased to tabernacle within the ark. The sinner entered by grace, but upon entering was immediately engaged in service in the good ship "Grace". So the believer is saved by grace and then joyfully enlisted in the service of the King.

4. Its decks (Vs. 16c). The ark would have three levels. This would maximize the efficient use of the space within the ark. In fact, the deck area of the Ark could fit 22 basketball courts.¹¹

C. The Passengers for the Ark (Vs. 17-20)

1. The human life that would be saved (Vs. 17-18).
 - a. God would make a covenant with Noah. This is the first occurrence of the word 'covenant' in the Bible and would be the first of a series of covenants God would make throughout Biblical history. The details of the Noachic covenant are given after the flood in Genesis 9:9-17. In this covenant, God promised that he would never again destroy the world with a flood and placed the rainbow in the sky as a token of that covenant. By the way, the rainbow should remind us that we have a merciful, gracious and covenant keeping God rather than making us think of a certain lobby group that advocates for sexual perversion.
 - b. God would preserve Noah and his family. They would all be spared the judgment of the world-wide flood. God in His foreknowledge knew that they would be the only ones saved from that generation.
 - c. "That only eight souls were saved in the ark is an encouragement to those who have labored diligently and faithfully in God's service but see very few results... So many judge the success of Christian service on the basis of numbers; so if one is not getting numbers, he is often tempted to resort to fleshly means to obtain them in order to demonstrate success in the work. We have many today who are criticizing and rejecting God's method of preaching and praying in favor of worldly methods to fill the church building. We are told to adapt to the culture. Thankfully Noah did not adapt to the culture. The culture was the reason for the flood. Why do you want to adapt to that which condemns us? Some churches have indeed obtained big crowds by rejecting Biblical methods and using worldly methods – methods that adapt to our culture. Dip your colors and the devil will have many running into your church. But this will be at the cost of a faithful message and holy standards."¹²
2. The animal life that would be spared (Vs. 19-20). Animals are created with instinctive abilities to discern storms, often long before humans. This may be what God used to bring them to the ark.

¹¹ Safarti, p. 500.

¹² Butler, pp. 56-57.

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- a. The instructions about numbers (Vs. 19a). Two of every kind generally and seven of every clean beast and bird specifically (Gen. 7:2-3). The extra numbers of clean animals were clearly a provision for sacrifices (See Gen. 8:20).
- b. The instructions about genders (Vs. 19b). The numbers were to be divided equally between male and female, clearly for the purpose of breeding after the flood to replenish the earth with animal life.
- c. The instructions about kinds (Vs. 20)
 - i. Fowls after their kind (bird life). The raven and dove are mentioned specifically later in the flood account.
 - ii. Cattle after their kind (land animals). A broad word meaning 'beasts'. Not the narrower definition we limit the word to today.
 - iii. Every creeping thing of the earth after his kind.
 - iv. Note: Remember, the Biblical kind was a broader category than the man-made classification system of species. Noah would not have needed to take two of every variety of dog for example. All he would need to do was to take two wolf-like creatures on the ark.
- d. Question: How did Noah fit all the animals on the ark? The short answer is "easily!" But lets back that up with some pointers.
 - i. Remember, as discussed earlier, the Ark could have held approx. 340 semi-trailers each of which could hold 300 sheep. So, it could hold 102,000 sheep.¹³ If they were only one layer deep on all three decks, 19,000 sheep could fit on the Ark, with enough area to satisfy UK animal welfare regulations. Based on the Biblical category of the kind as opposed to the man-made classification system of species, only around 2,000 animals would have been passengers on the ark.¹⁴
 - ii. For example, "of the 9,000 bird species, approximately 400 are hummingbirds, with only minor differences in color, size and habitat."¹⁵
 - iii. Scientist and author John Woodmorappe wrote a book in 1996 entitled *Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study* which deals with the attacks of the critics against the ark account. To be generous to the critics, he bases the calculation on the man-made category 'genus'. Based on that classification you have about 16,000 individual animals. Woodmorappe shows from standard recommended floor space requirements for animals that all of them together would have needed less than half the available floor space of the Ark's three decks.¹⁶
- e. Question: What about the size of the animals?

¹³ Henry Morris suggests as many as 125,000 sheep in his classic book "The Genesis Record".

¹⁴ Sarfarti, p. 516.

¹⁵ Institute of Creation Research, <https://www.icr.org/article/how-could-all-animals-get-board-noahs-ark>, Viewed 24/2/22.

¹⁶ Cited by Sarfarti, pp. 516-517.

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- i. We have discussed how many sheep-sized animals could fit on the ark. But “most vertebrate animals are smaller than sheep (e.g., most of the rodents, shrews, rabbits, birds, and lizards). The median size of all animals on the ark would actually have been that of a small rat, according to Woodmorappe’s tabulations, while only about 11% would have been much larger than a sheep.”
- ii. Regarding dinosaurs, there is no reason to assume that Noah took the largest, adult-sized ones. It is entirely reasonable to assume he took juvenile ones. It is important to remember that even the largest dinosaurs were once small. “They hatched from eggs, the largest of which was not much bigger than a football.”¹⁷

D. The Provisions for the Ark (Vs. 21)

This verse contains instructions concerning food stores for the passengers on the ark.

1. Food for Noah and his family.
2. Food for the animals.
3. On the space this would require, “Woodmorappe calculated that the volume of required foodstuffs would have been only about 15% of the Ark’s total volume. Drinking water would only have taken up about 9% of the volume. This volume would be reduced further if rainwater was collected and piped through troughs.”¹⁸
4. Note: This would constitute a significant task for Noah and his family in addition to the huge job of building the ark. Noah must have had a servant’s heart and attitude to work and labor for His God.

E. The Performance in relation to the Ark (Vs. 22)

1. This section ends with another positive statement about Noah. He was obedient to “all that God commanded him.” What a testimony! His faith was an obedient faith. His walk was an obedient walk.
2. Noah’s obedience to God is also mentioned in Gen. 7:5, 9 & 16.
3. Faith is acting upon God’s Word in obedience. Noah had never seen rain or a flood before. He had to walk by faith rather than sight and trust himself entirely and completely to God’s Word.

Conclusion:

1. Have you entered the ark of salvation? Are you sheltering under his atoning blood? Will you come to Christ today and escape the coming wrath and judgment of God?
2. How important is it to you to walk with God as a Christian? Are you surrendered to obeying God fully in your life? Is consecration to Christ and all His ways important to you?

¹⁷ Sarfati, p. 517.

¹⁸ Cited by Sarfati, p. 521.

Come into the Ark of Safety

Text: Gen. 7:1-24

Introduction:

1. In our last message we watched Noah as he constructed the ark, an ocean-liner sized vessel with more than sufficient capacity to carry Noah's family, the required number of animals and the food supplies for all on board. We now come to the account of the flood itself.
2. Henry Morris: "God had spoken to Noah nearly one hundred years earlier giving instructions concerning the Ark and the animals, and assuring him that the flood indeed would come on schedule. There had been no further word from heaven, but Noah had proceeded steadily and faithfully with his unique mission and ministry, obeying God's commandments without question. With all the urgency possible, he preached the coming judgment, year after year, but to no avail, so far as converts were concerned. Finally, the Ark was completed and all the animals were assembling. The 120 years would be up in a few days, and Grandfather Methuselah, who had served the Lord longer than any man who ever lived, was on his deathbed. Then it was, after a century of silence, that God once again spoke to Noah."¹
3. The flood account is a powerful reminder that God is a just and Holy God who will judge unrepentant men who refuse His offer of grace. Never forget the backdrop to this account of the longsuffering and mercy of God that was rejected by the pre-flood world.
4. We have divided the account into three sections for our study:

I. THE DIRECTIVES BEFORE THE FLOOD (VS. 1-9; 13-16)

Let's break down what God said to Noah just before the flood came. There was:

A. The Final Invitation into the Ark (Vs. 1)

1. The reach of the invitation – "come thou and all thy house" (Vs. 1a)
 - a. Noah was invited – "come thou". Note that God said 'come', not 'go'. God would be in the ark with them, preserving them from the watery judgment.
 - b. Noah's family was invited – "all thy house". Noah's entire household was saved. His children all made an individual decision to enter the ark of safety (Vs. 13). Acts 16:31 "And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.**"
 - c. You are invited! God is an invitational God so His invitation extends to you too. All down through history, God has issued the salvation call for sinners to repent and be reconciled to Himself.
 - i. Matt. 11:28 "**Come** unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."
 - ii. Revelation 22:17 "And the Spirit and the bride say, **Come**. And let him that heareth say, **Come**. And let him that is athirst **come**. And whosoever will, let him take the

¹ H Morris, *The Genesis Record*, p. 189.

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water of life freely.” The Spirit and the saints invite the sinner to come and avail themselves of the water of life.

2. The rescue in the invitation – “into the ark” (Vs. 1b)
 - a. The ark was the only place of safety from the judgment that was about to fall.
 - b. The ark is a wonderful picture of salvation.
 - i. The ark was pitched (Heb. ‘atonement’) within and without protecting those inside from the waters of judgment outside. In like manner it is only the atoning blood of Christ that has the power to cover the sinner and protect him from God’s wrath. Eph. 1:7 “In whom we have **redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;”
 - ii. The ark’s window provided light. Jesus Christ is the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5).
 - iii. You had to be in the ark to be rescued from the flood. Knowing about the ark or viewing it from afar would not save you. In like manner, you must be “in Christ” in order to escape God’s judgment. 2 Cor. 5:17 “Therefore if any man **be in Christ**, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”
 - iv. You had to make a personal decision to enter the ark. In like manner, you must make a choice to receive Christ’s offer of salvation. You are not forced!
 - v. You had to enter through the ark’s only door, accepting God’s only way of salvation. The ark was God’s design, revealed to Noah. You could not invent your own way to escape the flood. In like manner, Jesus Christ is the door, the only way of salvation.
 - John 10:9 “**I am the door**: by me if any man enter in, **he shall be saved**, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”
 - John 14:6 “Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way**, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”
 - Acts 4:12 “Neither is there **salvation in any other**: for there is **none other name under heaven** given among men, whereby we must be **saved**.”
3. The reason for the invitation – “thee have I seen righteous” (Vs. 1c)
 - a. Remember, this was not Noah’s own righteousness. Noah was saved by grace (Gen. 6:8), through faith (Heb. 11:7) and was therefore made righteous in the sight of God (Gen. 6:9).
 - b. Once saved, Noah lived a godly, separated, sanctified and obedient life for God’s glory. Walking with God is the truly blessed life and comes with great rewards and blessings. All those long years of faithfully serving God were worth every minute of sacrifice for Noah and His family.

B. The Final Instructions for the Ark (Vs. 2-9; 13-16)

1. The Creatures for the Ark (Vs. 2-3; 14-16)

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- a. Clean beasts – by sevens. This would mean three pairs instead of one, leaving a spare animal for sacrifice. Another possibility is that the word ‘sevens’ refers to seven pairs making 14 in total. “The larger number of clean animals would also encourage the greater numerical proliferation of the clean animals after the Flood.”²
 - b. Unclean beasts – by two.
 - c. Fowls of air – by sevens.
 - d. Note: We see God’s mercy not only upon mankind in saving Noah’s family but also upon the animals in that representatives of each kind were preserved.
2. The Countdown to the Flood (Vs. 4)
- a. Evidently by this time the construction of the flood is complete. Methuselah has probably just died, a sign that God’s judgment was about to fall. It could be that the remaining seven days served as a period of mourning for Methuselah (See Gen. 50:10).
 - b. God reveals to Noah that there is only seven days to go before the rain would begin to fall. Time was almost up for the pre-flood world!
 - c. Challenge: **Time is running out for the world.** God has not revealed to us the exactly how much time is left on His Divine timetable before the rapture comes and the judgments of the tribulation period are unleashed on this wicked world. But we do know that it is imminent (could happen at any moment) and that it is nearer with each passing day (Rom. 13:11).
 - d. Challenge: **Time is running out for you.** Hebrews 9:27 “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”
 - e. “I will cause it to rain” = God was the cause of the flood! We do not need to seek a purely naturalistic explanation for what got the rains started.
 - f. “every living substance” = lit. “all substance” or “all that grows up”. Seems to include plants as well as animals.
3. The Compliance of Noah (Vs. 5-9; 13)
- Observe the following qualities of Noah’s obedience:
- a. The Totality of Noah’s Obedience (Vs. 5). No partial obedience there! Most Christians want to obey God selectively. Like Saul of old, they obey some things but not all things that God requires.
 - b. The Trust of Noah’s Obedience – “because of the waters of the flood” (Vs. 7) At this point the waters of the flood had not come upon the earth but Noah obeyed in faith. He believed God’s Word! Heb. 11:7 “**By faith** Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.”
 - c. The Timing of Noah’s Obedience – “the selfsame day” (Vs. 13). The word ‘selfsame’ means “the very same”. So, it means that Noah and his family took God’s Word seriously about the seven

² Ibid, p. 191.

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days left and entered the ark the very same day the flood began (day 7). They believed in the absolute accuracy of the Word of God.

4. The Closing of the Ark (Vs. 16)

The closing of the Ark's Door by the hand of God teaches two lessons:

- a. The salvation of Noah's family. God's shutting of the door is a wonderful picture of the security of the believer. God invited them into the ark of salvation and sealed them safely inside it. "The old world was forever dead to them from that moment on. Their life was henceforth a new life and they were to live in a new world."³
- b. The damnation of Noah's world. God's shutting of the door of the ark is a sobering reminder of the truth that the day of grace will not last forever. From this moment on, those outside the ark were doomed. There comes a time when the door of opportunity is closed forever to those who are hardened in their unrepentant state and judgment comes.
- c. Challenge: Come into the ark of salvation (Jesus Christ) while the door is open for you. "...behold, **now** is the accepted time; behold, **now** is the day of salvation." (2 Cor. 6:2) Isaiah 55:6-7 "Seek ye the LORD **while he may be found**, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE FLOOD (VS. 10-12)

A. The Day the Flood Came (Vs. 10-11a)

Two time markers are given, adding to the historicity of the flood account. This was a significant day in human history. It was:

1. The sovereign timing of God (Vs. 10). The judgment fell exactly at God's appointed time. God had revealed over a century earlier that there would be 120 years left before the flood (See Gen. 6:3). At the end of that period, God revealed to Noah the final week before the flood would come.
2. The six hundredth year of Noah (Vs. 11a).
3. The seventeenth day of the second month (Vs. 11b). We do not know which calendar Moses was referring to when he wrote Genesis so it is difficult to pinpoint the exact month the flood came.

B. The Way the Flood Came (Vs. 11b-12)

The floodwaters came from two sources:

1. Waters from below the earth – "fountains of the great deep".
 - a. "all the fountains" = all the underground reservoirs involved. Not hard to see how the floodwaters would eventually cover the whole earth.
 - b. "the great deep" = clearly a reference to subterranean water reserves. Since there was no rain in Eden, it would be

³ Ibid, p. 198.

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reasonable to assume Eden's River was fed from one of these underground water sources.

- c. "broken up" = a strong word meaning "to split, break open, burst open, burst forth. It has the basic idea of something splitting or dividing with force" (Baker & Carpenter) Speaks of the fracturing of earth's crust, resulting in widespread volcanic activity, earthquakes and tsunamis. Imagine the scene. Not only do you have torrential rains from above but large volumes of water shooting into the air from below the earth along with magma etc...
2. Waters from above the earth – "the windows of heaven were opened".
 - a. The place from which the rains fell – the water canopy above the firmament is dumped on the earth. The word 'opened' means "to loosen". God released the waters from above the firmament (Gen. 1:7).
 - b. The period for which the rain fell (Vs. 12). The rains persisted for 40 days and 40 nights. Significant local flooding can occur in a matter of hours in a torrential downpour. Imagine nonstop rains worldwide for 40 days and nights. "A worldwide rain lasting forty days would be quite impossible under present atmospheric conditions. This is explained by the dumbing of the water canopy on the earth."⁴ In the Bible the number 40 "regularly describes a period of trial terminating in the victory of good and the overthrow of evil."⁵

III. THE DEVASTATION OF THE FLOOD (VS. 17-24)

A. The Progression of the Flood (Vs. 17-20)

1. The Rising of the Waters (Vs. 17)
 - a. The waters increased until the ark was lifted up above the earth.
 - b. This tends to indicate the ark was constructed inland and that it took some time for the waters to rise to the point of lifting it off the ground. Imagine if you were in Noah's ark when that happened. You hear the rain pelting down outside and the shouts and screams of those hoping to scramble to safety. Eventually you hear the lap of the water against the side of the ark and then it begins to move.
2. The Prevailing of the Waters (Vs. 18-20)
 - a. Four times the word 'prevailed' is used in relation to the flood waters.
 - i. "the waters prevailed and were increased greatly" (Vs. 18).
 - ii. "the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth" (Vs. 19).
 - iii. "Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail" (Vs. 20).
 - iv. "the waters prevailed upon the earth" (Vs. 24).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Leupold, cited by J Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, p. 524.

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- b. The word means “to be strong” (Baker & Carpenter), to conquer. It means “were overwhelmingly mighty”.⁶ These were powerful floodwaters that conquered the earth.
- c. “**all** the high hills, that were under the **whole** heaven” = words could not be plainer as to the fact this flood was world-wide. Fifteen cubits would be close to 7 meters. Note: Remember that the topography of the pre-flood world was different to what we have now in the post-flood era. Therefore, it is a mistake to take a mountain from the post-flood era such as Mount Ararat as the benchmark for the depth of the flood.

B. The Punishment of the Flood (Vs. 21-23)

These verses specify in great detail the universal death that came upon the planet.

1. Those who were destroyed in the judgment (Vs. 21-23a).

There was:

- a. The complete destruction of animal life.
- b. The complete destruction of bird life.
- c. The complete destruction of human life.
- d. The complete destruction of plant life. The phrase “every living substance” appears to include vegetation as well as animals. God had said, “I will destroy man **with the earth.**” (Gen. 6:13)
- e. We could summarize it this way. In the flood, there was the burial of fossils and the blotting out of mankind.
 - i. It is important to note that “the fossil record is not a record of a succession of ages, but a sequence of burial. At the beginning, when the ‘fountains of the great deep’ were bursting, this would have generated underwater mudslides, or turbidity currents. Huge amounts of bottom-dwelling marine life would have been buried and fossilized right away. It is thus not surprising that we see marine invertebrates at the bottom of the fossil record. Also, about 95% of all fossils are shellfish. It should also not be surprising that we also find many fish buried near the bottom of the fossil record. Also ‘low’ in the record are those creatures at the boundary of water and land – the amphibians. After that, land creatures would be buried. So the fossil record reflects a successive burial of ecosystems as the Flood encroached upon the land from the sea.”⁷
 - ii. Most of the world rejects catastrophism in favor of uniformitarianism. Uniformitarianism “is a geological belief that existing processes acting the same way as at the present time are sufficient to account for all geological changes.” (Butler) Oxford dictionary defines the word as follows: “The theory that changes in the earth's crust during geological history have resulted from the action of

⁶ Morris, p. 200.

⁷ Sarfati, p. 561.

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- continuous and uniform processes.”⁸ However, fossils form rapidly, not gradually over time. The evidence actually supports the Biblical view of catastrophism.
- iii. Mount St. Helens is a good case study in catastrophism. It demonstrated that significant topographical and geological changes can occur in just a matter of hours.
 - iv. “Wrong geological ideas have also led people to wrong ideas about the Bible—that the events it describes were mythological and did not actually happen. Mount St Helens changed that, which is why I have been so interested in what happened. The eruption demonstrated that geologic catastrophe can produce in hours and days geologic features previously believed to have taken millions of years. When we see what the volcano did in such a short time, we can better appreciate how the catastrophe of Noah’s Flood formed the much larger geological features on planet Earth.”⁹ Mount St. Helens demonstrated for example that geological layers can form in hours and canyons can be carved out very quickly. So in reality it was rapid and catastrophic, not slow and gradual for the fossil record.
 - v. John Butler writes, “Some folk with the Scripture in hand are afraid of science, but it is science that needs to be afraid of Scripture. For Scripture speaks of heaven and hell and our eternal destiny and how to secure heaven as one’s eternal destiny. Science has no answers for the soul. Many in modern science do not like to admit the credibility of the Scripture, for then they must admit to God and sin and His judgment upon it. Many in modern science do not want to admit these things, for they want a universe without God.”¹⁰
- 2. Those who were spared the judgment (Vs. 23b).
 - a. The human life that was spared – Noah and his family.
 - b. The animal life that was spared – 2 of each kind (7 for clean animals).

C. The Period of the Flood (Vs. 24)

- 1. The floodwaters prevailed over the whole earth for 150 days before beginning to recede.
- 2. It would be over an entire year (compare 7:11 and 8:13) before enough land had been exposed to permit the occupants to leave the ark.
- 3. There are five significant date notations in the flood account:
 - a. 2nd month, 17th day – The Beginning of the Flood (Gen. 7:11-12).
 - b. 7th month, 17th day – The Grounding of the ark (Gen. 8:4).

⁸ <https://www.lexico.com/definition/uniformitarianism> Viewed 5.3.22.

⁹ <https://creation.com/lessons-from-mount-st-helens> Viewed 5.3.22.

¹⁰ J Butler, *Noah the Ark Builder*, pp. 81-82.

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- c. 10th month, 1st day – The tops of the mountains become visible (Gen. 8:5).
 - d. 1st month, 1st day – Noah removes the Ark's covering (Gen. 8:13).
 - e. 2nd month, 27th day – Noah and his family disembark from the Ark (Gen. 8:14-18).
4. There are also five significant day notations in the flood account:
- a. 7 days – Countdown to the flood (Gen. 7:10).
 - b. 40 days – Rain upon the earth (Gen. 7:12, 17).
 - c. 150 days – waters prevail on the earth (Gen. 7:24).
 - d. 40 days – waiting in the ark (Gen. 8:6-7).
 - e. 7 days – week long intervals (Gen. 8:10-12). “These seven-day periods refer to the intervals of Noah sending out the dove who was sent out three times to ascertain the degree of drying that had taken place on the earth.”¹¹

Conclusion:

1. Have you entered the ark of salvation? Are you sheltering under his atoning blood? Will you come to Christ today and escape the coming wrath and judgment of God?
2. How important is obedience to God's Word to you as a Christian?

¹¹ Butler, p. 96.

The World Under Water

Text: Gen. 8:1-22

Introduction:

1. The flood account continues in this chapter with the restraining and the process of the waters receding from off the earth. The faithfulness of God to those on the Ark is demonstrated and their worshipful thankfulness is highlighted upon leaving the ark.
2. This chapter adds further important details to help us in the development of the catastrophist model in opposition to the uniformitarian explanation of geology. Fossils formed in a rapid and catastrophic environment rather than through long, slow processes over millions and billions of years. The record in the rocks is a testament to God's judgment on sin, not a testimony to the evolutionary theory.
3. We will divide the chapter into four parts for our study.

I. THE PURPOSE TOWARDS NOAH (VS. 1-5)

In these verses we witness God's gracious consideration of Noah and His actions that flow from that care, revealing God's purpose towards Noah and his family. Notice the two actions of God that are revealed:

A. God Remembered the Arks Passengers (Vs. 1a)

1. God remembered the human life on the ark.
 - a. The word 'remembered' does not imply that God had forgotten Noah and his family as God cannot and does not forget His children. The word reveals that God is about to act again on their behalf. "The word 'remembered' simply speaks of God's compassion and God's faithfulness. He has compassion on His people's needs and diligently cares for them, and He is faithful to His promises to them."
 - b. We note the same pattern in other verses where God is said to 'remember'. Wiersbe notes, "To remember means to tact on behalf of another. God remembered Abraham and rescued Lot from destruction in Sodom (Gen. 19:29). The Lord remembered both Rachel and Hannah and enabled them to conceive and bear sons (30:22; 1 Sam. 1:11, 19). The Lord remembered His covenant and delivered the Jews from the bondage of Egypt (Ex. 2:24; 6:5).
2. God remembered the animal life on the ark.
 - a. God also remembered the creatures on the ark. This is "a touching indication of the tenderness of God towards his creatures" (Whitelaw).
 - b. Animals are not the objects of God's saving, redemptive love like mankind who was created in God's image. However, they are the objects of His overall care as Creator (Matt. 10:29).

B. God Restrained the Floodwaters (Vs. 1b-5)

God used natural phenomena to bring the end to the flood.

1. The blowing of a wind (Vs. 1b).

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- a. The word 'asswaged' means "to decrease, subside". In this context it means "to go down, to get lower" (Baker and Carpenter). The wind was a part of this process. Not only would the wind aid the evaporation of the water, it would also aid the moving of the water into what would become the post flood bodies of water in oceans, seas, lakes and rivers.
 - b. This is the first mention of wind in the Bible and is significant in light of the atmospheric and environmental changes that have occurred because of the dumping of the water canopy above the earth. "The uniform (near uniform) temperatures of the antediluvian world would have precluded strong winds. With the vapor canopy gone, however, sharp temperature differentials would have been established between equator and poles, and great air movements begun." (Morris)
2. The stopping of the water (Vs. 2)
 - a. The fountains were stopped. God stopped the flow of water from the underground reservoirs.
 - b. The rain was stopped.
 3. The receding of the waters (Vs. 3-5). The waters begin to drain off the emerging lands:
 - a. The process of the receding – "and the waters returned from off the earth continually" (Vs. 3a). This describes the post flood movements of the colossal floodwaters. This process would result in the formation of huge canyons as the waters gouged pathways through the flood sediment. It would also contribute to the formation of the post flood topography with its hills, mountains and valleys. The movement of tectonic plates would have likely been a part of this process also. Henry Morris writes, "Depending on topography, vast interior continental lakes would exist for a time and great rivers would form, scouring out great canyons rapidly and depositing tremendous amounts of alluvium in their lower courses. It is significant that, all over the world, interior lakes and seas show evidence of much higher water levels in the recent past. Rivers also everywhere show that they once carried much greater quantities of water and sediment than they do at present. These and related phenomena provide still further geologic evidence of a worldwide Flood several thousand years ago." One might ask, "**where did the floodwaters go?**" Wiersbe answers, "Never underestimate the power of moving water! It's possible that the flood greatly altered the contours of the land and created new areas for the water to fill, both on the surface of the earth and underground. Since there were eruptions from beneath the earth (7:11), whole continents and mountain ranges could have risen and fallen, creating huge areas into which the water could spill. The winds that God sent over the earth helped to evaporate the water and also move it to the places God had provided."
 - b. The period of the receding – "after the end of the hundred and fifty days" (Vs. 3b). This ties in with the end of chapter 7 that

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states that the flood waters “prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days” (7:24).

- c. The product of the receding – “the waters were abated” (Vs. 4-5). The word means lessened, decreased, diminished, reduced. This led to two events:
 - i. The Resting of the Ark (Vs. 4). The ark's keel runs aground somewhere in the mountains of Ararat before the tops of the mountains can actually be seen. While there are claims the ark has been found on Mount Ararat, it should be noted that the text of Scripture does not specify a particular mountain but a mountain range. Further, the discovery of the ark is not essential to prove the truth of the world-wide flood. The evidence of a worldwide flood is practically everywhere! Interestingly, “the Ararat region, including Mount Ararat itself abounds in what is known as pillow lava, a dense lava rock formed under great depths of water. The mountain also includes certain sedimentary formations containing marine fossils.” This is the second mention of the word ‘rested’ in the Bible. The first is in Gen. 2:2-3 where God ‘rested’ upon completing creation. The Ark is a wonderful type of Christ. “As God ‘finished’ His work of Creation and as the Ark ‘finished’ its mission, so Christ ‘finished’ His work of salvation (Jn. 19:30).” (Morris)
 - ii. The Revealing of the Mountains (Vs. 5). These mountains no doubt had been shaped and formed through the flood. “The mountains on today’s world were largely uplifted during and after the Flood. This very uplift, combined with sinking of the ocean floors, would produce the unevenness required. As this happened, the water would run off the mountains and into the oceans.” The earth’s topography would be very different from what it was before the flood. There is also a time stamp on this event. It took place on the first day of the 10th month. The flood had begun the seventeenth day of the second month (7:11) so this is almost 8 months later.

II. THE PATIENCE OF NOAH (VS. 6-14)

A. The Principle of Waiting

1. God sometimes allows us to have periods of confinement in our lives. Just make sure with God’s help that these times do not become a lapse in faith and a drifting from the Lord.
2. God was silent and yet was providentially and powerfully working on Noah’s behalf at this time (See Vs. 1-5). Do not misinterpret the silence of God to mean He has ceased activity in your life. Noah and his family did not know when it would all end. They simply clung to God’s provision of salvation and waited on Him. Outside, God was working to bring the flood to an end. His Providence also ensured the ark ran aground in a safe and strategic place. His guidance ensured the circumstances were right for Noah and his

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family to leave the ark safely. Someone said “Waiting is a common instrument of providential discipline for those to whom exceptional work has been appointed.” (Stalker)

3. Faith not only works for God; it waits upon God. Noah was a good example of this. He was patient during the long years of building the ark; patient as he preached continually to an unresponsive audience and patient while waiting for the flood to come to an end. 1 Pet. 3:20 “...the longsuffering of God **waited** in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing”.

B. The Progression of Waiting (Vs. 6-12)

This period of waiting was not a time of idleness and inactivity on Noah’s part and reminds us that waiting upon God is not entirely a passive matter. We see the constant intersection of Divine sovereignty and human responsibility in the Scriptures. Noah was active during this time, not only in serving and caring for the animals inside the ark but also in seeking to actively discern God’s will and timing as to when they were to leave the ark. Noah undertakes several initiatives to assess the flood situation:

1. The Sending out of the Raven (Vs. 7). The raven does not return, no doubt finding plenty of rotting flesh to feed upon.
2. The Sending out of the Dove (Vs. 8-12). The dove is a positive symbol in the Bible of youth (Son 1:15, 4:1, 5:12), love (Song 2:14, 5:2, 6:9), innocence (Matt. 10:16) and the Holy Spirit (Lk. 3:22). The dove is sent out three times with one-week intervals between each dispatch:
 - a. The first time the dove is sent out with the raven and returns as she “found no rest for the sole of her foot” (Vs. 8-9).
 - b. The second time the dove is sent out she returns with an olive twig in her beak, indicating not only that the waters had receded further but that the trees and vegetation were beginning to re-sprout (Vs. 10-11).
 - c. The third time the dove is sent out she does not return, indicating that the land has become habitable again.

C. The Period of Waiting (Vs. 13-14)

1. The final period of waiting (Vs. 13)
 - a. On the first day of the first month almost one year since boarding the ark, Noah removes the ark’s covering (possibly one of its windows) and surveys the ground. It appears dry and ready for them to disembark. However, Noah would need to wait till the end of the following month before he heard officially from God that it was time to leave the ark.
 - b. Perhaps this period was the hardest and most challenging for Noah and his family. Often the last period of waiting is the hardest and discipline and patience is needed to not rush ahead of God’s program.
2. The total period of waiting (Vs. 14)
 - a. Noah entered the ark in his six hundredth year, the seventeenth day of the second month (Gen. 7:11).

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- b. Noah leaves the ark in his six hundredth and first year, the twenty seventh day of the second month. This means Noah and his family were on the ark for a total of a year and 10 days.

III. THE PROCLAMATION TO NOAH (VS. 15-19)

A. The Order to Noah (Vs. 15-17)

1. Noah stays where he is until he hears from God. This is wisdom! Only move from where you are at the Lord's clear direction.
2. God commands Noah and his family to disembark from the ark and to bring all the animals with them in order that they might "breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful, and multiply upon the earth." (Vs. 17b).

B. The Obedience of Noah (Vs. 18-19).

1. Again, Noah does exactly as God has commanded him, leaving the ark and walking out into the post flood world. Total obedience to the revealed Word of God was what characterized Noah's life from start to finish with the exception of his drunkenness at the end. Genuine faith leads to a life of submission to the will of God revealed in the Word of God.
2. Note: What changes would we expect in the post-flood world? Henry Morris suggests the following:
 - a. The oceans were much more extensive, since they now contained all the waters which one were "above the firmament" and in the subterranean reservoirs of the "great deep".
 - b. The land areas were much less extensive than before the Flood, with a much greater portion of its surface uninhabitable for this reason.
 - c. The thermal vapor blanket had been dissipated, so that strong temperature differentials were inaugurated, leading to a gradual buildup of snow and ice in the polar latitudes, rendering much of the extreme north and southern land surfaces also essentially uninhabitable.
 - d. Mountain ranges uplifted after the Flood emphasized the more rugged topography of the postdiluvian continents, with many of these regions also becoming unfit for human habitation.
 - e. Winds and storms, rains and snows, were possible now, thus rendering the total environment less congenial to man and animals than had once been the case.
 - f. The environment was also more hostile because of harmful radiation from space, no longer filtered out by the vapor canopy, resulting (along with other contributing environmental factors) in gradual reduction in human longevity after the Flood.
 - g. Because of the tremendous physiographic and isostatic movements generated by the collapse of the subterranean caverns and the post-Flood uplifts, the crust of the earth was in a state of general instability, reflected in recurrent volcanic and seismic activity all over the world for many centuries and continuing in some degree even to the present.

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- h. The lands were barren of vegetation, until such time as plant life could be reestablished through the sprouting of seeds and cuttings buried beneath the surface.

IV. THE PRAISE FROM NOAH (VS. 20-22)

The first thing Noah does after leaving the ark is to build an altar and offer a sacrifice to God. Let's consider five points about Noah's offering:

A. The Priority of Noah's Offering (Vs. 20a)

Evidently the worship and thanksgiving of God was first priority to Noah as a pattern of life as his first act after leaving the ark was to lead his family in worship. How important is worship to you in the following areas?

1. On an individual level.
2. On a family level.
3. On a church level.

B. The Price of Noah's Offering (Vs. 20b)

1. Noah offers at least one of each of the clean animals and birds. This represented a great sacrifice when you consider the relatively small number of clean animals available at that time. "This was probably the biggest sacrifice in history, in proportion to availability of animals" (Sarfati).
2. True worship leads the worshipper to make sacrifices for God. Consider David's example in 2 Sam. 24:24.

C. The Picture of Noah's Offering (Vs. 20)

Several truths are pictured in the offering on the altar.

1. *Adoration* – Noah's offering was an act of worshipful thanksgiving to God. Undoubtedly this sacrifice represented the overwhelming thankfulness of Noah and his family on account of the fact they had been spared God's judgment. The fact we have been spared God's judgment should motivate us to regular thanksgiving and adoration of our God.
2. *Intercession* – the altar also speaks of the place of prayer. Perhaps Noah was also asking God for mercy for him and his family after witnessing the sobering judgment of the world-wide flood as God responds with a specific promise never to condemn the world again with a universal flood.
3. *Propitiation* – the sacrifice on the altar is a picture of substitution and propitiation. The innocent victim is slain in place of the guilty (substitution), thus providing appeasement from the wrath of God (propitiation). The Greek word translated 'propitiation' (Rom. 3:25) is also translated "mercy seat" in Heb. 9:5. The mercy seat perfectly covered the law which was contained in the Ark (Ex. 25:17, 21). This symbolizes propitiation – Christ covering the demands of God's law with His precious, sinless blood.

D. The Pleasure in Noah's Offering (Vs. 21a)

1. The metaphor is of the smoke of the offering being like a sweet-smelling aroma in God's nostrils. "The meaning is that the sacrifice of the patriarch was as acceptable to God as refreshing odors are to the sense of a man." (Whitelaw) This figure of speech reveals the truth of God's acceptance of Noah's offering. Conversely, when

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God is said to refuse to “smell” an offering, it meant it was rejected (See Lev. 26:31; Is. 1:11-15; Amos 5:21).

2. This is also a beautiful picture of Christ’s sacrifice which was well-pleasing to the Father. Eph. 5:2 “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a **sweet-smelling savour.**” Remember. God will never accept anyone on the basis of their sin-tainted works. He only accepts them on the basis of Christ’s blood sacrifice on the cross.
3. We are also reminded of the truth that in order for worship to please God, we need to approach Him in His appointed way. Noah’s offering was a ‘clean’ offering and hence represents pure worship. There is too much emphasis in modern Christendom on making “worship” enjoyable and acceptable to man rather than God. The result has been entertainment, rock and roll churches that resemble something more like a carnal theatre than house of true worship.

E. The Promise in response to Noah’s Offering (Vs. 21b-22)

In grace, God determined three promises in His heart towards Noah and his descendants. Notice that the inner thoughts of God’s heart are being revealed through the Word of God in these verses. Before formally pronounced His promises to Noah (next chapter) He first determined them in His heart. The promises were:

1. God would not pronounce an additional curse upon the earth. This does not mean that the original curse after the fall was rescinded but that God would not pronounce an additional curse on the earth.
2. God would not send another world-wide flood to destroy the earth.
3. God would ensure the day/night and four-season cycles would continue while the earth remains. The normal cycle of the seasons had been interrupted during the flood for a year but that would not be repeated.
4. Note: Do you see the picture of Christ again? Grace is extended and deserved judgment withheld because of the blood sacrifice. “The continuation of man’s existence is not something man has earned by goodness; rather, its entirely because of God’s long-suffering and forbearance.” (Sarfati)

Conclusion:

1. Have you come to God by His appointed way for salvation?
2. Is God allowing a period of testing in your life? A period of waiting upon Him? Stay faithful and trust that He is working sovereignly for your good and His ultimate glory.
3. How important is worship to you?

Noah's Final Chapter

Text: Gen. 9:1-24

Introduction:

1. In this chapter we have the post flood account of Noah and his three sons beginning with God's covenant and ending with Noah's compromise. It provides us with the conclusion to the life of this man of God who apart from one serious fall at the end, stands as an inspiring example of truth and righteousness. This chapter reminds us of the faithfulness of God on the one hand and the weakness of man on the other. It presents a sobering lesson that our testimony can be tarnished at the end of a life that was otherwise lived for God's glory.
2. Concerning the first part of this chapter, Henry Morris writes, "The first seventeen verses of this chapter contain a detailed quotation of God's own words, given to Noah in response to his believing sacrifice after leaving the Ark. These verses contain the basic provision for human governments among men, exercised on behalf of God. They also contain the great Noahic covenant with post-Flood man, which is still in effect as far as God is concerned, though thousands of years have passed since it was made."
3. We will consider the text under three headings as follows:
 - The Commission to Noah (Vs. 1-7)
 - The Covenant with Noah (Vs. 8-17)
 - The Compromise of Noah (Vs. 18-24)

I. THE COMMISSION TO NOAH (VS. 1-7)

God outline three rules for Noah and his descendants in this commission:

A. The Multiply Rule (Vs. 1, 7)

These verses contain a similar mandate to that found in Gen. 1:26-28. After the flood it was God's will for:

1. The Multiplication of animal life (Gen. 8:17).
2. The Multiplication of human life (Vs. 1, 7).
 - a. The word 'replenish' means "to fill". The phrase "bring forth abundantly" (Vs. 7) literally means "bring forth in swarms" (Morris). It is translated "breed abundantly" in Genesis 8:17.
 - b. The command is repeated in verse 7 for emphasis.
 - c. These commands reveal God's heart and will for His earth. God is the giver of life and it is His will that His world be filled with both human and animal life in abundance. This is opposite to the message of the radical environmental lobby with its constant scaremongering about the world being "overpopulated".
 - d. Illustration: John Reid, an atheistic neuroscientist from Melbourne Australia, advocated in 2006: "The population of the world must be very quickly reduced to 5 billion. And then, as the average level of affluence rises, fairly quickly reduced further to, say, 2 to 3 billion." Earlier that year, evolutionary ecologist Eric Pianka presented a chilling talk to the Texas Academy of Science at Lamar University in Beaumont, advocating a similar reduction of humanity. He received a standing ovation. Amongst

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other things, he expressed that his hope was that the Ebola virus which attacks humans currently (but only through blood transmission) will mutate with the Ebola virus that attacks monkeys airborne to create an airborne Ebola virus that attacks humans. He was basically advocating for the death of all but 10% of the current population.¹

- e. **Question: Why don't the advocates of such radical policies lead by example?**

B. The Meat Rule (Vs. 2-4)

Man's relationship with the animal kingdom would take on some new aspects after the flood. There would be:

1. A new fear in the animal kingdom (Vs. 2). This fear would be in part because man would now become a hunter of animals for meat. It may also be that God placed this fear in the animal kingdom for the preservation of human life. Animals generally multiply more rapidly than humans and with predatory behavior now a part of the post-fall world, humans could have been wiped out if God hadn't placed this inhibition in the animal kingdom.
2. A new fare from the animal kingdom (Vs. 3-4)
 - a. The scope (Vs. 3). Every living thing in the animal kingdom was now a potential part of man's diet. Dietary laws for the Jewish people would come later. The Bible is very clear that meat eating is permitted and those teach otherwise are actually promoting doctrines of devils (1 Tim. 4:1-5). Meat eating is not commanded but it is permitted.
 - b. The restriction (Vs. 4). The blood was to be respected, even in an animal being used for meat. The blood speaks of life and therefore has value. The blood played a central role in the sacrificial system of the Old Testament that ultimately pointed forward to Christ who would shed His perfect, sinless blood for our redemption. Lev. 17:11 "For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul."

C. The Murder Rule (Vs. 5-6)

Warren Wiersbe writes, "From instructing Noah about the shedding of animal blood, the Lord proceeded to discuss an even more important topic: the shedding of human blood...God had put the fear of humans into the animals, but now He had to put the fear of God into the humans lest they destroy one another!"

1. The application of the law to animal kind (Vs. 5a).
 - a. Henry Morris writes, "Man's blood, representing his life, was even more sacred than that of animals for "in the image of God made he man." Though animals share the possession of a soul and body with man, it was only man who had an eternal spirit, the image of God. Neither beast nor man was therefore permitted to spill man's blood. The death penalty would therefore apply to any animal or man who shed human blood."

¹ J Sarfati, *The Genesis Account*, p. 264.

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- b. If a beast took a man's life, it was to lose its life. We are reminded that in God's Divine order, human life is of far greater value than animal life. When an animal dies, it ceases to exist but when a human created in God's image dies, he lives for eternity in heaven or hell.
 - c. If a shark kills a swimmer, if possible, the shark should be hunted down and killed! Animal activists get the priority round the wrong way. An animal that attacks and kills a human being, if allowed to continue roaming free, presents a great risk to others.
 - d. The Mosaic law outlines a similar truth in Exodus 21:28-29. "If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox *shall be* quit. But if the ox were wont to push with his horn in time past, and it hath been testified to his owner, and he hath not kept him in, but that he hath killed a man or a woman; the ox shall be stoned, and his owner also shall be put to death."
 - e. Illustration: A pair of man-eating lions called "the man eaters of Tsavo" terrorised railway workers in Tsavo, Kenya in 1898 eating at least 28 people during a 10-month period. Finally, the pair was shot and killed by a British officer called Lt. Col. John H. Patterson.
2. The application of the law to mankind (Vs. 6).
 - a. The legal precedent of the law (Vs. 6a). "This simple instruction to Noah is the fundamental basis for all human legal and governmental institutions." (Morris) God's Word is clear that the death penalty applies for murder. If you take another's life, you pay for it with your own life. Three times the word 'require' appears. God requires capital punishment for murder. Capital punishment is a function of government as taught in Romans 13:1-7 (the 'sword' is an instrument of death). This law has never been revoked and there would be far less murders if governments upheld Divine law on this point.
 - b. Remember: Capital punishment is a function of government, not the church. The church wields the sword of the Spirit (Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17), not the sword of justice (Rom. 13:4; John 18:36).
 - c. Illustration: Singapore has the death penalty for murder and other serious offences such as rape. The result? It is one of the safest countries in the world for people to visit.
 - d. The logic of the law (Vs. 6b). The reason for the law is given – "for in the image of God made he man". This verse reinforces the Christian view of the sanctity of human life and that only God has the right to take life.

II. THE COVENANT WITH NOAH (VS. 8-17)

God fulfills the promise He made to Noah in Genesis 6:18 that He would establish His covenant with him.

A. The Source of the Covenant (Vs. 8-9a)

1. "And **God spake**...And **I**, behold, **I establish my** covenant with you" = this covenant came from the heart of God (See Gen. 8:21-22) and was initiated by Him.

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2. 'covenant' = the word is used 8 times in relation to the Noahic covenant (See Gen. 6:18; 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17).
3. "God's covenant was unconditional meaning that whether mankind adhered to his responsibilities or not, God would still uphold His end of the agreement and not destroy the world again with a world-wide flood." (Morris)

B. The Subjects of the Covenant (Vs. 9b-10)

In these verses we note the beneficiaries of the Noahic covenant:

1. The people of the earth (Vs. 8-9). The covenant was intended for:
 - a. Noah. The promise was made to Noah as an individual.
 - b. Noah's seed. This includes us as we are descendants of Noah and his sons.
2. The beasts of the earth (Vs. 10). God's tender care extended to the animal kingdom. The animal kingdom, with the exception of those on the ark, had been destroyed as a consequence of man's sin. However, they would not be destroyed again in the same way.

C. The Specifics of the Covenant (Vs. 11)

1. What the covenant did promise.
 - a. All flesh would not be destroyed by a world-wide flood again.
 - b. The whole earth would not be destroyed by a world-wide flood again.
2. What the covenant did not promise. This covenant did not promise that there would never again be floods or natural disasters. Only that there would not be another world-wide, universal flood like that of Noah's day. The covenant also did not promise no more judgment on sin, just that sin would not be judged in this way again on the earth.

D. The Sign of the Covenant (Vs. 12-17)

1. The Revelation of the Sign (Vs. 12-13). God reveals the sign of the rainbow to Noah. The word 'token' means 'sign' and is translated 'sign' in Genesis 1:14.
 - a. The permanence of the sign (Vs. 12). It would be for "perpetual generations" (Vs. 12), an "everlasting covenant" (Vs. 16) meaning it would be a continuing sign throughout human history from this point in time.
 - b. The picture of the sign (Vs. 13)
 - i. The rainbow is a reminder of the manifold (multicolored, multifaceted) grace of God in salvation (See 1 Pet. 4:10). A 'bow' is an instrument of war but God turns it into a picture of his grace. "God could certainly turn the bow of judgment upon us, because we've broken His law and deserve judgment. But He has turned the bow toward heaven and taken the punishment for us Himself." (Wiersbe)
 - ii. The rainbow is a reminder of the mercy of God in our trials. In the storms of life, God gives us tokens of His grace and kindness. John Butler writes, "A rainbow is a product of storm and sunshine. God's people have a lot of storms and clouds in their lives on earth, but in them God sends the sunshine of His love and grace and

Begin with God - Genesis Series

produces a beautiful experience from the clouds of trials and troubles in lives. To have the beauty of the rainbow, the beauty of God's handiwork in our lives, it will require something besides sunshine. It will also require the stormy clouds of trials and troubles. Some blessings can only come via trials and troubles. So, when clouds come into your life, look for the beauty God gives them."

- iii. "Since the rainbow comes from the sun shining forth through the dark clouds, this symbolizes the heavenly pervading the earthly. And as it spans the horizon, it reminds man that God's covenant is universal, as was the Flood that will never recur." (Keil & Delitzsch)
2. The Remembrance of the Sign (Vs. 14-16).
 - a. A reminder to man of the covenant (Vs. 14).
 - b. A reminder to God of the covenant (Vs. 15-16). This does not imply that God will forget and need reminding as we do as human beings. It is simply teaching us that God will always remember the promise He has made with His creatures. God would remain faithful to the covenant He had made.
3. The Reiteration of the Sign (Vs. 17). There is repetition in these verses as God goes to great lengths to assure Noah and his descendants of the trustworthiness of the covenant He is making. What a comfort it is to have God assure and reassure that we can trust His promises to us.

III. THE COMPROMISE OF NOAH (VS. 18-24)

These verses record the sad account of Noah's drunkenness and the pain and damage it brought into his family. God's Word does not whitewash the heroes of the faith or conceal their failures. This is a mark of inspiration. When men write an account of their heroes' lives, they are usually more inclined to gloss over any errors or failures. God's Word deals plainly with both the successes and failures of God's men that we might be admonished and warned.

A. Noah's Drunkenness (Vs. 18-21a)

1. The Context of his Drunkenness (Vs. 18-19)
 - a. Noah was in the sunset years of his life. In many ways the major battles of his life and ministry were behind him. Such a position comes with unique dangers.
 - b. By God's grace we need to start well but by God's grace we also need to finish well. Senior saints need to beware of a spirit of complacency in their sunset years as if the devil is finished with them now that they are "retired". The devil is all too aware of the kind of damage that can be done to the testimony of Christ if he can trip up an older saint with a lifetime of godly testimony behind him. Satan's traps come in many forms for older saints.
 - i. The lusts of the flesh and eyes. This was Noah's downfall. Old age is not a time to crack out the wine glasses or turn on a dirty T.V. show or movie! Remember, the flesh doesn't improve with age!

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- ii. The pride of life. Young believers aren't the only ones compromising in our day. The doctrinal drift is on amongst the gray heads also! Don't leave the paths of truth and "discover" some new doctrine in your old age!
 - c. John Butler writes, "One of the important lessons of warning in this incident of Noah is that this sin of Noah's occurred in Noah's life not when he was young and inexperienced but when he was over six hundred years old and had demonstrated, before the flood, exceptional faithfulness and godliness in a world gone crazy with sin...All of this warns us that no achievement in the past guarantees victory in the future. That as long as we are on the earth we need to be on our guard against temptation...There are warning shipwrecks all around us of veteran preachers and veteran saints who have fallen into great sin after they have for many years lived gallant lives for Jesus Christ and have stood strong amidst great temptation and evil. Their fall warns us that the battle is not over until we are home with the Lord, and we should never let down our guard until we have reached the golden shores of eternity."
2. The Cause of his Drunkenness (Vs. 20-21a).
- a. The classification of this wine.
 - i. This is the first time the word 'wine' appears in the Bible. It is most instructive that the danger of fermented wine is highlighted by the Holy Spirit in the first mention of the word in the Bible. This is not by accident. The Word of God is warning us early in the canon of Scripture about the destructiveness of alcoholic beverages.
 - ii. The word 'wine' is a generic term in the Bible and can refer to either good wine (pure grape juice) or bad wine (fermented, alcoholic wine). The context is the key to determining which wine is being discussed as well as comparing Scripture with Scripture.
 - iii. It was fermented wine that brought about Noah's state of drunkenness. Drunkenness starts with just one drink. This is the way sin works. It starts with one downward step. Don't be so foolish as to think you can control how far you slide after you have taken that first step. The Japanese have an appropriate proverb: "First the man takes a drink, then the drink takes a drink, and then the drink takes the man." (Cited by Wiersbe)
 - b. The denunciation of this wine. The Bible is not ambiguous in its warnings of alcoholic wine:
 - i. Prov. 20:1 "**Wine** is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."
 - ii. Prov. 23:31-33 "Look not thou upon the **wine** when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things."

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- iii. Eph. 5:18 “And **be not drunk with wine**, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;”
3. The Consequences of his Drunkenness (Vs. 21b)
 - a. Noah’s drunkenness led to his nakedness. The sequence in the text is clear. Noah drank, got drunk and disrobed. Drinking leads to drunkenness and drunkenness leads to depravity. Alcohol is one of the most destructive influences in our world today and is linked to just about every crime you can imagine.
 - b. Noah’s drunkenness bore bitter fruit in Ham and Ham’s son Canaan.

B. Ham’s Depravity (Vs. 22)

1. Ham Delighted in his father’s Nakedness (Vs. 22a)
 - a. Ham “saw” his father’s nakedness. Clearly this was not a quick, accidental glance followed by a respectful approach to his drunken father. The word ‘saw’ implies “gazed at” (Morris). “The Hebrew in this case means that he “looked at”, but in the sense of violating a boundary.” (Sarfaty) Ham’s brothers stand in clear contrast to Ham’s behavior.
 - b. Noah had a measure of responsibility in this. His behavior had a damaging effect upon Ham. However, there is also the aspect that this incident served to simply reveal where Ham’s heart was already at.
 - c. The corrupt sin nature has given mankind an inordinate fascination with nakedness. Our hearts, even as believers, can easily be drawn in the wrong direction by the sight of nakedness in its various forms.
 - d. Let’s remember God’s mind on nakedness as revealed in the Bible. One of the first things God did after Adam and Eve sinned was make them coats of skins to cover their nakedness. Clothing to cover one’s nakedness was God’s idea. On a very basic level, to be modestly dressed is to be covered. Remember, God’s definition of nakedness is much higher than society’s. Uncovering the thigh equals nakedness in God’s perspective (Is. 47:2-3) Sadly, most 21st century churches have become almost indistinguishable from the world with its immodest, sensual fashions.
2. Ham Discussed his father’s Nakedness (Vs. 22b). It appears Ham share the news in the spirit of reporting a delightful scandal. Perhaps he hoped to induce his brothers to also make a mockery of their father.

C. Shem & Japheth’s Decency (Vs. 23-24)

1. Shem and Japheth’s actions stand in sharp contrast to that of Ham’s. They took deliberate and careful steps to not only ensure they weren’t defiled themselves but also make sure their father’s shame was covered.
2. Note: While families don’t have to be stiff and formal, it is important that basic rules of decency be followed in a home, even amongst family members (e.g., parents and children).

Conclusion: Make sure by God’s grace you stay faithful and finish well!

The World after the Flood

Text: Gen. 9:24-10:32

Introduction:

1. In this section we have the final and only recorded words of Noah as he delivers a Patriarchal prophecy concerning his three sons and their descendants. It is a similar scenario to Jacob's prophecy concerning his 12 sons at the end of his life recorded in Genesis 49.
2. We also have the invaluable historical genealogy of chapter 10 which provides very helpful information on the development of the nations after the flood and is a tremendous testament to the doctrine of inspiration. It also lays down an important foundation for the account of Babel in chapter 11.
3. We will consider the text under two headings as follows:
 - The Prophecy of Noah (Gen. 9:24-29).
 - The Genealogy of Noah (Gen. 10:1-32)

I. THE PROPHECY OF NOAH (GEN. 9:24-29)

The incident of Noah's drunkenness and the responses of his sons formed the catalyst for Noah's pronouncements concerning the future of his sons and their descendants. Noah's prophecy covers the following:

A. The Curse upon Ham's Son (Vs. 24-25)

1. The Interpretation of the Curse (Vs. 24-25)
 - a. The curse fell on Canaan, the youngest of Ham's sons. At first glance, this may seem unfair but it is best understood as coming from Noah's prophetic insights. Canaan would end up living out his father's compromised ways. Wiersbe writes, "The word 'curse' is used only once but it is directed at Ham's youngest son Canaan and not at Ham himself. This suggests that Noah was describing the future of his sons and one grandson on the basis of what he saw in their character, not unlike what Jacob did before he died (Gen. 49)."
 - b. Canaan was the progenitor of the Canaanites who became infamous in Biblical history for their perversion and depravity. Archaeology has graphically illustrated just how debased these people were. Bright writes, "Canaanite religion presents us with no pretty picture. Numerous debasing practices, including sacred prostitution, homosexuality, and various orgiastic rites, were prevalent. Wright and Filson add that "the amazing thing about the gods, as they were conceived in Canaan, is that they had no moral character whatever. In fact, their conduct was on a much lower level than that of society as a whole, if we can judge from ancient codes of law...Worship of these gods carried with it some of the most demoralizing practices then in existence." (Cited by Sarfati)
 - c. There is a practical lesson in all of this. The sins of a parent can bear bitter fruit in the offspring. Parents, don't just think about yourself in the decisions you make. Think about how your decisions might affect your children! You may only take your

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compromise so far but you are opening the door for your children to a life of devastation.

2. The Misapplication of the Curse.
 - a. Sadly, Noah's curse has been misused in history by some Christians as being a curse upon all of Ham's descendants and thereby justifying the practice of slavery. It has also been misused by secularists to attempt to smear the Bible as a racist book.
 - b. In reality, a proper reading of Noah's curse reveals that it was not a general curse upon all of Ham's descendants but upon one branch of Ham's lineage, namely the Canaanites. Even with the Canaanites, God dealt with them justly, not judging them until the cup of their iniquity was full (See Genesis 15:16).
 - c. Slavery in all its forms is a dark stain on human history and continues to this day with many enslaved in sex trafficking, forced labor etc.
 - d. Barnhouse: "Any attempt to make black skin the fulfillment of this curse is unscholarly, prejudiced to the extreme and certainly without basis in the Bible."
 - e. In reality, Evolution has arguably done more than any other theory in the last 200 years to fan the fires of racism and prejudice. Stephen Jay Gould (1941-2002) had to admit: "Biological arguments for racism may have been common before 1850, but they increased by orders of magnitude following the acceptance of evolutionary theory."
 - f. For example, the American high school biology textbook, *Hunters Civic Biology* stated: "At the present time there exist upon the earth five races or varieties of man, each very different from the others in instincts, social customs, and to an extent, in structure. These are the Ethiopian or negro type, originating in Africa; the Malay or brown race, from the island of the Pacific; the American Indian; the Mongolian or yellow race, including the natives of China, Japan and the Eskimos; and finally, the highest type of all, the Caucasians, represented by the civilized white inhabitants of Europe and America." It was this book that the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) defended the right to teach in the infamous Scopes trial of 1925.
 - g. It should be remembered that the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade was not led by atheists but by Bible believing, God fearing Christians such as William Wilberforce and John Newton.
 - h. In all the discussion about racism today, almost nothing is said of the abortion industry and its role in wiping out millions of black babies. Since the Roe v. Wade decision of 1973 in the USA, the biggest cause of death among black people in the USA has been abortion. According to a website called *Black Genocide*:

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- Minority women constitute only about 13% of the female population (age 15-44) in the USA but they underwent approximately 36% of the abortions.
 - According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, black women are more than five times as likely as white women to have an abortion.
 - On average, 1,876 black babies are aborted every day in the United States.
 - This incidence of abortion has resulted in a tremendous loss of life. It has been estimated that since 1973 black women have had about 16 million abortions. Michael Novak had calculated, "Since the number of current living Blacks (in the U.S.) is 36 million, the missing 16 million represents an enormous loss, for without abortion, America's Black community would now number 52 million persons. It would be 36 percent larger than it is now. Abortion has swept through the Black community like a scythe, cutting down every fourth member."
- i. Differences between people groups are cultural and not racial. While the Bible recognizes different people and language groups, it does not promote the idea of "race". There is also nothing wrong with people marrying someone from another country and culture if it be God's will. Believers who say they are against "interracial marriage" are expressing an evolutionary and not a biblical concept. "And hath made of **one blood** all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth..." (Acts 17:26).
- i. Joseph married an Egyptian wife.
 - ii. Boaz married Ruth, the Moabitess.
 - iii. Jesus Christ, a Jew in his humanity, is espoused to a Gentile church!

B. The Commendation upon Two Sons (Vs. 26-27)

1. A Messianic blessing upon Shem (Vs. 26). Shem's blessing would be primarily in spiritual things.
 - a. Observe that "Noah didn't bless Shem; he blessed "the LORD God of Shem". Noah gave glory to God for what He would do with the descendants of Shem. Shem is the ancestor of Abraham (11:10-32) who is the founder of the Hebrew nation; so, Noah was talking about the Jewish people." (Wiersbe)
 - b. Shem's descendants include the Israelites. To them were given the Scriptures, and from them came the Saviour (John 4:22). It would be through the line of Shem that Messiah would eventually come.
 - c. Canaan would become his servant. This happened in a very real way when the Canaanites became "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for the Israelites (Josh. 9:23).
2. A Material blessing upon Japheth (Vs. 27). Japheth would be 'enlarged'.
 - a. This appears to be a reference to the expansion of Japheth's descendants across the world. "History informs us that this

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enlargement was in lands and people. The descendants of Japheth filled more of the earth in population than the descendants of any of the other two sons of Noah.” (Butler)

- b. “He was the ancestor of what we now generally call the “Gentile nations”. We have here a play on words. In Hebrew the name Japheth is very close to the word that means “to enlarge.” The Hamites built large civilizations in the east, and the Semites settled in the land of Canaan and surrounding territory, but the descendants of Japheth spread out much farther than their relatives and even reached what we know as Asia Minor and Europe.” (Wiersbe)
- c. He would also have a close association and fellowship with Shem – “dwell in the tents of Shem”.

C. The Conclusion to Noah’s life (Vs. 28-29)

1. Noah lived a further 350 years after the flood bringing his total lifespan to 950 years.
2. “Provided there are no gaps in the genealogies of Genesis 11 this means that Noah continued living until Abraham was 58 years old. It is also likely that Noah lived until after the dispersion of the nations at Babel.” (Henry Morris)

II. THE GENEALOGY OF NOAH (GEN. 10:1-32)

We will not be able to do a detailed analysis of this genealogy. There are helpful resources you can read (e.g., Henry Morris’ commentary) which provide further information. However, we will seek to trace the general development of the post flood civilization and highlight some prominent names along the way that are significant in Biblical history.

A. Japheth’s Lineage (Vs. 1-5)

1. Some noteworthy names (Vs. 4)
 - a. Gomer: According to Josephus “Gomer founded those whom the Greeks now call “Galatians” (Antiquities Book 1, Ch. 6). The ancient region of Galatian was located in the region we know today as central Turkey.
 - b. Magog: Regarding Magog, Morris writes, “Magog is commonly associated in the Bible with two other sons of Japheth – Meshech and Tubal (esp. Ezekiel 38:2). Meshech clearly is preserved in the name Muskovi (the former name of Russia) and Moscow. Tubal is know in the Assyrian monuments as the Tibareni and probably and has been preserved in the modern Russian city of Tobolsk. In Ezekiel 38:2 they are associated with “Rosh”, a name from which modern “Russia” was derived. Generally speaking, therefore, these three sons of Japheth – Magog, Meshech and Tubal – can be considered as the progenitors of the modern Russian peoples.”
 - c. Togarmah: A son of Gomer who also features in the Ezekiel 38 prophecy. This refers to the former southern republics of the Soviet Union and to Turkey.
2. Some noteworthy notes (Vs. 5)
 1. Japheth’s descendants are particularly said to have inhabited the “isles of the Gentiles”.

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2. Henry Morris writes, "Although some of the identifications are uncertain, they do seem to indicate that the descendants of Japheth spread all over Europe, with one major branch heading eastward into Persia and India. It is especially to the descendants of Japheth that the term "Gentiles" was applied."
3. Jonathan Sarfati adds, "The Japhethite nations were the "coastland peoples", originally around the Mediterranean, Black and Caspian Seas. From there, they spread in their lands with many different languages and nations. The Japhethites occupied most of Europe, as well as Asia past Persia and India. Thus, they fulfilled Noah's prophecy of God enlarging Japheth (9:27)."

B. Ham's Lineage (Vs. 6-20)

The account now proceeds to the sons of Ham whose descendants are treated in more detail than those of Japheth. Some of the names can be identified as follows:

1. Cush (Vs.6-7) is the same as Ethiopia in the Bible and is usually so translated.
2. Mizraim (Vs.6-7) is the ancestor of the Egyptians and this Hebrew word is translated hundreds of times all through the Old Testament as "Egypt".
3. Phut (Vs.6-7) is the same as Libya, applied to the region of North Africa west of Egypt. This identification was confirmed by Josephus. The Hebrew word is also translated 'Libya' in Ezekiel 38.
4. Canaan (Vs.6-7) was the ancestor of the Canaanites and after whom the land of Canaan was named.
5. Nimrod (Vs. 8-12) was Cush's most famous son who would go down in Biblical history as the first ruler to attempt a one world government at Babel. He was renowned as a hunter and city builder in the ancient world. Babel is his most famous but you will notice there was actually a network of cities in the land of Shinar with Babel functioning as a capital city and religious center. A man named Asshur, inspired by Nimrod's example, went out of Shinar and built Nineveh, a city that would become the capital of the great Assyrian empire. Nineveh was roughly two hundred miles north of Babylon and was situated on the upper Tigris River.
6. The sons of Mizraim are next listed (Vs. 13-14). Evidently, they were important tribes in or near Egypt at the time of the writing of Genesis. The Philistines, well known in later Biblical history, came out of Casluhim.
7. The eleven sons of Canaan (Vs. 15-18) are listed next.
 - a. The first two sons (Vs. 15). Sidon, the eldest was the progenitor of the Phoenicians. Heth was the ancestor of the Hittites. Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah from "Ephron the Hittite" in Genesis 23:10. The Hittites ruled a great empire centered in Asia Minor for over 800 years, apparently migrating there originally from the home of their brothers in Canaan. Hittites were present in the land of Canaan during the time of Abraham. Interestingly the sceptics used the absence of secular

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evidence for the Hittites to attack the Bible in the 19th century until their capital city was unearthed in north central Turkey in the late 19th century. **The Bible will ALWAYS stand up to the sceptics' attacks.** Illustration: Hammers worn out on a blacksmith's anvil.

- b. The remaining nine sons of Canaan were "the progenitors of the Canaanite tribes that inhabited the land when the Israelites arrived. The Amorites were one of the most prominent tribes, with their name sometimes used as representative of all the Canaanites (Gen. 15:16)." (Morris)
 - c. The conclusion of verse 18 states that "afterward were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad." The Hittites spread to Asia Minor and perhaps the Sinites to China.
8. The borders of the Canaanite lands are mentioned and a summary statement is made to finish off the record of Ham's sons (Vs. 19-20).

C. Shem's Lineage (Vs. 21-32)

Shem's is left until last, not because he was the youngest nor the least important but for emphasis since his family was the Seed line through which Messiah would come.

1. Significantly, Shem is identified first as "the father of all the children of Eber" (Vs. 21). The term "Hebrew" is derived from the word "Eber". The first mention of the word 'Hebrew' is in connection with Abraham. "And there came one that had escaped, and told **Abram the Hebrew**; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these *were* confederate with Abram." (Gen. 14:13) The word 'Hebrew' is a derivative of the word 'Eber' and means "Eberite" or "descendant of Eber". So, Shem is highlighted as the progenitor of the Hebrew (Jewish) people who would be God's chosen nation.
2. Five children of Shem are then listed (Vs. 22). Elam was the ancestor off the Elamites who later merged with the Medes to form the Persian Empire. Arphaxad is the most important name in this list as he was in the direct line leading to Abraham.
3. Four sons of Aram are then listed (Vs. 23-24). Little is known of these except that Arphaxad was in the line of the promised seed and that the name 'Uz' appears to be the same name associated in Arabia with Job's homeland.
4. The two sons of Eber are mentioned next (Vs. 25). In particular the verse focuses on the division of the earth during the lifetime of Peleg. Undoubtedly within the context of this section, it is a reference to the division of Babel.
5. Thirteen sons of Joktan, Peleg's brother are then mentioned (Vs. 26-30). Indications are they mostly settled in Arabia.
6. There is a summary that then concludes this section often referred to as "The Table of the Nations".
7. Verse 32 states; "These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their nations: and by these were the nations divided in the earth after the flood." This ties in with the statement in Genesis 9:18-19 "And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark,

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were Shem, and Ham and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. These are the three sons of Noah and of them was the whole earth overspread." We should not therefore be surprised that there are flood legends all around the world. And these are not confined to tribes and peoples living near a body of water (e.g., sea or river). Some examples are as follows:

- a. "The **Pawnee tribe in Nebraska** as the following tradition: the creator of Ti-ra-wa destroyed the first people, who were giants, by water because of his indignation about their corruption and after that he created a man and a woman like present people, who became the Pawnee's ancestors." (Osanai Nozomi cited by Sarfati)
- b. **Hawaii** has a legend that says "Long after the death of Kuniuhonna, the first man, the world became a wicked, terrible place to live. There was one good man left; his name was Nu-u. He made a great canoe with a house on it and filled it with animals. The waters came up over all the earth and killed all the people. Only Nu-u and his family were saved." (Duane T. Gish)
- c. "Ancient **Chinese** writings refer to a violent catastrophe that happened to the Earth. They report that the entire land was flooded. The water went up to the highest mountains and completely covered all the foothills. One ancient Chinese classic called "Hihking" tells the story of Fuhi, whom the Chinese consider to be the father of their civilization. This history records that Fuhi, his wife, three sons, and three daughters escaped a great flood. He and his family were the only people left alive on earth. After the great flood they repopulated the world. An ancient temple in China has a wall painting that shows Fuhi's boat in the raging waters. Dolphins are swimming around the boat and a dove with an olive branch in its beak is flying toward it." (Duane T. Gish)
- d. "The **Miao tribe** which resides in **southwest China** had a tradition which is like the Genesis account even before they met Christian missionaries. According to their tradition, when God destroyed the whole world by the flood because of the wickedness of man, Nuah the righteous man and his wife Matriarch, their three sons, Lo Han, Lo Shen, and Jah-hu survived by building a very broad ship and embarked on it with pairs of animals." (Osanai Nozomi cited by Sarfati)
- e. The **Australian Aborigines** also have flood legends.
- f. Why are there such flood stories all over the world? BECAUSE IT ACTUALLY HAPPENED JUST AS THE BIBLE SAID IT DID!

Conclusion:

1. This brings our studies on Noah's Flood in Genesis to a conclusion. We saw the Pre-flood world, the world under water and then the post flood world and the development of the nations from Noah's three sons.
2. The Genesis Flood account is a sobering reminder that God will judge sin. But it is also an encouraging reminder that God also extends mercy and grace to those who will repent. Will you enter the ark of salvation today?

Sin City: The Babel Rebellion

Text: Gen. 11:1-9

Introduction:

1. We come now to another pivotal event in Biblical history with the dispersion at Babel and the origin of the world's diverse languages.
2. Babel would go on to become known as Babylon. The Babylonian empire would become a tool of chastisement in the hands of God against His chosen people with the Babylonian captivity.
3. Babylon would go on to represent not just a geographical location and an empire in Scripture but a system opposed to God and His truth. In fact, Babel was the first real attempt recorded in Scripture to set up a one world government in opposition to God's authority.
4. We will consider the text under three headings.

I. THE CREATOR OF BABEL (GEN. 10:8-11)

Nimrod, a son of Cush who was a son of Ham, founded the kingdom of Babel. He would go down in both biblical and secular history as a man renowned for his wickedness and defiance of the One True God. Let's briefly study the profile the Scriptures give us of this man:

A. The Parent of Nimrod (Vs. 8a)

1. Nimrod was a son of Cush. Sadly, it appears Cush followed in his father Ham's rebellious ways as the name he chose for this son (Nimrod) means "let us revolt/rebel". Remember, in the ancient world, the meaning of a name was usually of primary importance when selecting a name for a child. In our culture today we tend to pick a name based on whether we like the sound of it or whether it has a special connection to a beloved relative, friend or person we esteem but often the meaning of the name is barely considered. Understanding the definition of Nimrod's name is key to understanding the statements that follow concerning his character.
2. Sometimes the rebellious ideals of the parent are carried out more fully in the offspring. What a strange and sorry vision for your child! What a sad reflection of Cush's state as a father.
3. What is your priority and vision for your children's future? Is it a godly one?

B. The Prominence of Nimrod (Vs. 8b-9a)

1. His Rise to Notoriety (Vs. 8b)
 - a. "mighty one" = powerful; by implication warrior, tyrant (Strong's Concordance). The word "refers to a champion, somebody who is superior in strength and courage." (Wiersbe) The word 'mighty' is used in the Old Testament to describe both godly and ungodly people. The context determines the way it is being used. The same word is used to describe the "mighty men" before the flood who were very wicked (Gen. 6:4). The word is also used to describe David's "mighty men" (1 Chro. 11:11) who were good men.

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- b. In this context it is clear that Nimrod was mighty in an evil sense. He was mighty to do evil and to lead others into revolt against God. This statement is repeated in 1 Chronicles 1:10 “And Cush begat Nimrod: **he began to be mighty upon the earth.**”
2. His Reason for Notoriety (Vs. 9a)
 - a. “a mighty hunter” = he gained fame and notoriety through his exploits as a hunter. Given the description of his character in the previous verse it seems highly likely that he was more than just a hunter of animals which in itself is not evil. He “began to be a mighty one in the earth” (Vs. 8b). He became a powerful warrior-style leader in the ancient world and his image and prowess was bolstered by his hunting skills. He was also a hunter and oppressor of men, seeking to establish his own political and religious system in opposition to Almighty God.
 - b. “before the LORD” = this phrase can also have a good or bad connotation depending on the context. An example of a good sense is where Abraham stood “before the LORD” (Gen. 18:22). In this context, it is being used in the same way as it is used in Genesis 13:13 “But the men of Sodom *were* wicked and sinners **before the LORD** exceedingly.” The Hebrew word is ‘lipnei’ which means “in the face of”. Nimrod’s rebellion had not gone unnoticed by Almighty God. He was sinning in the sight/presence of God. Leupold writes, “in this context it means that Nimrod’s rebellious ways did not elude the watchful eye of Him, who in mercy regards the welfare of men, Yahweh, but the fact was openly before Him, even if He did not at once proceed to take vengeance upon the despot.”

C. The Parable about Nimrod (Vs. 9b)

1. “wherefore it is said” = Nimrod’s fame at that time was so widespread that a common saying was coined – “Even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD”.
2. Nimrod’s fame as one who was mighty in his rebellion against the God of heaven was well established in the post flood world. His fame was for all the wrong reasons! Sadly, this is the reality in a wicked world. Wicked men who do great exploits for the cause of evil are idolized whereas those who are godly are lightly esteemed.

D. The Pioneering of Nimrod (Vs. 10-11)

1. Nimrod founded the kingdom of Babel. Again, this highlights that he was not just a hunter, he was also a builder of cities and an organizer of men. Nimrod established a network of four cities – Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh in the land of Shinar with Babel functioning as a capital city.
2. Nimrod also instrumental in establishing the kingdom of Assyria as Asshur went out from Nimrod’s kingdom and built Nineveh which would become the capital of the Assyrian Empire.
3. To summarize Nimrod in three words; he was a hunter, builder and dictator.

II. THE CONSTRUCTION OF BABEL (GEN. 11:1-4)

Babel was all about rebellion against God's rulership and authority. There was:

A. A Rebel Ruler – Nimrod (Gen. 10:8-10).

1. It is important that as we read the account of the tower of Babel, we remember that Nimrod was the architect of it – “the beginning of **his kingdom** was Babel” (Gen. 10:10).
2. The city of Babel (to be later known as Babylon) was the crowning act of Nimrod's rebellion against God. The fact that God intervened in such a dramatic and definite way is clear evidence that God was displeased with what was going on at Babel. His desire was to setup a city and a system that would operate under his rule, independent from and in opposition to the authority of Almighty God.

B. A Rebel Region – Shinar (Vs. 1-2)

1. The location of the region – “the land of Shinar”.
 - a. The location is described as “east’ of Ararat. This is an accurate description as Babel is southeast of Ararat. The “land of Shinar” was the fertile Mesopotamian plain.
 - b. The location is in the region now controlled by modern Iraq between the two great river systems of the Tigris and Euphrates (refer maps).
2. The lushness of the region.
 - a. This area has been called “the Fertile Crescent”. Water usually plays a key role in the prosperity of a region. At this time in history the land of Shinar was a fertile and lush area.
 - b. While prosperity is not sinful in and of itself, it tends towards creating an environment conducive to rebellion against God's authority. Prosperity without submission to God's authority leads to anarchy and debauchery.
 - c. For Nimrod and his followers, material prosperity was more important to them than the commission God gave to fill the earth (Gen. 9:1). Materialism is one of greatest dangers to God's people in prosperous countries. If it comes down to a hard choice, it is much better to be like the Church at Smyrna which was poor materially and rich spiritually than Laodicea which was rich materially and poor spiritually (Compare Rev. 2:9-11 & 3:14-22).
 - d. Illustration: The prosperity of Sodom was linked to its indulgence in perversion. Ezekiel 16:49 “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister **Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness** was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.”

C. A Rebel Regime – City (Vs. 3-4a)

1. The Unity of the Regime (Vs. 3a; 4a)
 - a. They were all of “one language and of one speech”. This was a major factor in their unity and is why God intervened to create other languages later in the account.
 - b. They were unified in their purpose - “they said one to another”. They held a council together and agreed on a course of action.

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There was also a spirit of enthusiasm as indicated by the phrase “go to” which is repeated twice. It’s meaning would be similar to our expression “come on, let’s go and do this!”

- c. This reminds us that not all forms of unity are of God. Unity that is based on submission to God’s truth and authority is the **right** kind of unity. Unity based on rebellion against God and His Word is the **wrong** kind of unity!
 - d. Note: Human government, while instituted by God (Gen. 9), was never intended of God to operate without reference to His supreme authority.
2. The Industry of the Regime (Vs. 3)
- a. Moses goes to some length to explain the brick making industry that was developed in Babel. Henry Morris explains, “The Babylonian construction was stronger than other common methods of construction in antiquity so the writer calls special attention to it. Furnace-treated bricks were used instead of stone, and bitumen instead of mortar. This “slime” was probably tarry material from the abundant asphalt pits in the Tigris-Euphrates valley. Archaeology has revealed that this type of kiln-fired brick and asphalt construction was common in ancient Babylon.”
 - b. Evidently Nimrod saw the opportunity “for the establishment of a strongly centralized society which, with controls over resources and occupations, would soon be able to produce a self-sufficient civilization capable of similarly controlling the entire world...A self-sufficient society, integrated under a powerful and brilliant leader, would be a society no longer dependant on God. And this was Nimrod’s aim.” (Morris)
 - c. Note: Industrial innovation is not evil in itself if it is used for a good purpose. In this case it was being misused for evil purposes. Mankind was using his inventive skills to rebel against God rather than using those skills within the sphere of submission to God’s will.
3. The City of the Regime (Vs. 4a)
- a. Having established the brick making industry, they then determine to construct the city of Babel. This would be a well-planned and constructed urban centre.
 - b. In Nimrod’s kingdom we see the first real attempt to achieve a one world government with centralized power in one city headed up by one man.
 - c. Babel came to symbolize not just a city but a system of pagan worship opposed to God. This is why Babylon is called “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” in Revelation 17:5. It is a type of the future one world kingdom of the Antichrist (See Revelation 17-18) which like Babel, is comprised of both a false system of worship and a political system.

D. A Rebel Religion – Tower (Vs. 4b)

The tower is emphasized in the account and brings us to the heart of the rebellion.

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1. Paganism – “a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven”.
 - a. This tower “would dominate the city, both architecturally and culturally. It would serve as the focal point of the political and religious life of the population and would be a symbol of their unity and strength.” (Morris) The tower was the centrepiece and shrine of the rebellion.
 - b. The tower was most likely a Ziggurat which was common in the Babylonian area. Sarfati explains, “The tower itself was likely a ziggurat, a massive step pyramid built from bricks, and part of a temple complex. One famous surviving ziggurat was long known in antiquity as the “Tongue Tower” in the Sumerian city Uruk, southwest of Babylon on the east bank of the Euphrates. The ruins of this tower are still about 50m taller than the mass of ruins.” Wiersbe adds, “A ziggurat was like a pyramid except that the successive levels were recessed so that you could walk to the top on “steps”. At the top was a special shrine dedicated to a god or goddess.”
 - c. The statement that the tower was to “reach unto heaven” tends to indicate that some sort of pagan worship of the heavens was intended. The ancient historian Herodotus claimed that there were religious shrines on top of ziggurats.
 - d. The Babylonian religious system served as the source of all the world’s non-Christian religions. Rev. 17:5 – Babylon is called “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth”. Morris notes, “There is abundant evidence that all forms of paganism have come originally from the ancient Babylonian religion. The essential identity of the various gods and goddesses of Rome, Greece, India, Egypt, and other nations with the original pantheon of the Babylonians is well established. Nimrod himself was apparently later deified as the chief god (“Merodach,” or “Marduk) of Babylon.”
 - e. Note: What a picture the tower presents of manmade, works religion. It wouldn’t matter how high they made the tower; they would never reach heaven and eternal life that way. God’s way was not for you to try and build your way up to heaven but for God’s Son to come down to rescue you!
2. Pride – “let us make us a name”. Pride was the driving motivation behind the Babel endeavor. Their goal was their own glory rather than God’s.
3. Perversity – “lest we be scattered abroad”.
 - a. This brings us to a specific point of their disobedience. God had commissioned Noah and his descendants to “replenish” (fill) the earth (Gen. 9:1). Of necessity this would involve a spreading out of the nations across the globe to fulfill this commission. Nimrod and his followers were attempting to do the opposite. Instead of spreading out across the earth, they were working towards centralized power in one main location. “This was a collective act of defiance against God’s clear and repeated commands to fill the earth.” (Sarfati)

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- b. While the tower of Babel is long gone, the Babel spirit of rebellious disobedience to God's authority has not! We find the Nimrod spirit in:
 - i. The wicked world in which we live. Our own country of Australia is at war with Almighty God in many areas.
 - ii. The home with children who rebel against the authority of their parents or where parents are in hostile opposition to God's ordained will for the home.
 - iii. The church with Nimrod members and attendees who come along and hear God's Word but have little to no attention of obeying what they hear. Or worse still, are in open rebellion about certain parts of the whole council of God.

III. THE CONFUSION OF BABEL (GEN. 11:5-9)

These verses describe the dramatic intervention of God into the situation.

A. The Divine Determination (Vs. 5-7)

- 1. The Omniscience behind the Determination (Vs. 5-6)
 - a. God's view of the tower of their hands (Vs. 5).
 - i. The statement that God came down to see the tower is not a suggestion that God did not know what was happening. God is Omnipresent and Omniscient so He had perfect knowledge of what was happening. The expression is an anthropomorphism, a figure of speech ascribing human actions to a non-human.
 - ii. Leupold explains it as, "a vivid way of stating that God interposed. Where He had till now, as so often in the affairs of the children of men, simply allowed things to take their course, now He manifestly intervenes and takes the situation in hand. His judicial control and regulation is His coming down."
 - iii. The lesson is that man's sinful actions do not escape the all-seeing eye of God. Sin does not go unnoticed by God.
 - b. God's view of the tendency of their hearts.
 - i. God's knowledge of the tendency of man's wicked heart is revealed. God knew that if they got away with their wicked imaginations in this area, it would serve as an incentive to go on and pursue darker and even more depraved imaginations. It is a sobering reminder that mankind's depravity knows no limits apart from the restraining hand of God. Achieving an evil objective spurs the sinner on to take his evil the next rung down the ladder of depravity.
 - ii. Often God allows mankind to pursue his own course (free will), leaving him to answer for his actions at the future judgment. However, human history is punctuated by supernatural interventions at key times in history and the tower of Babel is one such incident. This verse reminds us that while God allows mankind the exercise of his freewill, He is not a neutral bystander when it comes to

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his progress into evil. God can and does intervene in human affairs when mankind goes too far. Romans 1 reminds us of this principle where God gives men up and gives them over when they cross a Divine boundary.

2. The Objective of the Determination (Vs. 7)
 - a. “go to” = God uses the same words that had been used by the rebels in verse 4 & 5 in a sense to mock their foolish plans. This was heaven’s response to earth’s revolt. Wicked men had held their counsels and determined their course of action but now the Godhead (“let us”) holds counsel. We are reminded that “*There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless **the counsel of the LORD**, that shall stand.*” (Prov. 19:21) “Babel’s conceited ‘Let’s go up!’ was answered by heaven’s calm ‘Let’s go down!’” (Wiersbe)
 - b. Read Psalm 2 – “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh...”
 - c. “confound their language” = the word ‘confound’ means “to mix”. God would introduce other languages that would force the population of that time to fulfill his mandate to spread out over the earth.

B. The Divine Division (Vs. 8-9)

1. The Lord scattered them (Vs. 8a).
2. The Lord stopped them (Vs. 8b). Their purpose to establish the city and tower was thwarted.
3. The city was called Babel meaning ‘confusion’. Instead of making a name for themselves, they ended up with the humiliating name ‘Babel’. Rather than Babel becoming a monument to man’s wisdom and ability, it would become a memorial in Biblical history to the power of God to put down man’s evil plans.
4. Babel is also a reminder that when mankind leaves God out of the picture, chaos and confusion is the result.

Conclusion:

1. How is your submission to God’s authority at this point in your Christian life?
2. Are you trying to construct your own religious tower to get to heaven? It will fail! Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven (John 14:6).

The Call of Abraham

Text: Gen. 11:10-12:9

Introduction:

1. The first eleven chapters of Genesis cover approximately 2,000 years of Biblical history. It takes the rest of the Old Testament to cover another 2,000 years of Biblical history so the pace slows down dramatically. It takes the next thirteen chapters of Genesis, covering the life of Abraham, to cover the next one hundred years. Abraham was born about 300-400 years after the flood and about 2,000 years before Christ. So, Abraham comes on the scene of Biblical history about half way between Adam and Christ. (John Butler)
2. We now come to another pivotal point in Biblical History with the call of Abraham who would be the progenitor of the Jewish Nation. Whereas the first section of Genesis (Chap. 1-11) had more of a world-wide focus, the Bible now focuses in on Israel as God's chosen people through whom Messiah, the promised Seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15), would come. Griffith Thomas explains, "The call of Abraham represents the third start God makes with humanity. Adam had failed, Noah's descendants had failed, and now another attempt was made. The former attempts were made with the human race as a whole but now God would take one man and one family to make one primary nation that would be His vehicle of blessing to the world."
3. Abraham is one of the most significant characters in the Bible. He is referred to repeatedly throughout the entire Bible (I counted 337 mentions of his name using the search feature of the e-Sword Bible program). Nearly fourteen of the 50 chapters of Genesis is dedicated to Abraham. Abraham goes down in Biblical history as the only one to be specifically called the "friend of God" (James 2:23) and the father of the faithful (Rom. 4:16). Abraham and his wife Sarah are found in the Hebrews Hall of Faith (Heb. 11:8-13) and so we can learn many lessons for the walk of faith from their lives. We can be encouraged as we witness both the highs and lows, the successes and the failures of their walk of faith but overriding it all, the faithfulness and mercy of God to fulfill His Divine purposes through them.
4. In this section we are introduced to Abraham and God's call that brought him out of heathen idolatry and into the promised land of Canaan to become the founder of the Jewish nation. We will consider this call of God to Abraham in four parts.

I. THE CONTEXT OF ABRAHAM'S CALL (GEN. 11:27-32)

A. Abraham's Family

1. His Father – Terah.
 - a. Terah was an idolater. This is clear from Joshua 24:2 "And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, *even* Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: **and they served other gods.**"
 - b. Archaeological discoveries reveal that the inhabitants of Ur worshipped the moon god Sin.

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2. His brothers – Nahor and Haran.
 - a. Nahor's family would play an important role in Abraham's life inasmuch as his son Isaac would take his granddaughter Rebecca to be his wife and later on, Jacob would marry his great granddaughters Leah and Rachel. That Nahor's family was idolatrous is clear on account of Rachel's taking her father Laban's gods.
 - b. Haran died early on in Ur and left Lot behind. It appears that as Lot's uncle, Abraham took him under his wing. Lot would become a genuine believer in the One True God along with his Uncle Abraham but sadly would go on to live a defeated and carnal life.
3. His Wife
 - a. Sarai was Abraham's half sister (Gen. 20:12). This was an acceptable and appropriate marriage at this early stage. Later, under Mosaic law the marrying of close relatives would be forbidden.
 - b. Sarai was barren (Vs. 30). Significant that this is noted early in the account as it would become a major part of Abraham and Sarah's story as a couple.

B. Abraham's Country

There are two words that help summarize Ur of the Chaldees. It was a city of:

1. Prosperity. Located in the Mesopotamia region, next to the Euphrates River, Ur was a successful and wealthy city. They were also known for their technological advancements in construction and the arts.
2. Idolatry. The Bible (e.g., Josh. 24:2) as well as archeological discovery confirms that Ur of the Chaldees was a center for heathen idolatry.
3. Unger's Bible Dictionary gives a helpful snapshot of Ur of the Chaldees: "Ur is located in southern Babylonia, not very far from the ancient city of Uruk to the NE and about 150 miles from the head of the Persian Gulf... Sir Leonard Woolley conducted excavations from 1922 to 1934. The famous royal cemeteries, dating c. 2500 B.C., yielded jewellery and art treasures of unbelievable beauty, particularly gorgeous head attire, personal jewels, and a golden tumbler and cup of Queen Puabi. Several musical instruments and other beautifully crafted objects demonstrate that this city had achieved a high level of civilization 500 years before Abraham." He goes on to state, "Archaeology has revealed that in Abraham's day Ur was a great and prosperous city, with perhaps 360,000 people living in the city and its suburbs." (See Pg. 1320-1321).
4. Concerning Ur of the Chaldees, Henry Morris notes, "The archaeologist's spade has shown Ur to have been a great city, with a high civilization (including a great library) even before Abram's time; but it was also a very idolatrous and wicked city."
5. The above forms an important backdrop and context to better understanding God's call of Abraham.

II. THE COMMAND IN ABRAHAM'S CALL (VS. 1)

The call of God in Abraham's life was what started it all. Without the call of God, Abraham would have lived and died and idolater in Ur of the Chaldees and his name buried in the sands of time. While God's call of Abraham had some unique aspects to it, we can see how the central principles apply to us. Notice four important principles with this call. It represents:

A. The Salvation Call (Vs. 1a; Acts 7:2-3)

For Abraham, there were at least two aspects to this:

1. Revelation of God (Acts 7:2-3).
 - a. The Revelation of God's Person – “And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; **The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham**, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, And said unto him, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee.” (Acts 7:2-3) Abraham had been raised by an idolater and was likely an idolater himself until the One True God revealed Himself to him. The exact details of God's appearance to Abraham are not given but we believe this represents a Christophany – a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ who is the revealing Person of the Godhead. Why would you continue worshiping idols when you have met the living God!
 - b. Revelation of God's Word – “Now the LORD had **said** unto Abram...” (Vs. 1a)
2. Repentance toward God. Abraham turned from heathen idolatry to belief in the One True God, the Creator of all. Salvation involves a turning to God from sin and one's own way.
 - a. In Isaiah 51:1-2, God reminded Abraham's descendants (Israel) of the hole they had been dug out of, “Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the LORD: **look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged**. Look unto **Abraham your father**, and unto Sarah *that* bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.”
 - b. This is illustrated in the conversion of the Thessalonian believers. 1 Thess. 1:9 “For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye **turned to God from idols** to serve the living and true God;”
 - c. This is demonstrated in Paul's preaching. Acts 20:21 “Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, **repentance toward God, and faith toward** our Lord Jesus Christ.”

B. The Separation Call (Vs. 1b)

Abraham was called to a separated walk. F.B. Meyer writes, “The key to Abraham's life is the word “Separation”. He was from first to last a SEPARATED MAN. Separated from his fatherland and kinsfolk; separated from Lot; separated, as a pilgrim and stranger, from the people of the land; separated from his own methods of securing a fulfilment of the promises of God; separated from the rest of mankind by special sorrows, which brought him into closer fellowship with God than has ever been reached by man; separated to high and lofty

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fellowship in thoughts and plans, which God could not hide from him. BUT IT WAS THE SEPARATION OF FAITH.” For Abraham this involved separation from:

1. Country – this symbolizes the believer’s separation from the world. We are called by God out of the world unto a life of consecration to God.
2. Kindred – a reference to family in general.
3. Close family – his “father’s house” represents the much closer family ties.
4. Note: For Abraham there was a geographical component to this. He was to relocate to the promised land. In a very real sense, the long distance between Ur and Canaan was representative of the spiritual distance that now existed between Abraham and those of his family who remained in heathen idolatry. Responding to God’s call means leaving the world with its pleasures and priorities behind. It also means leaving behind, at least in a spiritual sense, those of our family, extended and close, who choose to stay in their sins and reject salvation.

C. The Sacrifice Call (Vs. 1b)

1. The above all represented sacrifice for Abraham. God’s calls are not always easy to follow! To leave that which is nearest and dearest involves sacrifice! Consecrated living means being a “living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1-2).
2. “A great act of renunciation at the divine call lies at the foundation of Israel’s history, as it does at the foundation of every life that blesses the world or is worth living...God does not hide the sacrifices that have to be made if we will be true to His command. He will enlist no recruits on false pretences. All ties of country, kindred, and father’s house have to be loosened, and, if need be, to be cut, for His command is to be supreme, and clinging hands that would hold back the pilgrim have to be disengaged.” (Maclaren)
3. Sadly, when confronted with the sacrifices required for a true walk of faith, many choose to stay where they are and not venture any further. Oh, that we might learn to see that the blessings of the walk of faith far outweigh any sacrifices we may be called upon to make!
4. David Livingstone: “People talk of the sacrifice I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owing to our God, which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward of healthful activity, the consciousness of doing good, peace of mind, and bright hope of a glorious destiny hereafter? Away with such a word, such a view, and such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege...I never made a sacrifice. Of this we ought not talk when we remember the great sacrifice which He made who left His Father’s throne on high to give Himself for us.”

D. The Service Call (Vs. 1c)

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1. God's will was for Abraham not only to leave Ur of the Chaldees but to enter the land of Canaan. Remember that we are not just separated from something, we are separated to Someone!
2. This is the "brought out" to "bring in" principle. Deut. 6:23 "And he **brought us out from thence**, that he might **bring us in**, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers."

III. THE COVENANT OF ABRAHAM'S CALL (VS. 2-3)

The key word in these verses is 'blessing'. If Abraham would obey God's call, God would bless Him richly! Note that God gave Abraham promises, not reasons. Promises encourage the principle of faith and trust whereas reasons tend to be more aligned with the rationalisations of the natural man. The walk of faith is the truly blessed life. God promised several blessings to Abraham:

A. The Blessing of Nationhood (Vs. 2a)

1. The nation of Israel would come out of Abraham's line. What a blessing for Abraham to be the human instrument used of God to bring about the world's most significant nation.
2. Israel would go on to become a great nation. Israel would not only become a great nation militarily and economically but above all Israel's significance would be on account of the fact they would be the channel through which Messiah would come.

B. The Blessing of Godly Reputation (Vs. 2b)

1. Nimrod and his followers tried to make a name for themselves and it ended in shame.
2. Here God promises to make Abraham's Name great as a reward for his faithfulness. The name Abraham, to this day, remains one of the most significant Names of history. It is revered in the three great monotheistic religions of the world – Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

C. The Blessing of Usefulness (Vs. 2c)

1. Observe the purpose in God's blessing of Abraham – "I will bless thee...and thou shalt be a blessing." God would bless Abraham so that he in turn could be a blessing to others.
2. With blessing comes the responsibility to be a channel of blessing to others. So many think of God's blessing in selfish, self-centered terms. God does delight to bless us personally but it has the greater end in view of helping others.

D. The Blessing of Divine Favor (Vs. 3a)

1. This promise has to do with how other peoples and nations would relate to Abraham and his descendants (Israel). Fruchtenbaum often says, "This perhaps can be viewed as God's foreign policy to the Gentiles in their relationship to the Jewish people."
2. Blessing is promise upon those who would bless Israel. No doubt the great blessing that has been upon the USA is largely due to the fact she has been a friend to the Jew.
3. Cursing is promised upon those who would curse Israel.
4. Note: This promise has never been rescinded and nations that mistreat the Jewish people can expect the chastening hand of God Almighty to be upon them.

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E. The Blessing to the World (Vs. 3b)

The whole world would be blessed through Abraham's seed.

1. In a **general sense**, Israel has been a blessing to the world in many ways (e.g., technological advancements and inventions).
2. In a **specific sense**, this promise has to do with the spiritual blessings Israel would be used to bring into the world. Israel would be:
 - a. The custodians of the Written Word – the Scriptures. Romans 3:2 says that **“the oracles of God”** were committed to the nation of Israel. What a priceless blessing! Every Book in the Bible, with the possible exception of Luke, was written by a Jewish vessel.
 - b. The channel for the Living Word – the Saviour. Through Israel would come the blessing of the Saviour and the truth of salvation by faith. Galatians 3:6-9 highlights this, “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. (7) Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. (8) **And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.** (9) So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.”

IV. THE CARRYING OUT OF ABRAHAM'S CALL (VS. 4-9)

Note some lessons from Abraham's response to God's call.

A. The Hindrance to Abraham's Obedience (Vs. 1a; 11:31-32)

1. Abraham's obedience, while admirable, was not immediate. The text clearly indicates that there was a delay in Abraham's obedience.
2. “Now the LORD **had said** unto Abram...”. This command was not spoken to Abraham in Haran as some have mistakenly suggested. Acts 7:2-3 makes it clear that it was given to Abraham when he was in Ur. God had also explicitly said he was to leave “his father's house”.
3. Instead of leaving Terah and going direct to Canaan, Abraham went on a detour from God's will with his father to Haran where they lived until Terah died. Sadly, Terah became a hindrance to Abraham's obedience. This is a sight all too common with parents (including Christian parents) today!
4. This reminds us of a sobering truth that sometimes the closest of human ties can become a hindrance and an obstruction to the fulfillment of God's will in our lives if we aren't prepared to take up the cross of misunderstanding. How many Christians are held back from the perfect will of God by unsaved or carnal family members.
5. True discipleship means putting Christ first, before even the closest of human ties. Christ has first call on your life, not mum, dad, brother or sister! Matthew 10:37-39 “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that

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findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”

6. F.B. Meyer writes, “The summons of God will ever involve a wrench from much that nature holds dear. We must be prepared to take up our cross daily if we would follow where He points the way. Each step of real advance in the Divine life will involve an altar on which some dear fragment of the self-life has been offered; or a cairn (pile of stones making a tomb) beneath which some cherished idol has been buried. It is true that the blessedness which awaits us will more than compensate us for sacrifices which we may have to make. And the prospect of the future may well allure us forward; but still, when it comes to the point, there is certain anguish as the last link is broken, the last farewell said, and the last look taken of the receding home of past happy years.”

B. The Confidence of Abraham’s Obedience (Vs. 4a)

1. Abraham stepped out in obedience to the Word of God – “as the LORD had spoken to him.” Abraham took God at His Word! Wiersbe writes, “How you respond to God’s promises determines what God will do in your life.”
2. Faith does not mean stepping out on the basis of our subjective feelings but trustful obedience to God’s revealed Word and will.

C. The Influence of Abraham’s Obedience (Vs. 4b-5a)

1. Abraham’s faith inspired others to follow him (e.g., Lot).
2. As we obey God wholeheartedly, that can serve to encourage and help others.

D. The Resistance to Abraham’s Obedience (Vs. 6)

1. The presence of the Canaanite in the land is a reminder that Abraham would face opposition to his walk of faith.
2. The walk of faith is not without its obstacles and challenges. In fact, the world, the flesh and the devil are great enemies to the walk of faith as such a walk brings the blessing and power of God into the Christians life.

V. THE CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM’S CALL (VS. 7-9)

From start to finish, faith was the central principle in Abraham’s walk. What kind of life was he called to? There are three features of Abraham’s life in these verses that teach us something of the life of faith – Abraham’s tent, altar and journeying. He was called to:

A. The Prayerful Life of Faith – the Altar (Vs. 7; 8b)

1. God appears to Abraham once he is in the land of Canaan and adds to the promise, he had given in Vs. 2-3. The promise is that the land would be given to Abraham’s seed. We note a principle that when we walk in obedience, God blesses us with a greater understanding of His Person and promises. Jesus said, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will **manifest myself** to him.” (John 14:21) Do you want to know more of God’s presence in your life? Walk in obedience by faith!

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2. In response, Abraham erects an altar. The altar serves as a reminder of God's special working in his life. Do you have any altars of memorial in your life you can look back to that remind you of God's faithfulness in your life?
3. Principally, the altar in Abraham's life speaks of prayer and consecration to, and dependence upon God – "there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and **called** upon the name of the LORD." (Vs. 8)

B. The Pilgrim Life of Faith – the Tent (Vs. 8a)

1. The tent in Abraham's life symbolized his walk as a stranger and a pilgrim; the separated life he was called to. He did not dwell in the impressive cities of the Canaanites but under the shelter of canvas in fellowship with His God.
2. F.B. Meyer notes, "**It is impossible to move our times, so long as we live beneath their spell**; but when once we have risen up, and gone, at the call of God, outside their pale, we are able to react on them with an irresistible power."
3. Heb. 11:13 "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."
4. Wiersbe writes, "Wherever Abraham went in the land of Canaan, he was marked by his *tent* and his *altar* (Gen. 12:7-8; 13:3-4, 18). The tent marked him as a "stranger and pilgrim" (Heb. 11:9-16; 1 Peter 2:11) and the altar marked him as a citizen of heaven who worshiped the true and living God. He was separated from the world (the tent) and devoted to the Lord (the altar). Whenever Abraham abandoned his tent and his altar, he got into trouble."

C. The Patient Life of Faith – the Journey (Vs. 9)

1. Abraham had to exercise patience as he waited for the fulfilment of God's promises. His waiting for the fulfilment of God's promise of a son (Isaac) is an example of this. Some of the promises would be later fulfilled in his descendants (e.g., the possession of the land).
2. This is perhaps the hardest part of the faith journey for us! We want everything NOW but often it is God's way to make us wait in order that He might grow, strengthen and refine our faith.
3. Although God had promised this land to Abraham and his seed, this was not yet the time for the fulfilment of these promises (See Acts 7:5). "Such experiences are not unique to Abram, but are common to all those who seek to follow God's will. The promise often seems long delayed, and the believer must simply continue following day by day, trusting God and knowing that His timing is always right." (Morris)

Conclusion: Have you responded to God's salvation call? The call to consecrated service? What is preventing you going forward in your walk of faith (something or someone)? Have you embraced the pilgrim mindset? Is there an altar of prayer in your life?

Abraham in Egypt

Text: Gen. 12:9-13:4

Introduction:

1. Egypt is a picture of the world in the Bible and God's people were warned against leaning upon it. Take the following two verses from Isaiah as an example:
 - Isaiah 30:1-2 "Woe to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin: **That walk to go down into Egypt**, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!"
 - Isaiah 31:1 "**Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help**; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because *they are* many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; **but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel**, neither seek the LORD!"
2. Abraham's sojourn in Egypt was not blessed of God and represents a lapse in his walk of faith. It serves as a very powerful and relevant warning to believers of the danger of neglecting the walk of faith for a life of accommodation with the world.
3. We will consider this period of Abraham's backsliding in Egypt in three segments.

I. THE RESORT TO AN EGYPT SOJOURN (VS. 10)

A. The Motivation towards an Egypt Sojourn (Vs. 10a & c)

1. The Adversity of Canaan – "a famine"
 - a. The Moment of the Trial.
 - i. It came in the context of God's leading. God had clearly led Abraham to this place. He was in the will of God and now facing a significant trial! Our natural reaction in such circumstances is to doubt and even feel God has somehow failed us. Stay where God led you unless God clearly directs you otherwise.
 - ii. It came in the context of God's promises. God had promised to bless Abraham in multiple ways, including by giving the land of Canaan to his descendants. A famine in the land of promise represented a big test for Abraham. Trials can test our faith in God's promises! The Christian life is not a life exempt from trials but a life sustained through trials.
 - iii. Far too often we assume that the walk of faith, backed by all the glorious promises of God, will be a life of ease. In reality, the life of faith is often confronted with trials and tests. These tests, if responded to correctly, can become great victories of faith where we prove the faithfulness of God.

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- iv. Tests often follow triumphs. John Butler writes, “One of the times or seasons in which trial often comes to us is right after we have had some great spiritual victory or mountain peak experience. So it was here with the timing of this trial in Abraham’s life. The trial came right after Abraham had reached a new high spiritually in his life. He had obeyed the Lord and come to the land of Canaan. Beware of the peril of post-victory and post-blessing problems.”
- b. The Magnitude of the Trial – “the famine was grievous”. Before we quickly dismiss Abraham’s dilemma, try and appreciate what this trial represented for him.
 - i. Abraham was from the well-watered pastureland of Mesopotamia. Canaan was more subject to famine due to its greater reliance upon seasonal rainfall.
 - ii. Abraham had livestock, servants and a wife to care for. We get the sense from verse 5 that Abraham was a man of reasonable means.
 - iii. We need to remember that big trials can be a blessing in that they develop our faith and also become occasions for the display of God’s power on our behalf. But to stay and trust is a real discipline and requires much grace from God!
- 2. The Attractiveness of Egypt
 - a. Egypt appeared to offer what Canaan lacked at this time – sustenance and relief from the famine. Egypt looked like the easier way! The world often appears to offer an easier way to the Bible way. But it’s all smoke and mirrors, a mirage that soon gives way to sand and nothingness. We find out that the world’s way is not the easy way after all.
 - b. Egypt appealed to natural wisdom. Like Ur of the Chaldees, it was a fertile area with a better food supply. It made good sense to go to Egypt from a logical point of view! One thing we learn from Abraham’s life is this; taking matters into your own hands never ends well!
 - c. Abraham allowed himself to be led by circumstances. The circumstances favored a move to Egypt but making a decision based on circumstances alone is a very dangerous game!
 - d. Abraham was also led by the drive for self-preservation. This is also a danger as God’s way is self-denial rather than self-preservation.
 - e. “Abraham was called to go to Canaan, not Egypt. He was, therefore, safer in Canaan in the midst of the worst of famines than in Egypt in the midst of plenty.” (Butler)

B. The Direction of an Egypt Sojourn (Vs. 10b)

- 1. Egypt was “down” in a topographical sense. Canaan was literally “higher ground” to Egypt. It was always “up” to Jerusalem.
- 2. Egypt was “down” in a spiritual sense. A move towards the world is always a downward move spiritually no matter how well it is rationalized and appears on the surface. A move in the direction of

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the world is always a move away from the higher ground of the separated, consecrated life of faith.

3. Is it any wonder God's Word warns us, "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love 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 pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17)

II. THE RESULTS OF THE EGYPT SOJOURN (VS. 11-20)

There are at least 8 consequences of Abraham's sojourn in Egypt.

Running from problems doesn't solve them; you just trade one set of problems for another! The same consequences can be expected for the believer who neglects the walk of faith and relies on the world. The Egypt sojourn is marked by:

A. Faithlessness – Abraham is now being guided by the wisdom of the natural man rather than by the wisdom of God's Word. A shift to Egypt (the world) represents an abandonment of the walk of faith.

B. Prayerlessness (Vs. 8) – there is no mention of the altar of prayer or of Abraham seeking God in earnest for direction and guidance. The Egypt life is marked by an absence of a real prayer life.

C. Fearfulness (Vs. 11)

1. Fear quickly replaces faith in Abraham's walk. He lost the peace that comes with the walk of faith in the center of God's will. His whole sojourn in Egypt is full of fear from start to end. Wiersbe writes, "Once in Egypt, Abraham faced a new set of problems; for if you run away from one test, you will soon face another...Abraham soon discovered that he had been better off dealing with the circumstances in Canaan than with the people in Egypt."
2. The closer Abraham got to Egypt the more he felt uneasy – "it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt". It began to dawn on Abraham that Egypt wasn't such a safe place for his family after all! From a distance it looked so good but as he got closer, he couldn't help but feel the change in atmosphere. The environment was different to Canaan!
3. Things can appear to be going very well initially when a believer moves towards the world. When you ask them how they are doing in their new "Egypt Evangelical Church", they are quick to tell you how WONDERFUL everything is going in their lives since they left Canaan Baptist Church! But the passing of time has a way of revealing the hidden dangers of the world and sad reaping in the life eventually comes.

D. Self-centeredness (Vs. 11b-13)

1. The Egypt sojourn represents the self-life in place of the Christ-centered, crucified life.
2. Notice the emphasis on self – "they will kill me" (Vs. 12), "well with me" (Vs. 13), "my soul shall live" (Vs. 13). Abraham's primary focus is on preserving Himself rather than on rescuing his wife. He should have put his wife first instead of himself. A spouse out of God's will

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can bring untold trouble into a marriage. This is specially true of the husband as head of the home.

3. One author (L.E. Maxwell – Born Crucified) wisely observed that the flesh is the “I” specialist. We discover:
 - a. In our service for Christ, self-confidence and self-esteem.
 - b. In the slightest suffering, self-saving and self-pity.
 - c. In the least misunderstanding, self-defense and self-vindication.
 - d. In our station in life, self-seeking and self-centeredness.
 - e. In the daily routine, self-pleasing and self-choosing.
 - f. In our relationships, self-assertiveness and self-respect.
 - g. In our education, self-boasting and self-expression.
 - h. In our desires, self-indulgence and self-satisfaction.
 - i. In our successes, self-admiration and self-congratulation.
 - j. In our failures, self-excusing and self-justification.
 - k. In our spiritual attainments, self-righteousness and self-complacency.
 - l. In our public ministry, self-reflection and self-glory.

E. Deceitfulness (Vs. 11-13)

1. Abraham again leans to his own understanding to try and deal with the threat that now loomed over his marriage. He concocts a half-truth which was calculated to deceive. A half truth is calculated to lead the other person to a wrong conclusion; in short, to believe a lie. If what you are doing requires the use of deceit, mark it down; you are out of the will of God!
2. Sarah simply claiming to be Abraham’s sister would give the impression she was unmarried. Abraham’s selfishness again highlighted as giving the impression he was not married to Sarah would lead the Egyptians to conclude she was available to be someone else’s wife! This is exactly what happened.
3. We also note that Abraham is not exercising proper headship in his home. He led his wife into Egypt but now he wants to hide behind her and make her responsible to spread the untruth to cover for him.
4. Worldly men tend to be selfish and also poor leaders (passive).

F. Vulnerableness (Vs. 14-15)

In Egypt, there was a very real danger to:

1. Abraham’s life. For Abraham, this was in the physical realm but it also included his spiritual life. The world has a way of strangling our spiritual life down to a bare glimmer of its former self. A true believer cannot be lost but he can get into a pretty bad state if he stays in a backslidden state.
2. Abraham’s wife. Abraham almost lost his wife and marriage in Egypt. They might have got close initially over their mutual compromise and their deceitful plan but it was short lived! If it hadn’t been for the direct intervention of God, Abraham would have lost Sarah to another man and probably have disappeared from the pages of history.
3. How many Christian marriages have been destroyed during an Egypt sojourn? Sadly, more than many realize. Canaan

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(representing the victorious life of faith) is a much safer place for marriage and the home than Egypt.

G. Prosperousness (Vs. 16)

1. Egypt was not without its positives from a worldly perspective. Abraham did very well materially all the while he was declining spiritually. The rewards of disobedience may look nice on the surface but in reality, they bring heartache.
2. Henry Morris wisely points out, "It often seems at first that a compromise between the methods of the world and God's will and promises works out very well. Following the criteria of the practical world system will often prove profitable because of the pragmatic nature of that system. Christians who follow this path may easily misinterpret the prosperity that follows such a compromise as a confirmation that this was, after all, God's leading; and they may become quite satisfied with the situation. Until, that is, God finally has to deal with them in chastisement, forcing them out of the compromising position back into the walk of true faith."
3. Warning: Do not mistaken material prosperity to automatically mean spiritual prosperity! Remember that "all that glitters is not gold". The Egypt sojourn is marked by materialism. Abraham came out of Egypt with his wealth significantly increased (See Gen. 13:2) but that wealth caused him way more problems that it was worth. It led to the division between him and Lot (Gen. 13:5-6). The time in Egypt also left its mark on Lot who chose the Sodom in part because of its likeness to Egypt (Gen. 13:10). And sadly one day during another lapse of faith, Abraham would marry Hagar, the Egyptian maidservant, brining division and sorry into the home (Gen. 16).
4. If it comes down to a choice, much better to be rich spiritually and poor materially (compare Smyrna Vs. Laodicea in Revelation 2-3). Griffith Thomas notes, "A crust with God is better than a feast without Him." C.H. Mackintosh adds, "It is better to starve in Canaan, if it should be so, than live in luxury in Egypt. It is better far to suffer in God's path, than be at ease in Satan's. It is better to be poor with Christ, than rich without Him."

H. Shamefulness (Vs. 17-20)

1. Abraham's testimony was compromised in Egypt. Instead of bringing blessing to Egypt, he brought God's judgment on Pharaoh and his household.
2. Abraham drew a well-deserved rebuke from a heathen king. It is a shameful and sad thing when a man who has been given a high calling from God requires a rebuke from an unbeliever. It should have been the other way around! Sometimes the unsaved behave better in some instances than the backslider.
3. While Pharaoh evidently came to fear Abraham's God, Abraham's poor testimony meant that Pharaoh would not turn to his God.
4. The Egypt sojourn is marked by powerlessness in the area of personal testimony and witness. Worldly Christians lose their zeal to reach the lost.

III. THE RECOVERY FROM THE EGYPT SOJOURN (VS. 1-4)

Praise God the story ended well for Abraham and should encourage every backslidden Christian that recovery from spiritual decline is possible if you truly desire it. Failure does not have to be permanent! Let's trace Abraham's spiritual recovery and how it applies to us:

A. The Path of Spiritual Recovery (Vs. 1)

1. Abraham "went **up out** of Egypt". Compare this with Genesis 12:10 – "and Abram went **down into** Egypt".
2. This was the first, critical step to spiritual recovery. You've got to get OUT of Egypt. You take the step back in the direction of higher ground and expect the power of God to come to your aid to speed you on your way.
3. If you are honest, you will likely recognize the fact that God's chastening hand has been upon you while you were compromising with the world. We see clear evidence of God's chastening hand on Abraham.

B. The Place of Spiritual Recovery (Vs. 3)

1. The Fellowship Place – 'Bethel' (Vs. 3a).
 - a. The word 'Bethel' means "house of God". Bethel was a special place in Scripture. God met Jacob at Bethel twice and even called Himself "the God of Bethel" (See Gen. 31:13; 35:1, 15).
 - b. The word 'Hai' means ruin, heap of ruins. Hai (same as Ai) would become a place of defeat later in the life of Israel under Joshua's leadership. Ai also represents the danger of leaning on human wisdom rather than seeking God in faith. Without reading too much into the meaning of these two words, we can at least make an application that a believer is always faced with two choices – the house of God and spiritual blessing or the world and spiritual ruin.
 - c. The New Testament "house of God" is the New Testament church. 1 Timothy 3:15 "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in **the house of God**, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." The Christian who wilfully neglects the New Testament house of God (local church) is a worldly Christian. They reveal by their actions that their heart is really in Egypt.
 - d. Beware of forsaking the house of God during a time of crisis! Times of trial are times to stay close to God's house. Attend church regularly and faithfully unless you are **Providentially** hindered from doing so. There is spiritual safety in the House of God!
2. The Former Place
You have to think about where you left your first love and return back to that place.
 - a. The Former place of Separation – "unto the **place** where his **tent** had been **at the beginning**" (Vs. 3b). The tent represents the life of separation as a stranger and pilgrim. The solution for compromise with the world is renewed separation from the world.

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- b. The Former place of Supplication – “unto the **place** of the **altar**, which he had made there **at the first**” (Vs. 3b). The return to the altar represents a return to an effectual prayer life – “and there Abram called on the name of the LORD”. It’s time for a return to personal prayer, family prayer and corporate prayer (church prayer meetings).
- c. Christ’s rebuke to the Ephesian church highlights the same pattern we see in Abraham’s recovery. Revelation 2:4-5 “Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left **thy first love**. Remember therefore **from whence thou art fallen**, and **repent**, and **do the first works**; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” Christ’s instruction for spiritual recover is to Remember, Repent and Renew (do the first works).

Conclusion: Have you drifted from the walk of faith into compromise with the world? Will you, like Abraham, make a decision today to return from wandering in Egypt to walking with God?

Abraham Separates from Lot

When Separation comes Closer to Home

Text: Gen. 13:5-18

Introduction:

1. In our last message, we dealt with the theme of separation from the world. Now we deal with Abraham's separation from Lot. This is an area of biblical separation that is in many ways is harder than separation from the world as it is much closer to home. It has to do with separation from other believers.
2. There are three kinds of people according to the Bible – Natural (unsaved), Carnal (saved but fleshly) and Spiritual (saved and Spirit-filled). Abraham would fall into the category of a spiritual man whereas Lot would fall into the category of a carnal man.
3. If it were not for the New Testament reference to the fact Lot was a "righteous" man we would be strongly inclined to view Lot as an unregenerate professor. But in reality, he presents a sobering warning to us of the kind of carnal life a true believer can lead apart from the grace of God.
4. We will study this needful separation between the spiritual (Abraham) and carnal (Lot) man under 5 headings.

I. THE CONTEXT OF THE SEPARATION (Vs. 1-5)

A. The Recent Sojourn in Egypt (Vs. 1-4)

1. Abraham is experiencing personal revival in his life. A lapse of faith had lured him into Egypt but through the gracious intervention of God, Abraham had been delivered from the Egypt sojourn and to a return to a position of spiritual victory.
2. Up until this point, Lot had willingly followed Abraham. We often read the phrase "and Lot went with him" or something similar. However, it would soon be revealed that in his heart, Lot was not prepared to allow the same reviving work to take place in his own life. Lot "seems to have been one of those men who take right steps, not because they are prompted by obedience to God, but because their friends are taking them. Around him was the inspiration of a heroic faith, the fascination of the untried and unknown; the stir of a great religious movement: and Lot was swept into the current, and resolved to go too. He was Pliable of the earlies Pilgrim's Progress." (F.B. Meyer)
3. F.B. Meyer wisely points out; "In every great religious movement there always have been, and always will be a number of individuals who cast in their lot with it, without knowing the power which inspires it. Beware of them! They cannot stand the stress of the life of separation to God. The excitement will soon die away from them; and, having no principle to take its place, they will become hindrances and disturbers of the peace. As certainly as they are harboured in the camp, or their principles are allowed within the heart, they will lower the spiritual tone; allure to worldly policy;

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suggest methods which would not otherwise occur to us; and dray us towards the Egypt-world. Nothing but supreme principle can carry any one through the real, separated, and surrendered life of the child of God. If you are prompted by anything less, such as excitement, enthusiasm, fashion, contagious example – you will first be a hindrance, and end by being a failure.”

B. The Riches Secured in Egypt (Vs. 5)

1. This is the first mention of riches in the Bible and the events that follow are instructive. The Holy Spirit highlights in this first mention of riches, the strife and heartache that riches can cause amongst brethren. Both Abraham and Lot returned out of Egypt with increased wealth. Sadly, this wealth caused more friction than blessing in their relationship. How often wealth causes problems in families!
2. We note the sowing and reaping principle here. It was a blessing that Abraham was restored from his season of backsliding in Egypt but there would be ongoing consequences to deal with.
3. We cannot blame all of Lot's demise on Uncle Abraham but acknowledging the accountability aspect of leadership means that Abraham did bear a measure of responsibility for the seeds sown in Lot's heart during the Egypt sojourn that would bear bitter fruit later on. We need to always remember that we are all influencing someone and that our decisions don't just affect us personally.
4. That said, Lot could have chosen personal revival like Uncle Abraham and gone on to victory also!

II. THE CATALYST FOR THE SEPARATION (VS. 5-7)

Conflicts such as these have a way of revealing the inner condition of the heart. They do not tend to create the problems as much as they reveal the problems already there. There were three issues at play here. There was:

A. The Presenting Issue (Vs. 5-6)

1. There was insufficient space to sustain the needs of both their families. They had outgrown the place they were dwelling in together. The fight was over material things.
2. The issue was not that the land of Canaan did not have the capacity to sustain Lot and Abraham. The issue was it was no longer possible for them to remain together in the same place.

B. The Underlying Issue (Vs. 7a)

1. Lot and Abraham were going in a different direction and were not of one spirit. The outer division was symptomatic of a division of a deeper kind. Someone wisely observed, “**The heart of every problem is the problem in the heart.**” Prov. 4:23 says that the issues of life proceed from the heart. Lot's heart was focused on wealth and worldly achievement, while Abraham wanted only to please the Lord.
2. Amos 3:3 says, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” That the division was not just confined to the herdsman is made plain by Abraham's words in verse 8 – “Let there be no strife, I pray thee, **between me and thee**, and between my herdmen and thy

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herdmen.” It is significant that Abraham mentions Himself and Lot before the herdmen.

3. Lot could not walk with Abraham because Abraham was the friend of God (2 Chr. 20:7; Is. 41:8) and Lot was a friend of the world (James 4:4).
4. There was also the matter of God’s Sovereign will for Abraham. God’s plan was to take Abraham alone from his family and make of him a great nation. First Abraham had to be separated from his father Terah (Gen. 11:31-32) and now it was time to part ways with his nephew Lot. Above it all, God was working out His Divine plan for Abraham. We do have to factor in that sometimes a parting of the ways from certain individuals is a part of God’s plan for our faith journey.

C. The Resulting Issues (Vs. 7b)

The Holy Spirit inserts an intriguing detail at this point in the narrative – “and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.” A couple of thoughts are suggested:

1. Spiritual Testimony was Compromised. Abraham had been an unashamed testimony for His allegiance to the one true God, building altars wherever he went in the land. No doubt the Canaanites were aware of this. The strife between Abraham and Lot had the potential to harm the testimony of God in the eyes of the unbelievers. A godly contention for the faith is not only important, it is commanded by God but an ungodly contention over carnal things is greatly damaging to the Christian testimony. Our love for one another is a BIG part of our testimony to the lost world. John 13:35 Jesus said, “By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have **love one to another.**”
2. Spiritual Safety was Compromised. The Canaanites were a warring people who could potentially take advantage of the weakness brought about by this division to plunder the flocks for themselves. Carnal division amongst God’s people makes the flock vulnerable to incursions by the devil!

III. THE CONDESCENSION IN THE SEPARATION (VS. 8-9)

Abraham’s response to this difficult and divisive situation highlights him as the spiritual man in the conflict. Observe two qualities about his response. It was:

A. A Spiritual Response (Vs. 8)

Abraham had a spiritual response to a carnal provocation. How important for us to follow his godly example! He was a peacemaker in the midst of this divisive situation. Abraham demonstrated:

1. The Initiative of a Peacemaker (Vs. 8a).
 - a. The **carnal man** watches on and allows carnal conflict to continue and escalate. Sadly, carnal people sometimes get a warped enjoyment out of a carnal conflict. They are warmongers rather than peacemakers!
 - b. The **spiritual man** seeks to bring such a conflict to a resolve/end. The longer such disputes go on, the worse things become! Sometimes there actually has to be a parting of the

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ways for peace to be achieved. “The beginning of strife *is as* when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with.” (Prov. 17:14) There is a time and a place to discuss issues as believers and seek to resolve them. There is also a time to let a matter rest, agree to disagree, part ways graciously and move on in the will of God. Another word of wisdom from Proverbs, “He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that **repeateth a matter** separateth *very* friends.” (Prov. 17:9)

2. The Intreaty of a Peacemaker (Vs. 8b). Abraham, as a spiritual man, makes a gracious appeal for a cessation of hostilities – “I pray thee”.
3. The Insight of a Peacemaker (Vs. 8c). Abraham gives a wise and insightful reason to back up his appeal – “for we be brethren”. What an example of being “sweetly reasonable”. Notice that despite the fact Lot is not in the best place spiritually, there is still a recognition that he is a part of the family. Separation from disobedient brethren is often a necessity but we should not count them as enemies but admonish them as brethren (2 Thess. 3:15).

B. A Selfless Response (Vs. 9)

1. Abraham was Self-denying. As the elder member in the family, Abraham had certain rights and privileges. Further, God had promised the land to Abraham, not Lot. However, we see Abraham surrendering rather than asserting his rights. The death to self-principle is highlighted. Abraham foreshadows Christ who surrendered His rights in order to go to the cross to provide salvation.
2. Abraham was Self-sacrificing. Abraham gives Lot the first choice of the land. A spiritual person is willing to even suffer loss if it contributes in some way to the greater spiritual objective of achieving peace. “In Egypt, Abraham put himself first. Now that he is back in Canaan and back to the altar, he put God first, others second, and himself last. Abraham did not insist on his rights. He was willing to be dead to his own rights and position.” (Wiersbe)
3. “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 places 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.” (Alexander Maclaren)
4. Illustration: William Booth sends telegram to national conference with one word message – “**OTHERS**”.

IV. THE CHOICE IN THE SEPARATION (VS. 10-13)

There is a real contrast between the choices Abraham and Lot made at this time and the consequences that came as a result of those choices. These verses concentrate mainly on Lot. We can trace 7 steps in Lot’s life from this point that led to his spiritual ruin.

A. Lot’s Temptation from Sodom (Vs. 10, 13)

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1. The Deceitful Illusions of Sodom (Vs. 10)

Deceit is at the heart and soul of temptation. Things are not as they appear! Sodom was deceitful in at least two areas and pictures the character of the world and its temptations.

 - a. Deceitful in its Assurances – Sodom’s plain appeared to offer a solution to Lot’s needs as it was “well-watered”. It seemed they would be refreshed down there near Sodom!
 - b. Deceitful in its Appearances – everything looked so incredibly attractive and good down on Sodom’s plain!
 - i. It looked like Eden – “as the garden of the LORD”.
 - ii. It looked like Egypt – “like the land of Egypt”. Sadly, this highlights that while Abraham may have gotten Lot out of Egypt, he was not able to remove Egypt out of Lot.
 - iii. How the devil and the world have a way of making sin looks so wonderful and attractive. It just looks so good on the surface! But it is all a lie and a deception.
 - c. “Sadly, Lot had been infected with the luxury and excitement of Egypt, and was no longer content to be a “stranger and pilgrim in the land”. He looked down to the plain of the Jordan River, as it flows into the Salt Sea, where there were five prosperous, exciting cities, and decided that was where he would like to be. No doubt he knew something of the wicked reputation of those cities but still chose that was where he wanted to be. Perhaps he also, like many believers today who make similar choices, rationalized that he could be a witness for the Lord there, while at the same time, enjoying the creature comforts they offered.” (Henry Morris)
2. The Depraved Iniquities of Sodom (Vs. 13)
 - a. God’s Divine perspective was very different to that of Lot’s. God saw the dark underbelly of the cities of the plain. It was a place renown for the darkest depravities known to man.
 - b. The only assessment that matters as to the moral condition of a nation and its peoples is God’s. The fact that Sodom’s sins were acceptable to the overwhelming majority in the cities of the plain did not make them acceptable to Almighty God.

B. Lot’s Decision for Sodom (Vs. 11-12a)

1. A significant choice – this was the first real choice that Lot made in his life independent of Abraham. Up till this point, he has been a follower of Abraham. There is nothing like a crossroads in one’s life where they can no longer lean on a spiritual figure in their lives to reveal the state of their heart. Lot “seems to have been one of those men who take right steps, not because they are prompted by obedience to God, but because their friends are taking them. Around him was the inspiration of a heroic faith, the fascination of the untried and unknown; the stir of a great religious movement: and Lot was swept into the current, and resolved to go too. He was like Pliable of the Pilgrim’s Progress.” (F.B. Meyer)
2. A sinful choice – Lot “chose” to walk by sight rather than by faith. Notice the sequence – Lot lifted up his eyes, beheld, desired and

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then chose. The wisest thing for us to do is to choose God's choice for us!

3. A separation choice – Lot chose more than just geographical distance between himself and Abraham; he chose spiritual distance as well. Remember, your decisions determine your destiny. “How many have stood upon those Bethel heights, intent on the same errand as took Lot thither! Age after age has poured forth its crowds of young hearts, to stand upon an exceeding high mountain, whilst before them have been spread all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them; the tempter whispering, that for one act of obeisance all shall be theirs. In assurance and self-confidence; eager to do the very best for themselves; prepared to consider the moralities only in so far as these did not interfere with what they held to be the main chance of life – thus have succeeding generations looked towards the plains of Sodom from afar. And, alas! Like Lot, they have tried to make stones into bread; they have cast themselves down from the mountain side, for angels to catch; they have knelt before the tempter, to find his promise broken, the vision of power an illusion, and the soul beggared for ever – whilst the tempter, with hollow laugh, has disappeared, leaving his dupe standing alone in the midst of a desolate wilderness.” (F.B. Meyer)

C. Lot's Direction towards Sodom (Vs. 12b)

1. Lot journeyed east from Bethel (Vs. 11a). This was in the direction of Hai (same as Ai) which means ruin or heap of ruins. We all are constantly faced with a choice of direction in our lives. Either we move towards Bethel (house of God) representing fellowship with God and spiritual blessing or we move towards Hai and the spiritual ruin and breakage that comes with compromise with the world.
2. Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom (Vs. 12b). Lot did not take up residence in Sodom straight away. He simply shifted his family in the direction of Sodom. The path of compromise usually starts out with subtil changes to begin with. Like a boat being carried along by the gentle movement of a river to begin with, the drift appears slow and gradual until it is soon seized in the powerful undertow of an approaching waterfall and soon plunged to destruction. Beware of getting caught in the world's vortex! “Like leprosy, sin has often a seemingly small beginning, but how rapid its spread, how loathsome its issue, how dreadful its end.” (Pink)
3. “Lot “pitched his tent toward Sodom”. He dwelled “in the cities of the plain” – not actually within the cities, since he still lived in his tent, but in their orbit, as it were, near enough to enjoy their advantages but not yet actually a part of their life. Christians today often follow the same path, hoping to have both the spiritual blessings of a separated walk with God and the carnal advantages of fellowship with the world. Sooner or later, however, one has to decide which it will be. He cannot have it both ways. Neither God nor the world will allow it.” (Morris)
4. “Lot is a type and illustration of the Christian who is not fully consecrated – one who is trying to make the best of both worlds,

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endeavouring to stand well with God, while pushing to the full his own earthly interests.” (Griffith Thomas)

D. Lot's Position in Sodom (14:12).

1. With what started as a seemingly innocent move in Sodom's direction soon led to actually dwelling in Sodom. Remember, **sin will always take you farther than you want to go and keep you longer than you want to stay.**
2. The New Testament brings out that Lot was vexed by the sights and sounds of Sodom as underneath, he was a righteous man who didn't really belong there. Only a saved person will truly feel vexed by sin. 2 Peter 2:7 “And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;)”
 - a. The word ‘vexed’ means to wear down, to oppress. The same word is translated ‘oppressed’ concerning Moses’ defense of the Hebrew man who was being ‘oppressed’ by the Egyptian (Acts 7:24). This is a reference to the incident when Moses saw “an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew” (Ex. 2:11-12).
 - b. It was the daily **sights** and **sounds** of Sodom that vexed Lot's righteous soul. We all have to face the vexing sights and sounds of a Sodom-like society and God can give us grace to endure it but that is very different to making a deliberate choice to place ourselves in a compromised position where we are going to be severely tempted. The separated Christian is spared so many of the world's vexatious temptations and defilements.

E. Lot's Determination to stay in Sodom (Gen. 14)

1. We will cover this chapter in our next message but to comment briefly, Lot was captured by the army of the four kings invading Sodom and its ally cities. It took the intervention of godly Abraham to see him rescued.
2. Despite this sobering chastisement, when it was all over, Lot returned to Sodom. The carnal believer despises the chastening of the Lord and stubbornly continues in his backslidden ways.

F. Lot's Promotion within Sodom (Gen. 19:1)

1. We now find Lot sitting in the gate, implying he has attained a position of leadership in Sodom. Lot had reached a level of success in the city but what a price he would pay in the long run for that “success”.
2. Lot may have been on the ascent materially but he was on the descent spiritually.

G. Lot's Ruination because of Sodom (Gen. 19)

Consider Lot's loss:

1. He lost his daughters. It appears Lot had a family of girls and only two of them left Sodom with him. The daughters that had married men in Sodom stayed behind and were lost along with their husbands.
2. He lost his house, position and wealth.
3. He lost his wife.
4. He lost his purity.

V. THE COMFORT AFTER THE SEPARATION (VS. 14-18)

Undoubtedly there was pain for Abraham in this separation from Lot and also a renewed test of faith given the fact from the human perspective it appeared that Lot had got the better end of the deal. God in His love and grace comforts and re-assures Abraham after this ordeal. Abraham was blessed with:

A. The Promises of God (Vs. 14-16)

1. The promise of a land (Vs. 14-15)
 - a. The significant timing of the promise (Vs. 14a).
 - i. This promise had special significance in light of what had just taken place in Abraham's life. God speaks to Abraham "after that Lot was separated from him". This separation, though painful, brought further blessing in Abraham's life. Sometimes the carnal Christian has to be removed so that there can be blessing.
 - ii. "Sometimes when a person does the will of God, it does not look at first like he did the right thing. The blessed results of doing the will of God do not always come quickly. The good seeds that have been planted do not always spring up as speedily as other seeds oftentimes do. This frequently discourages the faithful soul, and there are plenty of critics around who will add to the discouragement by pointing out the apparent lack of success in the life of the obedient one compare to the worlding. But be patient; truth will be vindicated; righteousness will be exonerated; and doing the will of God will be confirmed in due season." (John Butler)
 - b. The scope of the promise (Vs. 14b-15).
 - i. God instructs Abraham to "lift up now thine eyes" and to look upon the inheritance he would receive from His God. What a contrast between what the man of faith and the man of the flesh saw. Lot also "lifted up his eyes" (Vs. 10) and chose the world's wealth. Abraham let God choose for him. God calls on Abraham to see the dimensions of his spiritual inheritance. May God give us the spiritual eyes of faith to see all that we have in Christ compared to the shallow offers of the world's temporal, fleeting joys.
 - ii. We are reminded of the dimensions of God's love that we have entered into through saving grace. Eph. 3:17-19 "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what **is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;** And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."
2. The promise of a seed (Vs. 16)

Lot lost his family, but Abraham was promised a family so large it could not be counted.

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- a. Abraham's natural seed. God had promised Abraham that he would make of him "a great nation" (Gen. 12:2). Later, God would add that he would be a father of many nations. Genesis 17:5 "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for **a father of many nations** have I made thee." This was fulfilled in the nation of Israel and also the other nations that came from Abraham's seed (e.g., Ishmael's descendants).
- b. Abraham's spiritual seed. The New Testament makes it clear that this promise extends to believers who become spiritual seed of Abraham by faith. Galatians 3:29 "And if ye *be* Christ's, **then are ye Abraham's seed**, and heirs according to the promise." See also Romans 4:16-18

B. The Plenty of God (Vs. 17)

1. Abraham is invited to not only look in each direction at the magnitude of his inheritance but also to explore and enjoy it. Abraham is to "walk up and down," and, as it were, appropriate and claim for himself in detail that which God gives.
2. What a picture of the believer's inheritance. The Christian life from beginning to end is a quest to enter into a deeper and broader understanding of all we have in Christ. It is the heart's happy exploration of all our salvation riches.

C. The Presence of God (Vs. 18)

1. Abraham obeys the Lord and commences the exploration, moving to Mamre near Hebron and building a new altar. "Hebron means "fellowship" and we may apply the thought by saying that prompt whole-hearted obedience always leads to fellowship with God." (Griffith Thomas) God draws near to his separated ones.
2. 2 Cor. 6:17-18 "Wherefore come out from among them, and **be ye separate**, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and **I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you**, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Conclusion:

1. What crossroad are you standing at in your life? What choices are you making in your life right now? Where will those decisions ultimately lead you?
2. Have you already commenced similar steps to that of Lot? God's grace is available to restore you before it is too late.
3. Do you struggle with a separation that has taken place in your walk of faith within the will of God (i.e., a close family member or Christian friend)? Trust in God! His presence will comfort you and His promises undergird you.

Steps to Spiritual Ruin

The Life of Lot

Text: Gen. 13:10-18

Introduction:

1. In our last message, we considered the separation that took place between Abraham and Lot. The lives of Abraham and Lot stand in stark contrast to each other. "Throughout the biographical portions of Scripture, we find the Holy Spirit frequently brings together two men of widely different character and places them in juxtaposition so that we might the better learn the salutary (useful, helpful) lessons He would teach us. Abel and Cain, Moses and Aaron, Samuel and Saul, David and Solomon, are well known examples of this principle." (Pink)
2. If it were not for the New Testament reference to the fact Lot was a "righteous" man (2 Pet. 2:8) we would be strongly inclined to view Lot as an unregenerate professor. But in reality, he presents a sobering warning to us of the kind of carnal life a true believer can lead apart from the grace of God.
3. In this message we will briefly review what we covered in the last message and then continue on with tracing Lot's spiritual drift downwards. We will also see the contrast in Abraham's life and how God blessed him after this separation.

I. THE CONTEXT OF THE SEPARATION (Vs. 1-5)

- A. The Recent Sojourn in Egypt (Vs. 1-4)
- B. The Riches Secured in Egypt (Vs. 5)

II. THE CATALYST FOR THE SEPARATION (VS. 5-7)

There were three issues at play here. There was:

- A. The Presenting Issue (Vs. 5-6)
- B. The Underlying Issue (Vs. 7a)
- C. The Resulting Issues (Vs. 7b)

III. THE CONDESCENSION IN THE SEPARATION (VS. 8-9)

Observe two qualities about Abraham's response. It was:

- A. A Spiritual Response (Vs. 8)
- B. A Selfless Response (Vs. 9)

IV. THE CHOICE IN THE SEPARATION (VS. 10-13)

There is a real contrast between the choices Abraham and Lot made at this time and the consequences that came as a result of those choices. We can trace 7 steps in Lot's life from this point that led to his spiritual ruin.

- A. Lot's Desire for Sodom (Vs. 10, 13)
 1. The Deceitful Illusions of Sodom (Vs. 10)

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Deceit is at the heart and soul of temptation. Things are not as they appear! Sodom was deceitful in at least two areas and pictures the character of the world and its temptations.

- a. Deceitful in its Assurances – Sodom’s plain appeared to offer a solution to Lot’s needs as it was “well-watered”. It seemed they would be refreshed down there near Sodom!
 - i. Remember, the world can never satisfy the thirst of your heart, only Christ (John 4:13-14; 7:37-39).
 - ii. Remember, the devil and the world’s promises are lies. The devil promised Eve, “ye shall not surely die” (Gen. 3:4), the complete opposite of what God had said and “ye shall be as gods” (Gen. 3:5) which was something she could never attain.
 - b. Deceitful in its Appearances – everything looked so incredibly attractive and good down on Sodom’s plain!
 - i. It looked like Eden – “as the garden of the LORD”.
 - ii. It looked like Egypt – “like the land of Egypt”. Sadly, this highlights that while Abraham may have gotten Lot out of Egypt, he was not able to remove Egypt out of Lot.
 - iii. How the devil and the world have a way of making sin looks so wonderful and attractive. It just looks so good on the surface! But it is all a lie and a deception.
 - c. “Sadly, Lot had been infected with the luxury and excitement of Egypt, and was no longer content to be a “stranger and pilgrim in the land”. He looked down to the plain of the Jordan River, as it flows into the Salt Sea, where there were five prosperous, exciting cities, and decided that was where he would like to be. No doubt he knew something of the wicked reputation of those cities but still chose that was where he wanted to be. Perhaps he also, like many believers today who make similar choices, rationalized that he could be a witness for the Lord there, while at the same time, enjoying the creature comforts they offered.” (Henry Morris)
2. The Depraved Iniquities of Sodom (Vs. 13)
- God’s Divine perspective was very different to that of Lot’s. God saw the dark underbelly of the cities of the plain. It was a place renown for the darkest depravities known to man. Sodom would go down in Biblical history as an example and warning to those who would pursue depraved perversion – “making them an **ensample** unto those that after should live ungodly” (2 Pet. 2:6); “are set forth for an **example**, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 1:7). What were the sins of Sodom? Sodom was:
- a. Prideful – “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, **pride**, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.” (Ez. 16:49)
 - b. Pleasure driven (hedonistic) - “Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, **fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters,**” (Ez. 16:49) A

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society that makes pleasure the chief end of man's existence is a society that slides very rapidly into depraved perversion.

- c. Pitiless – "...neither did she strengthen the hand of **the poor and needy**." (Ez. 16:49) A society that becomes taken over with the pursuit of the fulfilment of fleshly lusts will become cruel and uncaring towards the vulnerable and needy. We see this very thing happening in our own country. While there is much rhetoric about compassion and care of the vulnerable, we now have state sanctioned murder of societies most vulnerable.
- d. Perverse – "And delivered just Lot, vexed with **the filthy conversation** (means lascivious lifestyle) of the wicked:" (2 Pet. 2:7) "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, **giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh**, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." (Jude 1:7) Sodom was given over to the pursuit of sexual depravity. It was:
 - i. Sold out to Immorality.
 - ii. Sold out to Sodomy.

B. Lot's Decision for Sodom (Vs. 11-12a)

Consider the choice that Lot made at this time. It was:

1. A significant choice – this was the first real choice that Lot made in his life independent of Abraham. Up till this point, he has been a follower of Abraham. There is nothing like a crossroads in one's life where they can no longer lean on a spiritual figure in their lives to reveal the state of their heart. Lot "seems to have been one of those men who take right steps, not because they are prompted by obedience to God, but because their friends are taking them. Around him was the inspiration of a heroic faith, the fascination of the untried and unknown; the stir of a great religious movement: and Lot was swept into the current, and resolved to go too. He was like Pliable of the Pilgrim's Progress." (F.B. Meyer)
2. A sinful choice – Lot "chose" to walk by sight rather than by faith. Notice the sequence – Lot lifted up his eyes, beheld, desired and then chose. The wisest thing for us to do is to choose God's choice for us rather than our own way.
3. A separation choice – Lot chose more than just geographical distance between himself and Abraham; he chose spiritual distance as well. The carnal man makes a choice to separate himself from the spiritual man. Remember, **your decisions determine your destiny**. F.B. Meyer notes, "How many have stood upon those Bethel heights, intent on the same errand as took Lot thither! Age after age has poured forth its crowds of young hearts, to stand upon an exceeding high mountain, whilst before them have been spread all the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them; the tempter whispering, that for one act of obeisance all shall be theirs. In assurance and self-confidence; eager to do the very best for themselves; prepared to consider the moralities only in so far as these did not interfere with what they held to be the main chance of life – thus have succeeding generations looked towards the plains of Sodom from afar. And, alas! Like Lot, they have tried to make

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stones into bread; they have cast themselves down from the mountain side, for angels to catch; they have knelt before the tempter, to find his promise broken, the vision of power an illusion, and the soul beggared for ever – whilst the tempter, with hollow laugh, has disappeared, leaving his dupe standing alone in the midst of a desolate wilderness.”

C. Lot's Direction towards Sodom (Vs. 12b)

1. Lot journeyed east from Bethel (Vs. 11a). This was in the direction of Hai (same as Ai) (Gen. 12:8) which means ruin or heap of ruins. We all are constantly faced with a choice of direction in our lives. Either we move towards Bethel (house of God) representing fellowship with God and spiritual blessing or we move towards Hai and the spiritual ruin and breakage that comes with compromise with the world.
2. Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom (Vs. 12b). Lot did not take up residence in Sodom straight away. He simply shifted his family in the direction of Sodom. The path of compromise usually starts out with subtle changes to begin with. Like a boat being carried along by the gentle movement of a river to begin with, the drift appears slow and gradual until it is suddenly seized in the powerful undertow of an approaching waterfall and plunged to destruction. Beware of getting caught in the world's vortex! The journey in the direction of compromise can seem exciting to begin with but it will end in devastation. “Like leprosy, sin has often a seemingly small beginning, but how rapid its spread, how loathsome its issue, how dreadful its end.” (Pink)
3. “Lot “pitched his tent toward Sodom”. He dwelled “in the cities of the plain” – not actually within the cities, since he still lived in his tent, but in their orbit, as it were, near enough to enjoy their advantages but not yet actually a part of their life. Christians today often follow the same path, hoping to have both the spiritual blessings of a separated walk with God and the carnal advantages of fellowship with the world. Sooner or later, however, one has to decide which it will be. He cannot have it both ways. Neither God nor the world will allow it.” (Morris)
4. “Lot is a type and illustration of the Christian who is not fully consecrated – one who is trying to make the best of both worlds, endeavouring to stand well with God, while pushing to the full his own earthly interests.” (Griffith Thomas)

D. Lot's Dwelling in Sodom (14:12).

1. With what started as a seemingly innocent move in Sodom's direction soon led to actually dwelling in Sodom. Remember, **sin will always take you farther than you want to go and keep you longer than you want to stay.**
2. The New Testament reveals that Lot was vexed by the sights and sounds of Sodom as he dwelt there. Underneath, Lot was a righteous man as only a saved person will truly feel vexed by sin. 2 Peter 2:7 says, “And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man **dwelling**

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among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)" The word 'vexed' means to wear down, to oppress. The same word is translated 'oppressed' concerning Moses' defense of the Hebrew man who was being 'oppressed' by the Egyptian (Acts 7:24). This is a reference to the incident when Moses saw "an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew" (Ex. 2:11-12). The verse then highlights the two specific areas in which Lot's soul was vexed. He was vexed by:

- a. **The sights of Sodom** (through the eye gate) – "in seeing". As we live in this sinful world, we will be confronted at times with vexing things through the eye gate that we will need God's grace and power to deal with. But being confronted by something through no fault of our own as we seek to fulfill God's will each day is totally different to making a conscious choice to place ourselves in a compromised situation where we know we are going to be sorely tempted. Many believers today, like Lot of old, make choices to place themselves in compromised situations where their inner spiritual life will be distressed and worn down through the eye gate by the world. For example:
 - i. Compromised events such as parties, school & work social functions, sensual weddings etc...
 - ii. Compromised entertainments and media such as
 - Television.
 - Hollywood movies and movie theatres.
 - YouTube, TikTok, online streaming services such as Netflix.
 - Video gaming.
 - Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. The saturation of these platforms with vile, pornographic, violent and depraved imagery **cannot be overstated**. For example, Instagram has been nicknamed 'Instaporn' by some due to the accessibility of pornographic material. Family Zone found that it took less than 30 seconds on Instagram to find "thousands of pornographic images and videos, with links to pornographic websites and various users to search for on other social media platforms who will provide even more porn."¹ It is also widely documented that Instagram is the number 1 social media platform used by pedophiles.
 - Unwholesome literature such as thrillers and novels that stimulate wicked imaginations and fantasies.
Note: This includes much within the Christian fiction genre (e.g., Francine Rivers book "Redeeming Love").
- b. **The Sounds of Sodom** (through the ear gate) – "and hearing". Lot was also vexed by the sounds of Sodom. No doubt the daily

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<https://www.familyzone.com/anz/families/blog/instaporn#:~:text=After%20testing%20the%20theory%2C%20we,who%20will%20provide%20more%20porn.>

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conversations on the streets of Sodom were largely focused on evil things. The sounds of Sodom's parties could be heard at night. And the sad thing is that Lot didn't have to be there! He could have returned to the separated walk which keeps the believer spiritually safe from so many of the world's defilements. Like Lot, many believers make foolish choices to vex their righteous souls with the world's sounds. E.g., the world's music. iTunes offers a staggering 75 million songs for streaming and download, the vast majority of which are wicked and evil. Spotify has a similar number at 70 million. We have more access to the sights and sounds of this wicked world than at any other time in human history. If ever there was a day to be separated and circumspect in what we allow through the eye gate and ear gate, it is today!

E. Lot's Determination to stay in Sodom (Gen. 14)

1. We will cover this chapter in our next message but to comment briefly, Lot was captured by the army of the four kings invading Sodom and its ally cities. It took the intervention of godly Abraham to see him rescued.
2. Despite this sobering chastisement, when it was all over, Lot returned to Sodom. The carnal believer often despises the chastening of the Lord and stubbornly continues in his backslidden ways.

F. Lot's Development within Sodom (Gen. 19:1)

1. We now find Lot sitting in the gate, implying he has attained a position of leadership in Sodom. Lot had reached a level of success in the city but what a price he would pay in the long run for that "success".
2. Remember, things can appear to go very well for the backslider for a season. Sometimes they go on in apparent prosperity for years but the law of sowing and reaping will always come into play.
3. Lot may have been on the ascent materially but he was on the descent spiritually. Do not make the mistake of equating worldly success with spiritual success.

G. Lot's Devastation in Sodom (Gen. 19)

What appeared to be gain for Lot initially turned into total loss. He lost just about everything! Consider Lot's loss:

1. He lost his daughters. It appears Lot had a family of girls and only two of them left Sodom with him. The daughters that had married men in Sodom stayed behind and were lost along with their husbands.
2. He lost his house, position and material wealth. All the things that motivated Lot initially as a man of the flesh ultimately came to nothing. There are many examples like this of backslidden believers who have made a success of themselves in a worldly sense only to have it all unravel with the passing of time. Even if you are able to be a success from the world's point of view till the end of your life, remember that it will all go up in smoke at the Judgment Seat of Christ!

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3. He lost his wife. He finally tried to get his wife out of Sodom but he couldn't get Sodom out of his wife. She looked back with a longing gaze, delayed her escape from the doomed city and was overcome by the judgment of God.
4. He lost his purity and any final trace of testimony for the Lord he may still have had.

V. THE CONTRAST IN THE SEPARATION (VS. 14-18)

Abraham's choice and its results stand in stark contrast to that of Lot. Living for God is the life of true blessing! Abraham was blessed with:

A. The Promises of God (Vs. 14-16)

Undoubtedly there was pain for Abraham in this separation from Lot and also a renewed test of faith given the fact from the human perspective it appeared that Lot had got the better end of the deal. God in His love and grace comforts and re-assures Abraham after this ordeal.

1. The promise of a land (Vs. 14-15)
 - a. The significant timing of the promise (Vs. 14a).
 - i. This promise had special significance in light of what had just taken place in Abraham's life. God speaks to Abraham "after that Lot was separated from him". This separation, though painful, brought further blessing in Abraham's life. Sometimes the carnal Christian has to be removed so that there can be blessing.
 - ii. "Sometimes when a person does the will of God, it does not look at first like he did the right thing. The blessed results of doing the will of God do not always come quickly. The good seeds that have been planted do not always spring up as speedily as other seeds oftentimes do. This frequently discourages the faithful soul, and there are plenty of critics around who will add to the discouragement by pointing out the apparent lack of success in the life of the obedient one compared to the worlding. But be patient; truth will be vindicated; righteousness will be exonerated; and doing the will of God will be confirmed in due season." (John Butler)
 - iii. We are reminded of the principle that "them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. 2:30) and that "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Ps. 84:11)
 - b. The scope of the promise (Vs. 14b-15).
 - i. God instructs Abraham to "lift up now thine eyes" and to look upon the inheritance he would receive from His God. What a contrast between what the man of faith and the man of the flesh saw. Lot also "lifted up his eyes" (Vs. 10) and chose the world. Abraham let God choose for him. God calls on Abraham to see the dimensions of his spiritual inheritance. May God give us the spiritual eyes of

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faith to see all that we have in Christ compared to the shallow offers of the world's temporal, fleeting joys.

- ii. We are reminded of the dimensions of God's love that we have entered into through saving grace. Eph. 3:17-19 "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what **is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height**; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."
 - iii. F.B. Meyer writes, "The words "northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward," remind us of the length, breadth, depth and height of the love of Christ that passeth knowledge. Much of the land of Canaan was yet unexplored territory for Abraham but enough was seen to give him a sense of the magnitude of God's blessing. Now it was his blessed privilege to explore all that God had provided. So, it is with our salvation! Similarly, we may not be able to comprehend the love of God in Christ, but the higher we climb the more we behold. The upper cliffs of the separated life command the fullest view of that measureless expanse."
2. The promise of a seed (Vs. 16)
- Lot lost his family, but Abraham was promised a family so large it could not be counted. There would be:
- a. Abraham's natural seed. God had promised Abraham that he would make of him "a great nation" (Gen. 12:2). Later, God would add that he would be a father of many nations. Genesis 17:5 "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for **a father of many nations** have I made thee." This was fulfilled in the nation of Israel and also the other nations that came from Abraham's seed (e.g., Ishmael's descendants).
 - b. Abraham's spiritual seed. The New Testament makes it clear that this promise extends to believers who become spiritual seed of Abraham by faith. Galatians 3:29 "And if ye *be* Christ's, **then are ye Abraham's seed**, and heirs according to the promise." See also Romans 4:16-18

B. The Plenty of God (Vs. 17)

1. Abraham is invited to not only look in each direction at the magnitude of his inheritance but also to explore and enjoy it. Abraham is to "walk up and down," and, as it were, appropriate and claim for himself in detail that which God gives.
2. What a picture of the believer's inheritance. The Christian life from beginning to end is a quest to enter into a deeper and broader understanding of all we have in Christ. It is the heart's happy exploration of all our salvation riches.
3. We have been blessed with a truly abundant life in Christ (John 10:10).

C. The Presence of God (Vs. 18)

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1. Abraham obeys the Lord and commences the exploration, moving to Mamre near Hebron and building a new altar. "Hebron means "fellowship" and we may apply the thought by saying that prompt whole-hearted obedience always leads to fellowship with God." (Griffith Thomas) God draws near to his separated ones.
2. 2 Cor. 6:17-18 "Wherefore come out from among them, and **be ye separate**, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and **I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you**, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

Conclusion:

1. What crossroad are you standing at in your life? What choices are you making in your life right now? Where will those decisions ultimately lead you?
2. Have you already commenced similar steps to that of Lot? God's grace is available to restore you before it is too late.
3. Do you struggle with a separation that has taken place in your walk of faith within the will of God (i.e., a close family member or Christian friend)? Trust in God! His presence will comfort you and His promises will undergird you.

Principles of Spiritual Warfare

Abraham rescues Lot

Text: Gen. 14:1-16

Introduction:

1. In this chapter we have the first battle between nations that is noted and recorded in Scripture. We now see Abraham functioning as a soldier in this battle as we follow his walk of faith. Abraham was a worshipper of the Lord but he was also a warrior for the Lord. “The life of restful fellowship with God (13:18) is now to be disturbed by a new emergency issuing in new experiences. Communion with God is constantly found to be the preparation for new crises in the believer’s daily life.” (Griffith Thomas)
2. From this passage we can learn some very helpful principles that we can apply to the spiritual conflict we find ourselves in, especially as it relates to entering into spiritual warfare on behalf of others.
3. We will study this battle under five headings:
 - The Description of the Battle (Vs. 1-12)
 - The Intervention in the Battle (Vs. 13-16)
 - The Visitation after the Battle (Vs. 17-20)
 - The Temptation after the Battle (Vs. 21-24)
 - The Consolation after the Battle (Gen. 15:1)
4. In this sermon, we will cover the first two headings, dealing with the battle itself. Next message, we will consider the events that took place after the battle was over.

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE BATTLE (VS. 1-12)

A. The Coalitions in the Conflict (Vs. 1-2)

1. The Attacking Kings (Vs. 1). This was a coalition of four powerful kings from the region of Mesopotamia, the general geographical location where Abraham had originally come from, the area we know today as modern-day Iraq. There was:
 - a. The primary king – Chedorlaomer.
 - b. The participating kings – Amraphel, Arioch and Tidal.
 - c. Henry Morris notes that the confederacy consisted of the kings of Shinar (Babylonia), Ellasar (the leading tribe in southern Babylonia), Elam (the original kingdom of Persia), and Tidal king of nations (probably a tribe of northeastern Babylonia).
2. The Defending Kings (Vs. 2) This was a coalition of five kings in the region of Sodom and Gomorrah. Four of these five cities would be destroyed in God’s Divine overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. Zoar, perhaps the smallest of the cities, was spared for Lot’s sake (See Gen. 19:20-23; Deut. 29:23) It appears Sodom was the most influential in this coalition of the “cities of the plain” (Gen. 13:12).

B. The Catalyst for the Conflict (Vs. 3-5a)

1. The cities of the plain were under tribute to Chedorlaomer for 12 years. Evidently Chedorlaomer had conquered these lands

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previously and put them under tribute. Interestingly, Lot moved to Sodom, thinking it offered him liberty but in reality, Sodom was enslaved to a foreign power. What a picture of the world! On the surface it appears so pleasant, free and exciting but in reality it is a system in bondage to the prince of the power of the air.

2. In the 13th year of their servitude, they rebelled and this provoked Chedorlaomer and his allies to invade in the 14th year.

C. The Conquest of the Conflict (Vs. 5b-12)

1. The conquering of lands (Vs. 5b-11)
 - a. The first phase of the campaign (Vs. 5b-7). Evidently the rebellion of the five cities became a pretext to wage war on other kingdoms in the region. This also appears to have been a strategy to leave the five cities isolated and without any other potential ally to call on for help. There were at least six kingdoms that were routed in this campaign of terror, some to the North of Sodom and some to the south. They made “a wide sweep to the east and south (Seir) and then around to the southwest (to “Kadesh” as in Kadesh-Barnea); then northwest to the western side of the Dead Sea (Hazazontamar, which is better known to Bible students as Engedie, cp. 2 Chronicles 20:2), and then lastly the troops swarm down upon their final objective.” (H.C. Leupold)
 - b. The second phase of the campaign (Vs. 8-11). The four kings now come to the primary purpose of their campaign; to punish and subjugate the five cities of the plain for their revolt. Two geographical markers are noted in the text to indicate where the battle took place.
 - i. The vale of Siddim. This is mentioned three times in the text (Vs. 3, 8 & 10). The location is believed to lie at the southern end of what we now know as the Dead Sea. The area had many “slimepits” meaning the area was a rich source of Bitumen. This may have been one of the reasons for the financial success of Sodom and surrounds.
 - ii. The salt sea (Vs. 3). This was likely an earlier version of what later became known as the Dead Sea. It was likely much smaller then and increased in size after the outpouring of God’s wrath on the land. John Butler calls this conflict “the Dead Sea War” since it is all centered around the Dead Sea area.
 - iii. Sodom and her allies had the home ground advantage over the enemy and possibly greater numbers (five kings vs four) but they lacked courage and strength. The lazy, lustful lifestyle of the Sodomites meant they were no match for the invading force (See Ez. 16:49). Moral weakness in a nation often leads to military weakness.
2. The capture of Lot (Vs. 12). Lot was in a place of vulnerability in Sodom. When you compromise with the world, you compromise on spiritual safety in your life and become no match for the devil.

II. THE INTERVENTION IN THE BATTLE (VS. 13-16)

Consider Abraham's response to this battle. We learn much about the quality and maturity of our Christian lives in the way we respond to things. Consider some lessons from Abraham's response to this battle:

A. The Maturity of his Intervention (Vs. 13)

Abraham's maturity is evidenced in:

1. The timing of his response. Up until this point Abraham was not targeted by the invading kings and Abraham did not get involved. He only got involved when he heard his "brother" was in jeopardy. Knowing when and when not to involve yourself in a conflict is something that requires maturity and wisdom.
2. The spirituality of his response. Clearly Abraham did not harbor resentment and an unforgiving, bitter attitude towards his nephew. We don't find Abraham saying something like, "well, that serves him right! After all, he shouldn't have gone to Sodom in the first place." While it is not wrong to recognize the facts of a situation and that a brother or sister is reaping what they have sown out of the will of God, it should be coupled with a sincere care for the individual. There should not be a carnal gloating over a brother's demise.

B. The Motivation of his Intervention (Vs. 14a)

1. It was not self-centered. Abraham had nothing to gain from a human perspective by getting involved in this conflict. The fact that Abraham did not have a carnal motive is evidenced in the verses that follow where he refuses the king of Sodom's offer (Vs. 21-24).
2. It was others centered. Abraham was clearly motivated by nothing else but selfless love for Lot. To get involved in spiritual rescue efforts requires a selfless mindset. You put yourself at risk spiritually by entering the battle. You also put yourself at risk emotionally as sometimes the person you are trying to help does not end up turning out how you had hoped. Sadly, in Lot's case, even after the sobering experience of being a prisoner of war and being the beneficiary of Abraham's help, he still chose to go back to Sodom!
3. "Genuine separation – an unattachedness to the things of time and sense, because of an ardent devotion to the unseen and eternal – is the result of faith, which always works by love; and this love tenderly yearns for those who are entangled in the meshes of worldliness and sin. **Faith makes us independent but not indifferent.**" (F.B. Meyer)
4. Note: This is a key point to highlight as the charge often levelled against the separated Christian is that he/she is harsh and unloving. Actually, the genuinely separated Christian is full of the love of Christ and will act selflessly on the behalf of those in need.

C. The Methodology of his Intervention (Vs. 14b-16)

We learn some excellent lessons for spiritual warfare by studying Abraham's approach to this battle with the enemy. We are reminded that a separated believer is also a soldier. Abraham had:

1. The Right Soldiers for the Battle (Vs. 14b) There are five qualities we note in Abraham's servant soldiers. These qualities are essential for the Christian soldier. Abraham's soldiers were:

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- a. Separated soldiers – Abraham and his men were separated men. Holiness and personal separation from the world goes hand in hand with being an effective soldier. The model promoted by many Christians today of becoming like the world to conquer the world is a recipe for tragic defeat. Lot is a prime example of this. His compromise led to spiritual powerlessness. A Christian who puts his head in the lap of this world will be shorn of the locks of his spiritual strength (remember Samson).
 - i. John Butler notes, “Here is a great lesson for the individual Christian and the church: you do not have to be popular with the world to be of help to them and to win them to Christ. We are making a grave mistake in our age in thinking that to reach the world and rescue the world from their sin cursed condition we must become more like the world... Yes, the philosophy of much of Christendom today is move to Sodom and mingle with the Sodomites and you will be better able to help them rather than sitting up on a hill in Hebron praying to God and staying aloof from Sodom. But this sort of thinking by the worldly saint does not have one single iota of support from the Scripture. Our text will nail it to the wall. It is the separated, clean saint that can help the sinner best. Though you may be scorned and despised for your separation from evil, it will in no way deter your ability or opportunity to help in the hour of need. Rather, it will enhance your ability and opportunity to help. The one who escaped knew there was help in Abraham, not in anyone from where he had just come.”
 - ii. F. B. Meyer adds, “The men who live the life of separation and devotion towards God, are they who act with most promptness and success when the time for action comes. Lot being in Sodom, could neither elevate its morals nor save it from attack. Abraham living among the hills is alone able to cope successfully with the might of the tyrant king. Oh, do not listen to those who say you must live on the level, and in the midst of worldly men, in order to elevate and save them; and advise you to go to the theatre, the ball-room, the public-house, in order to give them a higher tone. Did Lot save Sodom? Nor will a better fate than his befall any man, who, unbidden by God, settles down in the world for his own whim and pleasure. If you would lift me, you must stand above me.”
 - iii. Let’s seek to be “**higher ground**” believers!
- b. Equipped soldiers – “**armed** his trained servants”. Abraham provided his soldiers with the weapons they would need for the battle. In like manner, we have been equipped by God for the spiritual battle we face. Ephesians 6:10-18 – “Finally brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might...”
- c. Trained soldiers – “armed his **trained** servants”. Abraham made sure that apart from their regular duties as servants, these men

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were trained for battle. Abraham's faith gave him the foresight to see the dangers and threats on the horizon and to prepare accordingly (See Prov. 22:3; 27:12 – the prudent man foresees the evil). It is not enough to have the weapons. You must know how to use them. The local church is the Lord's training center to prepare skilled Christian soldiers (See Eph. 4:11-12). To be trained you must be teachable!

- d. Dedicated soldiers – “servants”. These men were servants. Spiritual warfare is a part of our service for Christ. It requires selfless effort to be involved in the battle on behalf of others.
 - e. Unified soldiers – “born in his own house”. Divided armies lose battles!
 - i. They were from one household. In like manner, we need to wage spiritual warfare with other likeminded believers from the household of faith (Gal. 6:10; 1 Tim. 3:15).
 - ii. They had one head. They had been born, raised and trained by godly Abraham. They were on the same page as their spiritual leader. Christ is our head and we rally under His leadership. Unity with Christ's appointed leaders in our lives (i.e., pastors/under shepherds) is also vital.
 - iii. They had one heart. They were single-minded and united in their objective to conquer the enemy.
2. The Right Strategy for the Battle (Vs. 15)
- Abraham employed a battle strategy that was similar to that adopted by Gideon some centuries later (Judges 7). Israel has a long history of night warfare, down to recent history. Note the three main prongs of their godly strategy.
- a. They were against the enemy – “divided himself **against** them”. In this day of “positivism only”, determine to be biblical and be against everything God is against and for everything God is for. There was no confusion in the minds of Abraham and his men as to who the enemy was.
 - b. They were arranged to face the enemy – “**divided**...he and his servants”. This was not a carnal division as this group of men were unified. It simply means that within this team of men under the godly leadership of Abraham, each man had his sphere of responsibility. God gave wisdom on how to organize the available men for the battle. The resources were wisely organized. There were teams within the team and each group was to fulfill its role and thus achieve the overall objective. In the local church, the whole team needs to be on the same page as to the main objective and in cooperation with God's appointed leaders but each member has a function to fulfill that contributes to the success of the whole. Put your whole heart into whatever sphere of ministry God has placed you in right now. The team depends on it!
 - i. Have you joined the team? Membership comes before ministry for a reason. You can't be on a ministry team

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- within the local church team unless you have first joined the team!
- ii. Have you joined a team? If you are a member, are you serving in a ministry?
 - c. They attacked the enemy – we note the word ‘pursued’ occurs twice. This is the action of faith. There is the more passive side of the walk of faith in worship by the altar but that leads to the active side of service in the battle.
 - i. They ‘pursued them unto Dan’ (Vs. 14b). Dan was in the north of Israel. Scholars tell us this was about 120 miles journey (193 km) for Abraham and his men. The enemy was journeying back to their homeland in Mesopotamia with the spoils of war.
 - ii. They ‘pursued them unto Hobah” (Vs. 15b). This location is noted as being near ‘Damascus’. This was no small feat!
 - iii. It is not enough to simply talk about the battle. You must get involved in the fight and earnestly contend for the faith.
 3. The Right Success in the Battle (Vs. 15b, 16)
 - a. The secret of the victory (Vs. 15b; 20). Abraham and his men were diligent, disciplined, trained, equipped and organized men. They gave it their very best. But in reality, even with all of that, they were no match humanly speaking for such a powerful foe. Chedorlaomer had routed the whole region, defeating multiple kings and kingdoms. The secret behind their victory was the power of God. God ‘delivered’ the enemy into their hands (Vs. 20).
 - i. It is significant that in Ephesians 6, the Apostle Paul opens the section on the armour of God with the words, “Finally, my brethren, be **strong in the Lord**, and in **the power of his might**.” (Eph. 6:10). Without God’s power, you are NO match for the devil and his demonic forces.
 - ii. “Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing; were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God’s own choosing: Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He, Lord Sabaoth, His name, from age to age the same, And He must win the battle.” (Martin Luther – A mighty Fortress is our God)
 - iii. The power of God is on the side of the separated, Spirit-filled man.
 - b. The size of the victory (Vs. 16). This was not a small victory. This was a huge victory! Never underestimate the big victories God can accomplish with a small army yielded to Him. Little is much when God is in it!

Conclusion: Are you an active soldier in the spiritual battle for souls?

The Majesty of Melchizedek

Text: Gen. 14:17-24; 15:1

Introduction:

1. In this chapter we have the first battle between nations that is noted and recorded in Scripture. We now see Abraham functioning as a soldier in this battle as we follow his walk of faith. Abraham was a worshipper of the Lord but he was also a warrior for the Lord.
2. We are studying this battle under five headings:
 - The Description of the Battle (Vs. 1-12)
 - The Intervention in the Battle (Vs. 13-16)
 - The Visitation after the Battle (Vs. 17-20)
 - The Temptation after the Battle (Vs. 21-24)
 - The Consolation after the Battle (Gen. 15:1)
3. In this sermon, we will briefly review last week's message and then move on to the final three points of the outline that deal with the events that transpired after the battle was over.

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE BATTLE (VS. 1-12)

A. The Coalitions in the Conflict (Vs. 1-2)

B. The Catalyst for the Conflict (Vs. 3-5a)

C. The Conquest of the Conflict (Vs. 5b-12)

II. THE INTERVENTION IN THE BATTLE (VS. 13-16)

A. The Maturity of his Intervention (Vs. 13)

B. The Motivation of his Intervention (Vs. 14a)

C. The Methodology of his Intervention (Vs. 14b-16)

1. The Right Soldiers for the Battle (Vs. 14b)

2. The Right Strategy for the Battle (Vs. 15)

3. The Right Success in the Battle (Vs. 15b, 16)

III. THE VISITATION AFTER THE BATTLE (VS. 17-20)

Abraham will now encounter two kings. The first king he encounters is named Melchizedek. Let's study this mysterious and wonderful Person who appears to Abraham after the battle. Consider 6 truths the text outlines concerning Melchizedek.

A. The Identity of Melchizedek (Vs. 18a)

Who is Melchizedek? Were it not for Psalm 110:4 and the Book of Hebrews (6:20; 7:1-28) we would be limited in our understanding of Melchizedek and would likely conclude that he was merely a special king in the land of Canaan who was a contemporary of Abraham with some sort of priestly function. Amongst Bible believers there are two main positions as to the identity of Melchizedek:

1. Melchizedek is a Type of Christ. This would mean that Melchizedek was a godly king in the land of Canaan in Abraham's day who typified the Lord Jesus Christ. There are many types in the Old Testament that foreshadow Christ (e.g., the Passover).

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2. Melchizedek is a pre-incarnate appearance of Christ (a Christophany). This seems to best fit the exalted language of Hebrews 7:3 which speaks of Melchizedek's nature as being eternal – "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." Some might ask, "then why does it say he was made "like unto the Son of God" rather than "he was the Son of God". The simple answer is that this is a typical phrase for an Old Testament Christophany. For example, Daniel 3:25 "He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is **like the Son of God.**"
3. What do both positions have in common? Both agree that Melchizedek speaks to us of Christ. So, whether a type or a theophany, this fragment of history is full of Christ.
4. F.B. Meyer writes, "Christ is here! The passage is fragrant with the ointment of His name. Our hands drop with myrrh, and our fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh, as we lay them upon the handles of this lock (Cant. 5:5). Let us go aside from the busy rush of life, and think long, deep thoughts of Him who is the Alpha and Omega of Scripture, and of saintly hearts. And let us draw from the unsearchable depths of his nature, by the bucket of this mysterious record touching Melchizedek, the King of Salem."
5. Note: The timing of this Revelation of Christ to Abraham is significant. It came just after the battle was over. It is important in spiritual warfare that we know the Captain of our Salvation.

B. The Offices of Melchizedek (Vs. 18)

1. You will notice that Melchizedek holds a combined office of priest and king. This is significant when you consider that in the Old Testament the two offices were kept strictly separate. Kings like Saul, and Uzziah intruded into the priestly office and came under the judgment of God. Saul dies prematurely on Mount Gilboa, and Uzziah finished out his days as a leper. In a world of fallen man, this division of power was a safeguard against the deification of human rulers.
2. However, in the Lord Jesus Christ the three anointed offices of Prophet, Priest and King are safely and gloriously united.
 - a. As Prophet, all revelation converges in Him as the Word.
 - b. As Priest, He is propitiatory sacrifice, mediating Priest, and object of worship. This is the first priest mentioned in the Bible. Importantly, Christ's priesthood is superior to the Levitical priesthood as it is an eternal priesthood. Psalm 110:4 "The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, **Thou art a priest for ever** after the order of Melchizedek." As sinners, we need a Priest, one who can represent us to an All-Holy God.
 - c. As King, He is Ruler and Sovereign, the Most High over all the universe. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords.

C. The Titles of Melchizedek (Vs. 18)

1. King of Righteousness. The title 'Melchizedek' means "King of Righteousness". What an apt title for our Lord Jesus Christ. He is

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the all righteous One without the tiniest spot or blemish of sin upon His Holy Person. "Truly this describes the Lord Jesus Christ who is altogether righteous. He is the One through His redemptive work made it possible for sinful men to become righteous through salvation and he is the One who will reign as King of Righteousness during the Millennium." (Butler)

2. King of Peace. The title "King of Salem" means "King of Peace". Salem is the early name for the city that would later be called Jerusalem (See Psalm 76:2). The Son of God's association with Jerusalem goes all the way back to Genesis! Christ will reign from Jerusalem during the Millennium.
3. Note the order of these titles. Righteousness comes before peace. There can be no true peace without righteousness. So long as evil reigns, there will be nothing but chaos, war and ruin. And the only way to have peace with God is to be made righteous by the Righteous One through salvation. Remember, God's righteousness is not earned through good works but is given by grace to the repentant, believing sinner.
4. F.B. Meyer writes, "Not first peace at any price, or at the cost of righteousness, but righteousness first – the righteousness of His Personal character; the righteous meeting, on our behalf, of the just demands of a Divine and holy law... There be plenty who are willing enough to have Him as Priest, who refuse to accept Him as King. But it will not do. He must be King, or He will not be Priest. And He must be King in this order, first making thee right, then giving thee His peace that passeth all understanding."

D. The Ministry of Melchizedek (Vs. 18b)

1. Melchizedek brings bread and wine to minister to Abraham. No doubt this was for the purpose of refreshing Abraham and his men after the exhausting battle they had just endured. Refreshing weary saints is something our Wonderful Saviour loves to do in our lives!
2. This highlights an important principle of spiritual warfare. It is so important to spend time in the presence of Christ and be refreshed and renewed after times of intense spiritual conflict.
3. The bread and wine are significant symbols of Christ. They are the emblems of the New Testament Lord's Table to remind the believer of the body of Christ that was sacrificed and the blood of Christ that was shed for our redemption. Need renewal as a believer? Be refreshed at the remembrance of the cross and what our Saviour accomplished on our behalf.

E. The Blessings of Melchizedek (Vs. 19-20a)

1. A blessing pronounced upon Abraham (Vs. 19). Melchizedek invokes a Divine blessing upon Abraham. Look at the title and the description of Almighty God in this verse:
 - a. The Most High God (El Elyon) – speaks of God's high and lofty position above all things and his superiority to all the false gods and goddesses created by man.
 - b. The Possessor of heaven and earth – emphasizes God's sovereign ownership of the universe.

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- c. Note: This represented a new Revelation to Abraham of His God. It obviously impacted Abraham as He would use the same title of God in his refusal to the king of Sodom (Vs. 22).
2. A blessing pronounced upon the Most High God (Vs. 20a)
 - a. God is given the glory for the victory over the enemy. Any victory in the Christian life should cause us to bless and worship our God, not ourselves!
 - b. We need to return to a God-focused and God-glorifying kind of Christianity in the “selfie” world we live in today.

F. The Tithes to Melchizedek (Vs. 20b)

We know that Abraham was the one who gave tithes from the Book of Hebrews – “To whom also Abraham gave a **tenth** part of all;” (Heb. 7:2). Abraham intuitively recognizes Melchizedek’s spiritual superiority and immediately submits to his authority. This is the first mention of tithing in the Bible. We should note that tithing came in centuries before the Law of Moses. It is a well-established principle of giving woven throughout the Bible. Jacob also tithed before the Mosaic Law was introduced (Gen. 28:22). Consider four key points about Biblical tithing:

1. The **What** of Biblical Tithing. A tithe is a tenth of one’s income. We honour the Lord by giving him the first portion of our income. Prov. 3:9-10 “Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.”
2. The **Why** of Biblical Tithing. We tithe as an act of loving worship to our wonderful Saviour. Abraham gave tithes to Son of God and so should we! If you view tithing as a law you are compelled to obey, you will resent tithing. However, if you view it as an act of worship and a part of your relationship with Him, it will be a joy for you. F.B. Meyer states, “This ancient custom shames us Christians. The patriarch gave more to the representative of Christ than many of us give to Christ Himself. Come, if you have never done so before, resolve to give your Lord a tithe or your time, your income, your all. “Bring all the tithes into His storehouse.” Nay, thou glorious One, we will not rest content with this; take all, for all is Thine.” A godly deacon once remarked to his pastor, “If the Old Testament Jew under Law could tithe, how much more ought New Testament Christians under grace!” (Wiersbe)
3. The **When** of Biblical Tithing. Giving is to be a part of the Christian day of worship. “Upon **the first day of the week** let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” (1 Cor. 16:2) That’s why we take up offerings on the Lord’s Day! We use a bag like Christ and the disciples, not a box like the Old Dispensation in the temple.
4. The **Where** of Biblical Tithing. We bring our tithes to God’s house which in this dispensation is the local church. “Bring ye all the tithes **into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house**, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it.*” (Ma. 3:10) The tithes help cover the running costs of the local church. We do not tithe to para

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church organisations, charities or ministries! The tithes are to be brought to the house of God.

5. Note the connection between tithing and blessing. Andrew Murray writes, "Christ gives us the blessing, we give Him the tithes. The tithes to God are the acknowledgment of His right to all. Our High Priest has a right to the surrender of all we have, as belonging to Him, to the willing sacrifice of all He asks or needs for His service. The connection between the tithes and the blessing is closer than we know. The more unreservedly we place all that we have at His disposal, the more we in very deed forsake all for His sake, the richer will our experience be of the fulness and the power which our High Priest can bless."

IV. THE TEMPTATION AFTER THE BATTLE (VS. 21-24)

Abraham now encounters Bera, the King of Sodom. What a contrast to his audience with the King of Salem (Melchizedek). Oftentimes our greatest victories are followed by our greatest temptations. Consider several points about this temptation:

A. The Timing of the Temptation (Vs. 21)

1. The temptation came right when Abraham and his men were "returning from the slaughter of the kings" (Heb. 7:1). They had just seen a great victory over a formidable foe but were about to face an enemy of a more subtil kind. How you handle success says just as much, if not more about you than how you handle trials. Andrew Bonar warns, "Let us be watchful after the victory as before the battle."
2. Griffith Thomas notes, "The crowning hour of success is a good test of character...How a man behaves at the moment of victory often affords a supreme revelation of character and spiritual power."
3. Mountain top experiences are often followed by valleys of testing. They are vulnerable times when we must take care lest the devil ensnare us with a more subtil, deceptive approach.
4. Illustration: Ahab and Benhadad (1 Kings 20:26-43).

B. The Test of the Temptation (Vs. 21)

1. Abraham was offered all the wealth of Sodom. Imagine such an offer! Apparently 'Bera' means 'gift' "suggesting that the world bargains for your allegiance." (Wiersbe) But the wealth of Sodom was tainted. Moreover, this offer was coming from a wicked, reprobate king whose motives could not be trusted. "It seems Abraham had learned from Egypt that taking wealth from a pagan king was fraught with danger." (Morris) Abraham also recognized that the victory was due to God and so would not take any of the goods.
2. Someone wisely observed, "Let us beware of the favours of the world even more than of its threats." (H.L. Rossier)
3. Sometimes Satan comes as a roaring lion to devour. It is usually not hard to discern when this happens! But at other times he comes as a serpent to deceive and this is often when we get duped.
4. Remember, the devil's offers ALWAYS come with Ts & Cs!

C. The Triumph over the Temptation (Vs. 22-24)

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What was the secret to Abraham's victory? There are three aspects to his victory over this temptation:

1. The Preparation of Abraham (Vs. 22). Abraham's response to the king of Sodom reflected his recent audience with the King of Salem. His audience with Melchizedek prepared him to face this temptation. Knowing that you are blessed by "the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth" gives you a right perspective of the worlds empty trinkets. Who needs to be enriched with tainted pleasures when we have been blessed by the God of heaven who owns all things?!
2. The Promise of Abraham (Vs. 22-23a). Somehow God had given Abraham the wisdom and foresight to preempt this situation and prepare for it before it happened. His godly commitment to his God meant that he knew how to respond straight away when the temptation came. Heart commitment to our God and His Ways puts you on victory ground when confronted with the enemy. If we are in a right relationship with God, our response to temptation should be quick and decisive.
3. The Perspective of Abraham (Vs. 23b). Abraham had godly discernment to see where accepting the king of Sodom's offer might lead. It would give the king of Sodom a measure of leverage over Abraham and would compromise Abraham's separated stand and testimony. "Abraham did not want to be dependent in any way upon the king of Sodom. Abraham evidently had an accurate view of Sodom's character, unlike his nephew Lot." (Thomas) Having a clear-eyed view of the world and its façade is so vital if we are going to resist temptation. "You cannot be a servant of God and a celebrity in the world at the same time". (Wiersbe)

V. THE CONSOLATION AFTER THE BATTLE (VS. 15:1)

God's Words to Abraham after these events were over are full of comfort and re-assurance. So often we see God's ministry of assurance in Abraham's life at such times. God promised that He would be:

A. His Protection (Vs. 1a)

1. This is a significant promise in light of what had just transpired. While our faith is often strengthened when we see a great victory, sometimes doubts and fears can also begin to creep into our hearts after the dust has settled. Perhaps Abraham felt his vulnerability in a strange land with many potential enemies. Would God come to his aid again in the future if the need arose? It appears that Abraham was fearful at this time as God exhorts him to "fear not".
2. God promised that He was Abraham's shield. God Himself was Abraham's Protector. This figure of God being the believer's shield is repeated often in the Psalms. For example, Psalm 28:7 "The LORD *is my strength and my shield*; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him."

B. His Prize (Vs. 1b)

1. Another significant promise in light of the fact Abraham had just turned down the offer of incredible wealth from the king of Sodom.

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Again, after such victories, doubts can begin to creep in. Was that the wisest choice? Did I do the right thing turning down that promotion that would have reduced my church attendance each week? How will I make up the short fall in funds?

2. God assures Abraham that He Himself would be his “exceeding great reward.” Can there be any greater reward than to be blessed by the God of heaven? Can there be any blessing greater than being in union with the Lord Jesus Christ? Can there be any blessing greater than being blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ? Can there be any greater assurance than knowing that God will take care of our needs as we reject the world’s compromised offers and trust Him?
3. “Happy they who prefer to be pensioners on the daily providence of God to being dependent on the gold of Sodom – the wagers of iniquity.” (F.B. Meyer)

Conclusion:

1. Are you trusting in Christ to lead you into a deeper life of fellowship with Him in the Holiest of all?
2. What is your attitude towards giving, specifically the principle of tithing to the Lord?
3. What subtle temptation of the devil confronts you now? Do you value the spiritual blessings of God above everything this world offers?
4. Are you discouraged and disheartened in your Christian life at present? Be comforted and assured by the precious promises of God.

Abraham is Justified by Faith

Text: Gen. 15:1-6

Introduction:

1. This chapter of Genesis contains some very significant, foundational truths that particularly affect two important areas of Bible doctrine:
 - Israelology – God’s covenant with Abraham is formalised in this passage. We refer to it as the Abrahamic Covenant. It is foundational to a right understanding of God’s plan for Israel.
 - Soteriology – This chapter and particularly verse 6 forms the backbone of the doctrine of justification by faith. The Apostle Paul appeals to it in both Romans and Galatians as a major argument in His thesis of Salvation.
2. In this chapter we also have some significant first mentions:
 - It is the first time the phrase “the word of the LORD” appears in the Bible.
 - It is the first time the phrase “Fear not” appears.
 - Is it the first time the words ‘vision’, ‘shield’ and ‘reward’ are mentioned.
 - It contains the first specific mention of faith – Abraham “believed in the LORD”.
 - It is the first time being “counted righteous” (justification) is mentioned.
3. We will study this chapter that deals with the Abrahamic Covenant under four headings:
 - The Context of the Covenant (Vs. 1-3)
 - The Contents of the Covenant (Vs. 4-7)
 - The Ceremony of the Covenant (Vs. 8-12)
 - The Confirmation of the Covenant (Vs. 13-21)

I. THE CONTEXT OF THE COVENANT (VS. 1-3)

Let’s set the scene and the occasion of the giving of this covenant. Take note of:

A. The Battle of the Enemy (Vs. 1a)

1. The verse begins with the words “After these things” which is a reference to the events that had just transpired in the previous chapter.
2. Having passed the test and having demonstrated surrender and yieldedness to the Lord’s will, Abraham is now ready to receive further Revelation and blessings from God Almighty.

B. The Blessing of the Lord (Vs. 1b)

1. The Blessing of God’s Revelation – “the word of the LORD came”. This is the first time in the Bible you find the phrase “the word of the Lord came”. The phrase “the word of the Lord” appears 258 times in the Bible. There is no greater blessing God could bestow upon us than His Word – the Written and the Living Word; the Scriptures and His Son.

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2. The Blessing of God's Protection – "Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield". Barnhouse said: "Cowards are afraid before a battle; heroes are afraid afterward...The man who administers a defeat to the world becomes a target for its hatred."
3. The Blessing of God's Reward – "and thy exceeding great reward." There is no greater reward than God Himself! The greatest gift/reward God has given us is the gift of Himself, His Own Dear Son to be our friend, Saviour and Redeemer. "To have God is to have all, though bereft of everything. To be destitute of God is to be bereft of everything, though having all." (F. B. Meyer) This was a significant promise in light of the fact Abraham had just turned down the offer of incredible wealth from the king of Sodom. "How much are the Lord's people losing today because of their acceptance of the world's favours." (Pink) Imagine what spiritual blessings Abraham would have missed out on if he had accepted the world's offer?

C. The Bewilderment of Abraham (Vs. 2-3)

These verses record Abraham's response to God's promise to be His reward. This was not a statement of fleshly doubt on the part of Abraham as much as it was the inquiry of faith. Abraham took God at His Word but He was perplexed as to how God was going to fulfill His promise. The two areas that Abraham grappled with are often the two same things we struggle with in seeking to discern and follow God's will. Abraham was perplexed over:

1. The Waiting for God to accomplish His Will. God had promised Abraham some years earlier that he would make of him a great nation (Gen. 12:1-3) and that He would make his seed as the dust of the earth (Gen. 13:14-16). As the years rolled by, it appeared nothing was going to happen. Abraham was now in his eighties and it had been about 10 years since he entered the land of Canaan. We need to remember a few basic truths about waiting in the Christian life:
 - a. Waiting is a part of God's dealings with us in the Christian life. We need to remember that in this age where we expect everything instantly.
 - b. Waiting is a part of how God tests and ultimately strengthens our faith.
 - c. Waiting is about bringing us to the end of our own wisdom, resources and reliance. In Abraham's case, God would deliberately delay giving them a child so that it would require a miracle, thus bringing great glory to Himself.
 - d. Are you in a waiting period of your Christian life? Perhaps you believe God has revealed something to you concerning His will for your life but you are confused at the apparent inactivity of God to fulfill it. Remember, God is doing something in you and heed the counsel of Scripture "**Wait** on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: **wait**, I say, on the LORD." (Psalm 27:14)
 - e. Personal Illustration: "God is not in a rush with preparing His servants".

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- f. As a general principle, it is not usually God's will for us to rush things in the Christian life. "Also, *that* the soul *be* without knowledge, *it is* not good; and he that hasteth with *his* feet sinneth." (Prov. 19:2)
2. The Way God would accomplish His Will. As time passed and the possibility of Sarah conceiving became more remote from a human standpoint, Abraham began to think that perhaps his steward would be his heir. We also often struggle with discerning "how" God is going to accomplish His will. Remember, it is rarely accomplished according to how we **think** it will be accomplished. God has a way of accomplishing His purposes in such a way that we are reminded that He is God, seated as Sovereign upon the throne.
3. Warren Wiersbe notes, "One of the basic lessons in the "school of faith" is: God's will must be fulfilled in God's way and in God's time. God did not expect Abraham and Sarah to figure out how to have an heir; all He asked was that they be available so He could accomplish His purposes in and through them. What Abraham and Sarah did not realize was that God was waiting for them to be "as good as dead" so that God alone would receive the power and glory."

II. THE CONTENTS OF THE COVENANT (VS. 4-7)

Abraham's plea forms the basis for the covenant promise that follows. There are two main promises in the Abrahamic Covenant. God had promised these two things to Abraham previously but now further Revelation is given and the promises are ratified in a covenant. In the Abrahamic Covenant there is:

A. The Promise of a Seed (Vs. 4-6)

1. The Specifics of the Promise (Vs. 4).
 - a. Who would NOT be his heir (Vs. 4a). Eliezer, his steward, would not be the heir as Abraham had thought. Be prepared for the Lord to correct your thinking in the Christian life! Often our thoughts are not right. Remember, your human mind is not infallible. Sometimes our thoughts are outright wrong!
 - b. Who WOULD BE his heir (Vs. 4b). God promises Abraham that he would have a son by natural generation.
2. The Simile of the Promise (Vs. 5a).
 - a. Previously God had likened Abraham's seed to the dust of the earth (Gen. 13:16); now He likens it to the stars of heaven. This means that whether Abraham looked down at the dust beneath his feet or up to the stars above his head, he would be reminded of God's promise.
 - b. "Before, He had said Abram's seed would be as the dust of the earth. Now, he says they will be as the stars of heaven. Not only does this imply a great number, but perhaps also that the sphere of activity of the promised seed in the eternal ages will be both on earth and in heaven." (Henry Morris)
3. The Seed of the Promise (Vs. 5b). Clearly God's plan included his natural descendants but also looked beyond that to an even bigger

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and grander plan. Consider the threefold fulfilment of the promised seed. There would be:

- a. The Natural Seed of Abraham – the nation of Israel. Israel would be God’s chosen people through whom He would bring both the Written Word (the Scriptures) and the Living Word (the Saviour) to a lost and needy world. Remember, Israel is not the church and God has not yet finished with Israel. There are many promises yet to be fulfilled for God’s chosen people.
 - b. The Spiritual Seed of Abraham – The New Testament makes it clear that this promise extends to believers who become spiritual seed of Abraham by faith. Galatians 3:7 “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” Galatians 3:29 “And if ye *be* Christ's, **then are ye Abraham's seed**, and heirs according to the promise.” See also Romans 4:16-18. William Macdonald suggests “the dust pictures Abram’s natural posterity – those who are Jews by birth. The stars depict his spiritual seed – those who are justified by faith (Gal. 3:7).”
 - c. The Messianic Seed of Abraham – through Abraham’s line the promised Messiah would come. Gal. 3:16 “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, **And to thy seed, which is Christ.**” Abraham grasped this aspect of the promise of God and gazed down the corridors of time with the eye of faith to the coming of the Promised Redeemer. The Lord Jesus said of Abraham, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.” (John 8:56)
4. The Salvation Response to the Promise (Vs. 6)
- We come to one of the most important verses in the Bible as it forms the bedrock of the doctrine of salvation. It is quoted in three Epistles in the New Testament – Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:6 and James 2:23. It is the John 3:16 of the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit highlights early in the canon of Scripture that justification in the sight of God is by faith alone, not works. The word ‘believe’ is “the biggest word in the chapter, one of the greatest in the Old Testament!” (Leupold).
1. Faith’s Definition – “and he believed”. Abraham took God completely at His Word and that’s faith (Romans 10:17). Regarding faith, the “fundamental idea is that of total confidence in, total reliance upon, total dependence upon another, or complete trust in a statement, thing or a person” (Sorenson). Faith is “firm persuasion, a conviction based upon hearing.” (Vines) A.W. Tozer expressed it well, “Faith is the gaze of the soul upon a saving God.” Salvation has always been only by grace through faith. In the Gospel of John, which was written to tell people how to be saved (John 20:31), the word ‘believe’ is used nearly 100 times (98 times by my count).
 2. Faith’s Object – “in the LORD”. God is the focal point of true saving faith. It is only faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work

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that brings salvation. Not faith in men but faith in “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

- a. Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 in Romans 4 and makes it a major argument in his thesis on salvation by faith without works.
 - b. Romans 4:1-4 (1) “What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? (2) For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath *whereof* to glory; but not before God. (3) **For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.** (4) Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. (5) But to him that worketh not, but **believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly**, his faith is **counted** for righteousness.”
 - a. The message of the Bible is clear, “And they said, **Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” (Acts 16:31)
 - b. Isaiah 45:22 “**Look unto me**, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else.”
3. Faith’s Result – “and he counted it to him for righteousness”.
- a. This is the first occurrence of the word ‘counted’ in the Bible and it is a significant salvation word. It is also the key word in Romans 4 being used 8 times in that key justification chapter (‘reckon’; ‘impute’ & ‘count’).
 - b. It means to credit or deposit to one’s account. “It has the sense of being recorded in a ledger, accounted, computed, or calculated. It particularly has the sense of all of the above being done mentally, such as coming to a conclusion, making a decision, or figuring something out.” (Sorenson) The same Greek word is translated ‘think’ 9 times in the N.T.
 - c. Note: This is not a Catholic concept of an infused righteousness where justification is seen as a “process” through works-based sacraments such as baptism, penance and confession to a priest but an imputed righteousness, a moment in time forensic declaration by God that this sinner is righteous.
 - d. Illustration: The Pharisee and the Publican pray in the temple. Luke 18:9-14 (9) “And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: (10) Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. (11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. (12) I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. (13) And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. (14) I tell you, this man went down to his house **justified** *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

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- e. Romans 5:1-2 “Therefore being **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”
- a. F. B. Meyer: “We cannot realize all that is included in those marvellous words. This only is evident, that faith unites us so absolutely to the Son of God that we are One with Him for evermore; and all the glory of His character – not only what He was when He became obedient unto death, but what He is in the majesty of His risen nature – is reckoned unto us.”

B. The Promise of a Land (Vs. 7; 18-21)

1. The Beneficiaries of the Land (Vs. 7)
 - a. The land would be given to Abraham and to his descendants.
 - b. Notice how this is a repeated theme in Scripture:
 - i. Genesis 13:15 – “For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.”
 - ii. Genesis 15:7 – “...to give thee this land to inherit it.”
 - iii. Genesis 15:18 – “In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land...”
2. The Boundaries of the Land (Vs. 18-21)

These verses spell out the geographical area that would be given to Abraham and his seed. There are a number of markers given that outline the extent of the promised land. Take notice of:

 - a. The Geographical markers (Vs. 18b). Two rivers are mentioned as forming the outer boundaries of the promised land.
 - i. The River of Egypt – forms the southern boundary of the promised land. This could be a reference to the Nile River but it is more likely the stream south of Gaza now known as Wadi El Arish.
 - ii. The River Euphrates – forms the northern boundary of the promised land.
 - b. The Nation markers (Vs. 19-20). Israel would possess the land in between these two rivers that was inhabited at that time by these 10 nations.
 - c. The closest Israel got to the full possession of the promised land was during the reign of Solomon. But in reality, Israel has never fully possessed the entire covenant land but she will one day in the Millennium.

To be continued in next sermon...

Conclusion:

1. Are you in a season of waiting as a believer? Perhaps beginning to doubt or feel discouraged? Wait on and trust in God. He will fulfill His will in your life in His will and time.
2. Have you been justified by faith or are you trusting in your own works? Look to Christ and Christ alone today for your salvation.

The Abrahamic Covenant

Text: Gen. 15:7-21

Introduction:

1. This chapter of Genesis contains some very significant, foundational truths that particularly affect two important areas of Bible doctrine:
 - Israelology – God’s covenant with Abraham is formalised in this passage. We refer to it as the Abrahamic Covenant. It is foundational to a right understanding of God’s plan for Israel.
 - Soteriology – This chapter and particularly verse 6 forms the backbone of the doctrine of justification by faith. The Apostle Paul appeals to it in both Romans and Galatians as a major argument in His thesis of Salvation.
2. In the previous sermon we focused primarily on that great theme of justification by faith in verse 6. We will now delve further into the details of the Abrahamic Covenant and the ceremony that was conducted to ratify that covenant.
3. The outline we are working with for the chapter is as follows:
 - The Context of the Covenant (Vs. 1-3)
 - The Contents of the Covenant (Vs. 4-7)
 - The Ceremony of the Covenant (Vs. 8-12)
 - The Confirmation of the Covenant (Vs. 13-21)

I. THE CONTEXT OF THE COVENANT (VS. 1-3)

Let’s set the scene and the occasion of the giving of this covenant. Take note of:

- A. The Battle of the Enemy (Vs. 1a)
- B. The Blessing of the Lord (Vs. 1b)
- C. The Bewilderment of Abraham (Vs. 2-3)

II. THE CONTENTS OF THE COVENANT (VS. 4-7)

Abraham’s plea forms the basis for the covenant promise that follows. There are two main promises in the Abrahamic Covenant. God had promised these two things to Abraham previously but now further Revelation is given and the promises are ratified in a covenant. In the Abrahamic Covenant there is:

A. The Promise of a Seed (Vs. 4-6)

B. The Promise of a Land (Vs. 7; 18-21)

1. The Beneficiaries of the Land (Vs. 7)
 - a. The land would be given to Abraham and to his descendants.
 - b. Notice how this is a repeated theme in Scripture:
 - i. Genesis 13:15 – “For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.”
 - ii. Genesis 15:7 – “...to give thee this land to inherit it.”
 - iii. Genesis 15:18 – “In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land...”

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2. The Boundaries of the Land (Vs. 18-21)

These verses spell out the geographical area that would be given to Abraham and his seed. There are a number of markers given that outline the extent of the promised land. Take notice of:

- a. The Geographical markers (Vs. 18b). Two rivers are mentioned as forming the outer boundaries of the promised land.
 - i. The River of Egypt – forms the southern boundary of the promised land. This could be a reference to the Nile River but it is more likely the stream south of Gaza now known as Wadi El Arish.
 - ii. The River Euphrates – forms the northern boundary of the promised land.
- b. The Nation markers (Vs. 19-20). Israel would possess the land in between these two rivers that was inhabited at that time by these 10 nations.
- c. The closest Israel got to the full possession of the promised land was during the reign of Solomon. But in reality, Israel has never fully possessed the entire covenant land but she will one day in the Millennium.
- d. “Solomon exercised dominion over a vast area (1 Kings 4:21; Ps. 72:8), but Israel did not possess all that land. The kings merely acknowledged Solomon’s sovereignty and paid tribute to him. When Jesus Christ reigns from the throne of David (Matt. 19:28; Lk. 1:32), the land of Israel will reach the full dimensions promised by God.” (Wiersbe)

III. THE CEREMONY OF THE COVENANT (VS. 8-12)

The ceremony was initiated by God in response to Abraham’s request for an assurance in verse 8. It is significant that immediately following the reference to Abraham being justified by faith, we have the blood sacrifice. It demonstrates the truth that God only justifies the sinner on the basis of the shedding of the blood. Henry Morris writes, “The ceremony not only confirmed the promise, but was highly instructive. The provision of imputed righteousness and full salvation is altogether God’s gift of grace to man, but it would be highly costly to God. The curse of sin can be removed only by sacrifice, in the shedding of blood. God stresses its necessary connection with His promise.” Let us consider this ceremony and how it is rich in pictures of Christ.

A. The Specifics of the Ceremony (Vs. 8-9)

1. The question (Vs. 8)
 - a. This was not unbelief on Abraham’s part. “This inquiry was not filled with unbelief. Abraham is seeking to know more about God’s promise. He wanted to have his faith strengthened. Abraham was not questioning the possibility of the promise but the method by which the inheritance would be made legal and certain. Inheritances require some legality. Abraham is looking for that, and God gave it to him in the covenant ceremony which follows.” (John Butler)

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- b. Sometimes inquiries of faith and unbelief look alike on the surface but it depends on the underlying heart attitude and condition. Compare the question of Zacharias Vs. that of Mary's (Lk. 1:18; Lk. 1:34)¹. "One said it cannot be done; the other said it could be done but wanted to know the way it was going to be done. A big difference indeed!" (Butler)
 - c. Abraham wanted to know more about what God had told him and his desire was rewarded with further revelation. If you accept God's Word by faith at face value with an honest and sincere heart but desire to know and understand more, that is a godly desire that is likely to be honoured by the Lord.
2. The custom (Vs. 9)
- a. This ceremony was a part of cutting a covenant. Interestingly, the word 'covenant' actually means "to cut".
 - b. This ancient custom of cutting a blood covenant is referred to in Jeremiah 34:18-19 – "And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf." In this case, the children of Judah had broken the covenant they had made with God, a very serious matter.
 - c. Wiersbe explains this ancient custom well, "What is described in 15:9-17 was known in that day as "cutting a covenant". This solemn ritual involved the death of animals and the binding of people to a promise. The persons making the covenant would sacrifice several animals and divide the bodies, placing the halves opposite to each other on the ground. Then the parties would walk between the pieces of the sacrifices in declaration, that if they failed to keep their word, they deserved the same fate as the animals (See Jer. 34:18-19)."

B. The Sacrifices of the Ceremony (Vs. 9-12)

Look at how these sacrifices picture Christ:

1. The number of sacrifices – there were five in total. Pictures the abundance and the completeness of God's provision of salvation.
2. The types of sacrifices - "Each of the three animals' names here were tame ones, not wild and needing to be captured by Abram; instead, they were the willing servants of man's need. Each one foreshadowed a distinctive aspect of Christ's perfections and work. The heifer of three years seems to have pointed to the freshness of His vigour; the goat, gave the sin-offering aspect; the ram is the animal that in the Levitical offerings was connected specially with consecration. The birds told of One from Heaven." (Pink)

¹ Luke 1:18 "And Zacharias said unto the angel, **Whereby shall I know this?** for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." Luke 1:34 "Then said Mary unto the angel, **How shall this be,** seeing I know not a man?"

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3. The age of the sacrifices – the three main sacrifices were all to be three years old. Christ had a three-year ministry before He was sacrificed on the cross.
4. The slaying of the sacrifices – the animals were slain and divided in two. Christ was slain on the cross, shedding His blood for our redemption.
5. The horror of great darkness – reminds us of the last three hours of the cross when the Lord Jesus was made sin for us. The word 'horror' has the sense of 'fear' or 'dread'. As Abram fell into a sleep/trance type of vision, it was horror provoking in its darkness. (Sorenson)

IV. THE CONFIRMATION OF THE COVENANT (VS. 13-21)

In these verses God spells out the details of the Abrahamic Covenant.

A. The Prophecies of the Covenant (Vs. 13-16)

1. A National Prophecy concerning Israel (Vs. 13-14; 16)
They would be:
 - a. Strangers in the Land of Egypt (Vs. 13a).
 - b. Slaves in the Land of Egypt (Vs. 13b)
 - c. Set free from the Land of Egypt (Vs. 14, 16).
 - i. Two time markers are given in these verses – “four hundred years” and the “fourth generation”. So that means that a generation was a hundred years.
 - ii. An interesting reason is given by God as to why there would be a 400-year (four generation) time frame before the Israelites would return to the land. It was because the “iniquity of the Amorites” was not yet full. The word ‘full’ had the idea of complete.
 - iii. When the seed of Abraham returned to the promised land, they were to wipe out the Canaanite nations. But they had a 400-year window to repent! What a testament to the longsuffering of God. This should be remembered when critics label the “God of the Old Testament” a cruel, harsh God.
 - iv. The “full cup” principle is also a reminder of the certainty of God’s just judgment. God does not give mankind an unlimited period of time to repent. Once a nation or an individual’s cup of iniquity is full, God will judge.
2. A Personal Prophecy concerning Abraham (Vs. 15)
Abraham would be spared going through the difficulties his seed would go through in Egypt. His work for the Lord would be finished before then. He would enjoy:
 - a. A peaceful end. Because we have peace with God through salvation, we can also know this peace at the time of our passing out of this life and into the next.
 - b. A protracted life. This was God’s will for Abraham. It may or may not be God’s will for you to have a long life. What matters is that you finish the “course” God has for you (Acts 20:24; 2 Tim. 4:7).
 - c. Genesis 25:7-9 documents the fulfillment of this promise. “And these are the days of the years of Abraham’s life which he lived,

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an hundred threescore and fifteen years. Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people.”

B. The Performance of the Covenant (Vs. 17-21)

1. What Abraham saw was “a portable clay oven, a couple of feet high, more or less like an inverted bowl, with a hole on the upper side for draft purposes. This ‘firepot’ has fire within it kindled and flaming out of the top of the oven like a ‘torch’. This firepot plus the flaming torch above pass in between the pieces of the animals.” (Leupold)
2. Normally this covenant would require both parties to walk between the pieces but in making this covenant with Abraham, only God Almighty passes between the pieces. It reveals that this would be an unconditional covenant. God Himself would guarantee it for His covenant people. “Only God passed through, not Abram, denoting an unconditional promise on God’s part, not dependent on Abram’s fulfilling his part of the contract, since he had no such part. It was all of God, in response to Abram’s believing faith.” (Morris)
3. This was a covenant of God’s grace. God made promises to Abraham, not Abraham to God. There were no conditions attached to this covenant. God alone would guarantee its fulfillment.
4. In a similar fashion, Christ walked the Calvary Road alone and paid for the New Covenant with His own life’s blood. Pastor Kyle Sutton writes, “Some 2,000 years later, Messiah cut a new covenant with Israel, and like He did with Abram, He walked it alone – at the cross. Just as a “horror of great darkness fell upon Abraham”, a horrible darkness fell over the land that Passover day, 32 AD.”
5. At the cross our Lord Jesus secured our eternal redemption. Hebrews 9:12 “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained **eternal redemption for us.**” (Heb. 9:12)
6. Hebrews 13:20-21 “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Conclusion:

1. Be encouraged in the truth that God is a covenant keeping God. His promises are sure and can be trusted.
2. Have you entered into the blessings of the New Covenant through repentance and faith?

God's Way or Your Way?

The danger of trying to do God's will your way

Text: Gen. 16:1-16

Introduction:

1. This chapter records a sad lapse of faith on the part of Abram and Sarai, the consequences of which in a very real way, continue down to the present time.
2. It presents a warning to us of the consequences of trying to accomplish God's will in our way and our timing instead of waiting upon God.
3. We learn that the self-life is ever present with the believer in his/her walk of faith and that no matter what stage we may be in on our earthly pilgrimage, none of us are exempt from falling. "We might be inclined to think that such a fall as the one recorded in Genesis 16 would not be possible for a godly man like Abraham, especially in light of the glorious spiritual experience recorded in chapter 15. But we need to be reminded that we can fail the Lord at any point in our earthly pilgrimage, no matter how far advanced or mature we may be." (Griffith Thomas)
4. The Bible records plainly both the successes and failures of the heroes of faith in order that we may be encouraged by their successes and at the same time warned by their failures. We learn from the lives of the pioneers of faith not only how we should do things but how we should not do things! We go from a high point of faith in chapter 15 to a low point of faithlessness in chapter 16.
5. We will consider sins of the self-life as illustrated in Abraham and Sarah under four headings.

I. THE RATIONALIZATIONS OF THE SELF-LIFE (VS. 1-3)

The account commences with the subtle suggestions of the self-life. The essence of the temptation was attempting to obtain the promises of God in the energy of the natural life. Notice several aspects of this temptation.

A. The Season of the Temptation (Vs. 1)

It came at a time when there was:

1. A Delay in the will of God (Vs. 1a).
 - a. The years were rolling by and yet Sarah bore Abraham no children. Verse 3 informs us they had now been 10 years in the land of Canaan and verse 16 indicates Abraham was 85 years old at this time (86 at the time of Ishmael's birth). Sarah was 75 years of age. This was a source of great sorrow and distress to Sarah. Not only would she suffer the womanly anguish that comes from barrenness but would she would also be plagued with feelings and thoughts that somehow she was a disappointment and failure for Abraham who was eagerly awaiting the promised son.
 - b. We should note that in reality God's will is not delayed so far as God is concerned. His will is always accomplished on time

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according to His perfect timetable but from our end, we often have a perception that His will is being delayed.

- c. Long periods of waiting in the will of God are times when the self-life will rise up and seek to assert itself in the life. The flesh hates to wait!
2. A Discouragement in the will of God. This is a by-product of the previous point. Clearly Sarah was discouraged at this point in her walk of faith on account of the apparent delay in the fulfillment of God's promise.
3. A Detour from the will of God (Vs. 1b).
 - a. At such a time of discouragement, the self-life has a way of suggesting what appears to be a logical and reasonable solution to the problem but in reality, it represents a dangerous detour from the will of God that will bring pain, sorrow and regret. Watch out for the devil's short cuts! Sarah said, "it may be" not "thus saith the Lord".
 - b. Vance Havner often said, "The detour is always worse than the main road."
 - c. This is why we are warned not to make provision for the flesh. Romans 13:14 "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and **make not provision for the flesh**, to fulfil the lusts *thereof*." "make not provision for the flesh" = 'provision' has the idea of forethought and speaks of preparation; measures taken beforehand for the supply of wants. (RWP) "We make provision for the body's needs but not its lusts. Whatever, then, tends to excite our corrupt propensities ought to be avoided." (Haldane)
 - a. Sadly, Abraham and Sarah got Hagar during their Egypt sojourn. She may well have been one of Pharaoh's gifts to Sarah when she was in his palace. If you've spent time in Egypt (the world), beware of what you might be still carrying with you even when you have returned to the walk of faith.

B. The Source of the Temptation (Vs. 2)

"The source of temptation has much to do with the strength of temptation. It is an old trick of the devil to have temptation come from the places of honour, trust, esteem, position and popularity." (John Butler) This temptation had a two-fold sanction, giving it an air of legitimacy to Abraham:

1. It had the sanction of Society. This arrangement was a common practice of the day. We see both Rachel and Leah engaging in the same practice later on in Genesis. There are many unions today that may have society's sanction but do not have the Lord's sanction. We need to be prepared to reject popular culture in favour of the path of obedience to God's Word.
2. It had the sanction of Sarah. The temptation to take this detour came to Abraham through the one who was his nearest and dearest. It is hard to imagine Abraham contemplating such a course of action had it not been for Sarah's influence. F.B. Meyer notes, "No one else could have approached Abraham with such a proposition, with the slightest hope of success. But when Sarah made it, the case was altered...It is always hard to resist temptation

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when it appeals to natural instinct or to distrustful fear. At such an hour, if the Saviour be not our Keeper, there is small hope of our being able to resist the double assault. But the temptation is still more perilous when it is presented, not by some repellent fiend, but by the object of our love; who, like Sarah, has been the partner of our pilgrimage, and now is willing to sacrifice all in order to obtain a blessing which God has promised, but has not yet bestowed.”

- a. The spiritual side to her council (Vs. 2a). Sarah rightly recognised God’s sovereignty over her womb. This is a repeated truth in the Bible and one that is not often recognized in our rationalistic age.
- b. The carnal side to her council (Vs. 2b). To acknowledge God’s sovereignty was a good thing but the solution she proposed was a carnal thing. The mix of flesh and spirit in counsel can make things confusing and misleading. Be very careful of suggestions that may appear spiritual on the surface but in reality, are in line with the desires of the depraved flesh nature.
 - i. There is an important lesson here for married couples. While we should not constantly eye our spouse with mistrust and suspicion and should always have an open ear to hear their counsel, we would do well to remember that they are not infallible in their counsel and can err in judgment, especially in times of discouragement. Any counsel, no matter how close the person may be to you, must be weighted in the scales of God’s Infallible Truth.
 - ii. “...few evils are so acceptable as those which are done in the name of justice or self-denial or under religious auspices. The devil is a master at dressing up evil in noble apparel. Therefore, keep your vision sharp and keen by studying the Word of God faithfully. Spiritual discernment is a must if we are to see through the deceptive appearances of evil and thus avoid being defiled by it.” (Butler)

C. The Seduction of the Temptation (Vs. 2b)

1. This suggestion by Sarah appealed to the flesh nature. To have access to another woman appeals to the sin nature in a man.
2. Be very careful of yielding to counsel that on the surface may seem logical but at the same time appeals to your baser appetites! “It is hard to find a temptation more appealing than one that pampers the appetite of the flesh yet seems also to obtain the goals of faith.” (Butler)

D. The Surrender to the Temptation (Vs. 2c-3)

1. Abraham yielded to Sarah (Vs. 2b)
 - a. In God’s structural order for the home, the husband is the head. 1 Cor. 11:3 “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and **the head of the woman is the man**; and the head of Christ *is* God.” This means Abraham bore the greater measure of responsibility for this decision.

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- b. Like his great, great, great grandfather Adam, Abraham 'hearkened' to his wife. How many good men and women have been taken out of the will of God by yielding to wrong counsel from their spouse.
 - c. There is a special closeness and interdependence between a husband and his wife but wisdom is needed to not follow a spouse in a wrong direction and to lovingly and gently point that spouse back to the Scriptural way to do things. If your spouse is giving you wise counsel that is in harmony with the Word of God, follow it. If its unbiblical and ungodly, don't follow it!
 - d. It is especially important that a husband be prepared to lead his wife and lovingly help her thinking patterns which at times can be driven more by emotion than reason. It is important that wives have a submissive spirit of followership as opposed to applying pressure to the husband to yield to her will in the matter. There was clearly some emotional pressure coming from Sarah – "I **pray thee**, go in unto my maid." The phrase "pray thee" comes from the Hebrew word 'na' which is a "particle of entreaty or exhortation" (TWOT) It is translated "I pray thee" or "now" all through the Old Testament multiple times.
2. Abraham yielded to Sin (Vs. 3)
His sin was threefold:
- a. The sin of faithlessness – this was not the decision of faith but of doubt.
 - b. The sin of prayerlessness – both Abraham and Sarah failed to seek the Lord in this decision. It was all based upon their own wisdom. Seek counsel in the big decisions of life but above all, seek the Lord and the counsel of His Word.
 - c. The sin of perverseness – Abraham went from being a monogamist, the Biblical marriage model, to a polygamist, a man-made distortion of marriage. Polygamy, polyandry, divorce & remarriage, fornication, adultery and Sodomy are all sinful perversions and deviations from God's original model for marriage and the home.

II. THE RESULTS OF THE SELF-LIFE (VS. 4-5)

Trying to accomplish God's will our way quickly bears a nasty crop of nettles. Sin never pays! Note the lessons we can learn from the sad results of Abraham and Sarah's wrong decision.

A. The Success before the Consequences (Vs. 4a)

1. For a very short time, it appeared that the plan was a success. Hagar conceived as planned.
2. There is often a temporary period where the decision may appear justified but it is short lived and soon the sad reality is revealed.

B. The Speed of the Consequences (Vs. 4b)

The consequences are both immediate and ongoing.

1. Immediate – the ugly fruit began to emerge from the time Hagar conceived.
2. Ongoing – there would be consequences long into the future from this sinful choice. In fact, there is a sense where the consequences

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continue to this day with the ongoing conflict between the descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Isaac.

C. The Specifics of the Consequences (Vs. 4c-5)

1. Pride in the Mistress (Vs. 4c)
 - a. Pride is always connected to sexual sin. Sarah experienced the disruption and disquiet described in Proverbs 30:22 “For a servant when he reigneth...”.
 - b. The Bible shows the sin of polygamy for what it is by its plain documentation of its sad results. It breeds pride, jealousy, mistrust and hurt. There are multiple polygamous marriages noted in Scripture but not one example of a happy one or of one that had the endorsement and blessing of God upon it.
2. Pain in the Marriage (Vs. 5)
 - a. Not surprisingly, conflict soon emerged between Sarah and Abraham. Up until now we have every indication that on the whole their marriage was marked by peace and harmony. Any deviation from God’s original design for marriage brings disunity and hurt into a home.
 - b. Even though Sarah was the one who pushed for this course of action, now that things begin to unravel, she lays the blame on her husband. It shows that when a husband gives into an unrighteous request from his wife, in the hopes it will quieten the discontent in the home, he is only sowing the seeds for worse problems to come!

III. THE RESPONSES OF THE SELF-LIFE (Vs. 5-6)

Our responses to the results of our sin also reveal something of the character of the self-life. Responding in the flesh to the fruit of the flesh only makes things worse. There is:

A. A Wrong Response to our Problems (Vs. 5-6)

Look at the three characters in the story and how each responded incorrectly to the mess they had got themselves into. We often respond to our problems in one of these three ways also:

1. Inflaming the Problem – Sarah (Vs. 5, 6b)

Notice the three-fold response of Sarah that made a bad situation worse. She responded with:

 - a. Anger (Vs. 5a). How often we get angry at others rather than getting angry at our own foolishness. Anger only makes a problem worse. James 1:20 reminds us that “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”
 - b. Accusation (Vs. 5b). Sarah, while vaguely admitting her error (“my wrong”), blames Abraham for what has taken place. In one sense this was legitimate as he was the leader of the home and therefore the one with the greater responsibility. However, the right approach would have been for Sarah to first acknowledge her own wrong rather than trying to blame someone else. It is in our sinful nature to try and pass the buck to someone else when the results of our sin blow up in our face. Adam and Eve also pointed the finger when confronted by God over their sin.

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- c. Aggression (Vs. 6b). Sarah vents her anger and frustration by mistreating Hagar. She took it out on someone else. In many ways, Hagar was the victim in this situation and bore the least responsibility. To use someone else as a scapegoat for your own problems is a very wicked thing to do. This kind of behaviour often occurs when there is disharmony in a marriage.
2. Ignoring the Problem – Abraham (Vs. 6a).
There are at least two factors to consider in relation to Abraham's response:
 - a. The role that was abdicated in the neglect – headship in the home. In this account Abraham is being a passive leader, taking the line of least resistance instead of taking charge of the situation and leading his family in the right direction. All sorts of problems occur in a home where the husband is leaving a leadership vacuum. Our feministic, anti-male society has produced a masculinity and identity crisis in a whole generation of men. We need a return to biblical, masculine, male, active leadership in the home, church and society. Genuine masculine traits are not toxic, they are God-given.
 - b. The root that was beneath the neglect – selfishness in the heart. To ignore the problem and hope it would disappear appeared to be the easiest way to respond to this painful situation but in reality, ignoring a problem only allows it to fester and get worse.
3. Running from the Problem – Hagar (Vs. 6c)
 - a. Running from our problems does not make them go away. Ultimately Hagar would have to go back and work through things.
 - b. Running from our problems only delays the inevitable. Eventually, you are going to have to face them so why not do it early with God's help. Sadly, some Christians waste years running from their problems in the hopes they will go away. But problems have a way of following you around when you refuse to deal with them biblically.
4. Warren Wiersbe summarizes it well, "Sadly, instead of facing their sins honestly, each of the persons involved took a different course; and this only made things worse. Sarah's solution was to blame her husband and mistreat her servant. Abraham's solution was to give in to his wife and abdicate spiritual headship in the home. He should have had pity for pregnant Hagar and summoned His family back to the altar but he did not. Hagar's solution was to run away from the problem, a tactic we all learned from Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:8). However, you soon discover that you cannot solve problems by running away."

B. A Right Response to our Problems

Initially, we see a wrong response to this situation by the three individuals involved. But there is also a right way to respond. The right response includes things like:

1. Humility – admit your wrong to God and those involved.

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2. Repentance – turn to God in repentance, confessing your sin to Him and trusting His power and grace to change you.
3. Restoration – yield to the Lord in the situation and allow Him to do the work of repair. Only the forgiveness, power and grace of God can make a bad situation better. The longer you try to fix it yourself according to your own fleshly wisdom, the worse it will become.
4. “Satan wants us to think that our “disobedience detours” must become the permanent road for the rest of our lives; but this is a lie. Like Abraham and Sarah, we can confess our sins, accept God’s cleansing (1 Jn. 1:9), and then learn to live with our mistakes.”
(Wiersbe)

IV. THE REMEDY FOR THE SELF-LIFE (Vs. 7-16)

While Hagar is the primary individual in focus in these verses, we do note the working of God in this sad situation and the principles that will also help us recover from the error of our own way.

A. The Visitation of God (Vs. 7)

It is of interest that out of the three individuals involved, it was Hagar who received the special visitation of God. It reveals God’s merciful heart towards those who like Hagar, experience suffering and mistreatment at the hands of others.

1. The Person in the Visitation (vs. 7a)
 - a. This is the first time the “angel of the LORD” appears in Scripture. As the text unfolds, this Person is clearly more than a created angel. Remember the word angel means messenger. This is a special Messenger of the Jehovah.
 - b. It appears that most, if not all the references to “the angel of the LORD” in the Old Testament fall into the category of what we all a Theophany – a preincarnate appearance of the Son of God, the Second Person of the Godhead. In this case this is evident by the fact that this Heavenly Person promises something that only God can do (Vs. 10). Hagar also referred to the angel as “God” (Vs. 13).
 - c. Isn’t it just like our Saviour to seek us out in our problems even when we have neglected to seek Him?
2. The Place of the Visitation (Vs. 7b).
 - a. She was visited while she was at a well of water. Evidently, she had taken a moment to pause from her running.
 - b. By way of application, we encounter the Living Word when we open take time to drink in the Water of the Word (Eph. 5:26).

B. The Intervention of God (Vs. 8-9)

1. The Divine Questions (Vs. 8)

God asks two searching questions of Hagar. When God asks questions of us, it is for our benefit, not His since He is Omniscient and already knows all things. Note the two questions:

 - a. Whence camest thou? – Consider your past.
 - b. Whither wilt thou go? – Consider your future. We need to also pause to consider our direction. You are running from your

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problem but where are you going to end up? In Hagar's case it appears she was attempting to flee back to Egypt.

2. The Divine Instructions (Vs. 9)

Note the two-fold instruction:

- a. Return – God's way is for us to go back and humbly face the point of spiritual defeat in our lives rather than to run from it.
- b. Submit – we are to submit to God in the situation and allow Him to do what only He can do. Abraham, Sarah and Hagar all had to submit to the Lord in this messy situation.
 - i. Hagar had to submit to the Lord by returning to her mistress.
 - ii. Sarah had to submit to the Lord by accepting Hagar upon her return and learning to treat her graciously. Both Abraham and Sarah would have to learn to live with their mistakes. We don't have any more record of Sarah mistreating Hagar from this point. It appears that God's intervention in Hagar's life had an impact on Sarah and Abraham also.
 - iii. Abraham had to submit to the Lord by naming his son Ishmael, an instruction that was evidently communicated to him by Hagar.
- c. Note: What we have here is really a death to self principle, an embracing of the cross in the situation and then allowing the resurrection life of Christ to take us forward on the other side.

C. The Revelation of God (Vs. 10-14)

1. The Revelation of His Promises (Vs. 10-12)

"It had not been God's will for this union between Abram and Hagar to take place; but now that it had, He would make a gracious promise to their descendants. He promised Hagar a son and even gave her the name for him, Ishmael, promising him also an abundant progeny." (Henry Morris)

- a. The prophecy concerning her seed (Vs. 10)
- b. The prophecy concerning her son (Vs. 11-12)
 - i. He would be a wild man. Ishmael is a type of the flesh and what the flesh produces. The flesh is lawless and cannot be tamed. God's solution for the flesh is not reformation but crucifixion.
 - ii. He would be a warring man. The flesh is at constant war with the Spirit in the life of the believer (Gal. 5:17).
 - iii. See New Testament commentary on this chapter in Galatians 4:21-31. These two women are an allegory of the two covenants; viz Law and Grace, Sinai and Jerusalem which is above. Hagar represents what man can do in the power of his natural life. Sarah represents what God can do for one who is as good as dead. Hagar represents natural life. Sarah represents resurrection life.

2. The Revelation of His Person (Vs. 13-14)

Hagar came away from this encounter with a better understanding of the character of the One True God. She learned that He is:

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- a. The Hearing God (Ishmael means “God hears”) – the Personal God.
- b. The Seeing God – the Omniscient God.
- c. The Living God – the True God. The name of the well means “The well of One who lives and sees me”. He is a personal God, concerned about abused people and unborn babies. (Wiersbe)

V. THE REVIEW OF THE STANDOUT LESSONS

We have touched on a number of important lessons for the Christian life as we have looked at this chapter together. But now let’s seek to summarize them in 7 (?) points.¹

- A. The continuance of the old nature.** The most deeply-taught believer is not exempt from the temptations, weaknesses, and tendencies of the old sinful nature.
- B. The occurrence of special dangers.** Our life may be lived for days, and weeks, and months without anything exceptional occurring, and then suddenly a special temptation may arise which leads us into sin.
- C. The unexpected sources of temptation.** Abraham’s temptation came from the nearest and dearest in his life, the very source whence trouble might have been least expected. So, it often is today. Satan uses even the holiest of relationships and the closest of ties to bring about sin, and we ought not to be “ignorant of his devices”.
- D. The combination of high motives and wrong actions.** Sarah’s motives may have been good but the means was wrong. How frequently this remarkable combination of good motive and bad conduct occurs in history and daily life! The end does NOT justify the means, whatever people may say.
- E. The far-reaching effects of a believer’s sin.** The existence of Mohammedanism today is really to be traced to Abraham’s false step; Mohammedanism which is in some respects the deadliest opponent of Christianity. Isaac and Ishmael still struggle in fierce opposition.
- F. The necessity of prolonged waiting on God.** God’s will must be realized in God’s way, and God’s way often involves waiting God’s time. The union of faith and patience is one of the prime necessities of true spiritual life (Heb. 6:12).
- G. The supreme secret of all true living.** Abraham could not have been living in close touch with God at this time or his spiritual perception would have been keen enough to detect the danger lurking in Sarah’s temptation. The only protection against error in thought and action is found in abiding with God, living in fellowship with Him, listening to His voice in His Word, and keeping the pathway to His presence clear by prayer and alertness of attitude before Him.

Conclusion: What will it be for your life? God’s way or your way? Choose God’s way!

¹ These points are taken from the list in Griffith Thomas’ commentary with some slight modifications.

A Mature Walk

Text: Gen. 17:1-27

Introduction:

1. This chapter again deals with the Abrahamic Covenant. The word 'covenant' occurs 13 times in the chapter. Each time God speaks to Abraham concerning His covenant with him, further Revelation is unveiled to give Abraham a deeper understanding of God's plan.
2. This epoch in Abraham's life teaches us concerning the need to "go on unto perfection" (maturity) in the walk of faith. This is the thread that runs through the chapter.
3. We will divide the chapter into three parts for our study. In this visitation of God to Abraham, we note several truths:

I. THE PERSON OF GOD REVEALED (VS. 1-3)

God again reveals Himself to Abraham (another Theophany – See Vs. 22). Take note of several aspects of this Divine Revelation:

A. The Period when God Revealed (Vs. 1a)

1. Abraham's age is noted as 99 years. This is 13 years on from the last reference to his age mentioned in Gen. 16:16.
2. Abraham has just gone through a long period of silence. During this time Ishmael has grown to 13 years of age. Abraham is attached to the lad and is contemplating that perhaps Ishmael will be the promised seed after all (see Vs. 18).
3. God moves afresh in Abraham's life to grow him further in his walk of faith and to refine his understanding of God's will.

B. The Power of God Revealed (Vs. 1b)

1. God reveals Himself by a new Name – "I am the Almighty God". This Name of God is from the Hebrew "El Shaddai" and is made up of 'El' (the Name of God that speaks of power) and 'Shaddai' (to be strong). The word 'Almighty' is made up of "all" and "might". He can do anything! "El Shaddai" is the name of "the all-powerful and all-sufficient God who can do anything and meet any need." (Wiersbe)
2. It is significant that God would choose to reveal Himself to Abraham by this Name in light of what God is going to reveal next. Abraham would need to believe that God is all-powerful in order to trust Him to perform what He had promised. "God reveals Himself by this Name because he is going to tell his friend Abraham that Sarah would have a son. The Lord wanted Abraham to know that He is the God who is all-sufficient and all-powerful, and that nothing is too hard for Him. God says "I will" twelve times in this chapter; He is about to do the miraculous." (Wiersbe)
3. "The message spoken by God is designed to fit the circumstances of the one to whom it is spoken... God had earlier revealed Himself to Abraham as a protecting shield when Abraham had reason to be concerned about retaliation from the armies he had earlier defeated (Gen. 15:1) and He had revealed Himself as Abraham's reward

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when Abraham had turned down the reward offer of the king of Sodom. Here God reveals Himself as the “Almighty” God to support the fact that the covenant which God has with Abraham would indeed be fulfilled though at the time it looked nigh unto impossible to natural man.” (Butler)

4. Principle: God has a way of revealing the aspect of His character we most need at a given period of time. Those who are faithful to read, study and hear God’s Word will see this time and time again.

C. The Precept of God Revealed (Vs. 1c)

Abraham was exhorted to:

1. Walk in the Presence of God – “walk before me”. This means walking with a consciousness that all I do is under the Omniscient eye of the Omnipotent (Almighty) God and is a mark of Christian maturity. The believer is to:
 - a. Walk after the LORD (Deut. 13:4; 2 Kings 23:3; 2 Chr. 34:31).
That’s followership.
 - b. Walk with God (Gen. 5:22, 24; 6:9). **That’s fellowship.**
 - c. Walk before the Lord (Gen. 17:1; 1 Kings 8:23, 25; 2 Chr. 6:14; 7:17). **That’s faithfulness.** “Would you walk before God? Then let there be nothing in heart or life which you would not open to the inspection of His holy and pitiful eye.” (Meyer)
2. Grow in the Perfection of God – “and be thou perfect”.
 - a. Webster (1828) defines ‘perfect’ as “complete in moral excellencies”. It refers to growth in Christian maturity. It describes the process of sanctification in our lives whereby we become less like the world and more like Christ. This is a significant command given the fact Abraham is now 99 years old! It doesn’t matter what stage you are at in your walk of faith, you need to “go on unto perfection” (Heb. 6:1). Remember this is not perfecting ourselves in the flesh. That will never work! Rather, it is us cooperating with the Holy Spirit as He does the work of sanctification in our lives.
 - b. “A comparison of the various passages where it occurs establishes its meaning beyond a doubt, and compels us to think into it the conception of “whole-heartedness”. It denotes the entire surrender of the being. We would do well to ask ourselves, “Is my heart perfect with God? Am I whole-hearted towards him? Is He first in my schemes, pleasures, friendships, thoughts, and actions? Is His will my law, His love my light, His business my aim, His “well-done” my exceeding great reward?” (F.B. Meyer)

D. The Promises of God Revealed (Vs. 2-3)

1. God had already revealed His covenant to Abraham but over 13 years have elapsed and it was needful for Abraham to be reassured and reaffirmed in the promises of God.
2. These verses give a summary of the covenant, the details of which will be expanded upon at length in the following verses. With each fresh telling of the covenant, there is a repetition of what is already known and then a revealing of more details.

II. THE PURPOSES OF GOD EXPLAINED (VS. 4-22)

God's purposes are revealed in connection with three new names. The new name is symbolic of the new nature. In chapter 16 we see Abraham and Sarah walking according to the old nature. Now in chapter 17 they are exhorted to walk in the light of their new identity. This is Christian maturity.

A. A New Name for Abram – 'Abraham' (Vs. 4-14)

His name is changed from 'Abram' meaning "exalted father" to 'Abraham' meaning "father of a multitude". It would require faith on the part of Abraham to accept this new identity as at this point, he did not yet have even one child by his wife Sarah! We too must accept by faith all that God says we are in Christ.

1. The Significance Connected to the Covenant (Vs. 4-8)

Again, we note the two primary aspects of the covenant touching on:

a. Seed (People) (Vs. 4-7) Observe the two truths revealed concerning Abraham's seed.

i. The Fruitfulness of Abraham's seed (Vs. 4-6)

1. "thou **shalt be** a father of many nations" (Vs. 4).
2. "a father of many nations have **I made thee**" (Vs. 5).
3. "**I will** make thee **exceeding fruitful**" (Vs. 6)
4. "**I will** make nations of thee" (Vs. 6)
5. "kings **shall** come out of thee" (Vs. 6)

6. Principle: Fruitfulness is something produced by the power of God in the believer as he/she walks before the Lord in the maturity and appropriation of the new nature. None of this would be achieved through Abraham's natural strength. God would do the work through Him according to His Divine power. The sooner we learn that fruit bearing only comes by abiding in Christ the sooner we will bear fruit! (See John 15:1-8). The flesh produces Ishmaels. The power of God produces kings!

7. We have nothing in ourselves to make ourselves fruitful (See John 15:5). Vance Havner said, "We say that we depend on the Holy Spirit but actually we are so wired up with our own devices that if the fire does not fall from heaven, we can turn on a switch and produce false fire of our own."

ii. The Future of Abraham's seed (Vs. 7)

1. The covenant would include Abraham's descendants, the nation of Israel – "and thy seed after thee in their generations".
2. The covenant would be permanent – "an everlasting covenant". "God promised that Canaan would be an "everlasting possession"; so it is clear no action on the part of Abraham's descendants can ever permanently sever the land from them." (Henry Morris)
3. The covenant would be spiritual in its focus – "to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee". Note also

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verse 8 – “and will be their God”. This is the most precious part of the covenant; that they would be the Lord’s people.

- b. Soil (Property) (Vs. 8) God again reiterates His promise of the land to Abraham and his descendants. The land belongs to Israel by Divine decree and no human government has any authority to say otherwise!
2. The Sign Connected with the Covenant (Vs. 9-14)
- This is new revelation concerning a sign that would be associated with the Abrahamic covenant, the sign of circumcision:
- a. The Particulars of the sign of Circumcision (Vs. 9-14)
 - i. It was a physical mark (Vs. 9-11). Verse 13 says, “and my covenant shall be **in your flesh** for an everlasting covenant”. The word ‘circumcision’ means “to cut around” and referred to the removing of the foreskin from the male reproductive organ.
 - ii. It was a national mark (Vs. 12-13). It was to be the distinctive mark for the whole nation of Israel, including all who were associated with them (e.g., servants).
 - iii. It was a mandatory mark (Vs. 14). Those who failed to adhere to the rite of circumcision were to be “cut off” from the people, likely a reference to some form of banishment. It is sometimes used in the Bible of capital punishment.
 - b. The Purpose of the sign of Circumcision
 - i. It was NOT for salvation. Abraham had been justified over 13 years before. Paul highlights this point in his letter to the Romans (See Rom. 4:9-13). Sadly, the Jews turned circumcision into a means of salvation but that was never its intent. **Circumcision was for a sign and not for salvation!** In a similar way, so many today look to a religious ritual (s) as the means of their salvation instead of looking to the Christ’s finished work on the cross.
 - ii. It was a sign for the covenant. “Since God’s covenant involved Abraham’s “seed”, it was fitting that the mark of the covenant be on the male organ of generation.” (Wiersbe) Henry Morris explains it well, “The emphasis of the covenant, of course, was on the promised seed, and on the abundance of progeny which would accrue to Abraham. The male reproductive organ is the remarkable, divinely created vehicle for the transmission of this seed from one generation to another. The circumcision (“cutting round”) of this channel would thus picture its complete enclosure within God’s protective and productive will.”
 - iii. Note: In the context of the moral debauchery of the Canaanites, it would also mark God’s people out as distinct and pure in sexual matters in contrast to the depraved practices of the heathen. To quote Morris

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- again, “The ‘cutting’ of the foreskin speaks of a surgical removal, a complete separation, from the sins of the flesh so widely prevalent in the world around them, such sins largely centred in the misuse of the male organ in adultery, fornication, and sodomy. As it directly, therefore, symbolized to the Jewish man that he was a member of an elect nation, a peculiar people, distinctly holy before God, in relation to sexual conduct, so it came indirectly to speak of holiness in every phase of life (note Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6, etc...).”
- iv. Griffith Thomas provides a helpful summary of the purpose of circumcision. The truths connected with circumcision seem to include at least four ideas:
- Designation, as belonging to God.
 - Separation unto Him.
 - Purity in Him.
 - Possession by Him.
- c. The Principles from the sign of Circumcision
- What does circumcision mean for the New Testament believer?
- i. Obviously, we are not bound to physical circumcision as the Jews were. That question is completely settled in the New Testament writings (e.g., Galatians).
- ii. The mark of the believer is not a physical mark on the body but a spiritual mark on spirit. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13) and are spiritually circumcised with the “circumcision of Christ” rather than the “circumcision of Moses”. Col. 2:11 “In whom also ye are circumcised with **the circumcision made without hands**, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh **by the circumcision of Christ:**”
- iii. “When we trusted Christ to save us, the Spirit of God preformed “spiritual surgery” that enables us to have victory over the desires of the old nature and the old life. Physical circumcision removes only a part of the body but the true “spiritual circumcision” puts off “the body of the sins of the flesh” (Col. 2:11). It is not the “circumcision of Moses” (Acts 15:1) but the “circumcision of Christ” (Col. 2:11) that is important to the Christian believer.” (Wiersbe)
- iv. Circumcision is therefore not a symbol of baptism as some suggest and then try to argue for the baptism of infants as a New Testament form of circumcision. Circumcision pictures the internal operation of God in salvation where “the body of the sins of the flesh” are “put off” (cut away). It refers to the same truth as Romans 6, albeit under the figure of circumcision. In Christ, the power of sin has been broken in our lives.
- v. Baptism is a New Testament ordinance that follows salvation as a step of obedience, public testimony of

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one's faith in Christ and an outward picture of our identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. Even if circumcision was a picture of baptism (and it is not) we should be reminded of the fact that Abraham's circumcision was "believer's circumcision", it came after he was justified!

B. A New Name for Sarai – 'Sarah' (Vs. 15-16)

1. Her name would be changed to 'Sarah' meaning "princess". This was a fitting name given the fact "kings of people" would come from her (Vs. 16).
2. God would bless her by giving her a son and making her a mother. We need to elevate motherhood back to the high position it is given by God. To raise a godly seed for the Lord to use is the highest calling a Christian woman can have.
3. Sarah would struggle to believe this possible to begin with (Gen. 18:12) but would eventually come to a place of faith in God's promise as revealed in Hebrews 11:11.

C. A New Name Isaac (Vs. 17-22)

1. God's plan for Isaac (Vs. 17-19)
 - a. Abraham's response to God's plan.
 - i. Abasement – he fell upon his face. For the second time Abraham takes this lowly posture of reverence before God.
 - ii. Astonishment – he laughed and pointed out the seeming impossibility of the situation in the form of two questions that focused on their old age. "Abraham received the new revelation of God with reverence, and yet with a certain trustful astonishment. The laugh is evidently not the laugh of unbelief, but of a faith which, while taking God at his word, considers the news almost too good to be true. God's revelations to His people often seem to be too good to be true, and yet they are true!" (Thomas)
 - iii. Advice – "O that Ishmael might live before thee!" Abraham was still holding on to the thought that God was going to use Ishmael to accomplish His purposes. How hard it is for us to come to the realization that the product of our own energies is not what God is going to use to accomplish His work. So often God has to work on us before He can really begin to work through us! Sometimes our acts of service for the Lord are Ishmaels more than Isaacs. Self is bound up in them and they are produced in the energies of the self-life.
 - iv. Amy Carmichael, missionary to India, wrote to a friend who was perplexed about a painful experience, "I will say what our Heavenly Father said to me long ago, and says to me still very often: 'see in it a chance to die'."
 - v. Perhaps we all need to pray not "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee" but rather "Oh, that Ishmael might die within me!"
 - b. God's reiteration of His plan.

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- i. Sarah would have a son indeed.
 - ii. His name would be Isaac, meaning “he laughs”. A most interesting response from God given the fact Abraham had just laughed. Three different occasions of laughter are associated with Isaac’s birth: Abraham laughed for joy when he heard his wife would give birth to the promised son (Gen. 17:17); Sarah laughed in unbelief when she heard the news (18:9-15); and Sarah laughed for joy when the boy was born (21:6-7).
 - iii. God would establish his covenant with Isaac and his seed. He would be the covenant son of Abraham and continue the Messianic line, not Ishmael.
2. God’s plan for Ishmael (Vs. 20-22)
 - a. God in His grace and mercy heard Abraham’s plea for Ishmael and promised to bless him by making him a great people.
 - b. God has kept this promise. The descendants of Ishmael are a fruitful and populous people.
 - c. Ishmael did not get a new name because he represents the flesh; and the flesh cannot be changed. See Romans 7:18.

D. Summary. God has given out three names in this section:

1. The name Abraham speaks of the faithfulness of God – “a father of many nations have I made thee”.
2. The name Sarah speaks of the grace of God – being called “princess” after her scheme with Hagar is certainly God’s grace.
3. The name Isaac speaks of the power of God – laughter in astonishment and wonderment at what God will accomplish by His power in enabling Abraham and Sarah to have a child at their age.

III. THE PRECEPTS OF GOD OBEYED (VS. 23-27)

These verses speak of Abraham’s obedience to the Lord’s command. Abraham’s obedience was:

A. Prompt (Vs. 23b; 26)

1. Abraham’s immediate obedience is noted twice with the phrase “selfsame day”. This means that Abraham obeyed the Lord the same day he received the command.
2. May God give us responsive hearts to obey the Lord straight away.

B. Complete (Vs. 23-27)

Abraham’s obedience was full and complete. Note the following phrases:

1. “**as God had said** unto him”.
2. “**all** that were born in his house, and **all** that were bought with his money”.
3. “**all** the men of his house...were circumcised with him”.

Conclusion: Are you maturing and growing in your walk of faith or have you become content with the status quo?

Abraham the Friend of God

Text: Gen. 18:1-21

Introduction:

1. This chapter forms a prelude to the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. Abraham receives a visitation from God and two angelic beings. God reiterates His promise concerning Isaac in Sarah's hearing and then reveals His intentions judge the cities of the plain viz. Sodom and Gomorrah.
2. Abraham responds to the news of Sodom's impending doom with intercessory prayer. This is the first recorded example of intercessory prayer and it is rich in instruction for this aspect of the believer's prayer life. Moses is also another example of a great Intercessor in the Old Testament (Gen. 32:30-33; Deut. 9:18-29).
3. Intercessory prayer is something that is connected with being a "friend of God". While Abraham is the only Bible character actually called by this title (2 Chr. 20:7; Is. 41:8; James 2:23), as children of God we can all be "friends" of God if we walk closely with Him in obedience. John 15:14 "**Ye are my friends**, if ye do whatsoever I command you."
4. We will learn from Abraham's example in this chapter the key principles of how to be a friend of God.

A friend of God is one who:

I. SERVES IN THE LORD'S PROVIDENCE (VS. 1-8)

Abraham receives a visitation from three heavenly personages and serves them.

A. The Identity of the Heavenly Visitors (Vs. 1-2)

Who were these three visitors?

1. The Divine Person (Vs. 1a)
This appearance of the LORD (Jehovah) is another Theophany. Clearly the Lord Himself was manifest as one of the three who were manifest in the form of "men" (Vs. 2).
 - a. "the LORD appeared unto him" (Vs. 1)
 - b. "and the LORD said unto Abraham" (Vs. 13)
 - c. "and the LORD said" (Vs. 17)
 - d. "And the LORD said" (Vs. 20)
 - e. "but Abraham stood yet before the LORD" (Vs. 22)
 - f. "And the LORD went his way" (Vs. 33)
2. The Angelic Persons (Compare Vs. 22 & 19:1)
 - a. Two of the three "men" who appeared to Abraham were angels.
 - b. These two angels appear in Sodom in verse 1 of the next chapter and ultimately rescue Lot and some of his family from the doomed city.
 - c. This is the first reference to angels in the Bible and we learn some basic truths about these heavenly beings from this account:

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- i. They are ministering spirits who serve God's children (Heb. 1:14).
 - ii. They are servants of Almighty God to administer His justice. These angels were associated with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Angels will be involved in judgment at the end of the world (Matt. 13:41, 49).
 - iii. They often appear as men in the Bible and thereby often go undetected by God's people. Heb. 13:2 "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."
 - iv. While angels do not need to eat as humans, it is evidently possible for them to do so in connection with their ministry to men as directed by God.
3. Note: The number 3 is of interest in this account and some have seen in it a glimpse of the Trinity.

B. The Hospitality to the Heavenly Visitors (Vs. 3-8)

These verses give us a good picture of the serving aspect of the walk of faith. We can learn at least 7 practical lessons about serving Christ from Abraham's godly example. Abraham served the Lord...

1. **Humbly** – Abraham was a man of considerable wealth and position in Canaan and yet we see a sweet spirit of humility towards the Lord in his words and actions.
 - a. Humble in actions – "bowed himself toward the ground" (Vs. 2b).
 - b. Humble in words – "my Lord" (Vs. 3a); "I pray thee" (Vs. 3b, 4a).
 - c. No matter how successful you may be as far as this life may be, always have a humble, servant's attitude. Sadly, for some Christians, wealth and position have the effect of making them proud. 1 Tim. 6:17 "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they **be not highminded**, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;"
2. **Personally** – Abraham had many servants but he was still a servant Himself. We see Abraham personally involved in serving the Lord; he didn't just delegate it all to others.
 - a. Abraham personally selected the calf for the meal.
 - b. Abraham set the meal before his guests and then stood by, ready to serve as the needs arose (Vs. 8).
3. **Generously** – Abraham gave his best for the Lord and served with excellence.
 - a. "Make ready quickly three measures of **fine meal**" (Vs. 6)
 - b. "a calf tender and good" (Vs. 7a)
 - c. "he took butter and milk" (Vs. 8a)
 - d. Give God your best, not your left overs! God deserves the best of our time, talent and treasure. He is worthy of it!
 - e. John Butler notes, "A number of professing believers like to think they are serving the Lord, but their giving often betrays them. They are stingy and miserly... They know little about sacrifice in giving. They not only give little in quantity, but they also give little in quality. They reserve the best for themselves and give God what they do not want... These folk are concerned the church

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might give too much money to a visiting missionary, while they wine and dine in the most expensive restaurants. They begrudge the pastor and evangelist a salary anywhere close to their salary, yet they expect these servants of God to work twice as many hours a week as they themselves do. When an unexpected, special offering is solicited for some worthy occasion, they will not, like Abraham, get the best from the heard and give it to the Lord; but they will instead be very slow in opening their pocketbooks. And when they do, it will not be in the category of “tender and good” but more like tight and grudgingly.”

4. **Immediately** – Abraham was willing to serve even though it was during the “heat of the day” and the customary time for rest (Vs. 1). Abraham’s schedule was submitted to the Lord’s schedule. He served the Lord without delay! If you delay serving the Lord until it becomes “convenient” for you to do so, you probably won’t end up serving the Lord much at all. This is why so many believers don’t serve. They don’t want any inconvenience to their personal schedules.
5. **Diligently** – Abraham served the Lord with promptly and efficiently. This was no half-hearted, drag-your-feet kind of service.
 - a. He “**ran** to meet them” (Vs. 2). Not bad for a 99-year-old!
 - b. He “**hastened** into the tent unto Sarah” (Vs. 6).
 - c. He “ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf” (Vs. 7).
 - d. While we do not want to approach Christian service with the Martha spirit of rushing around in the flesh, we do want to serve with Spirit-filled diligence.
6. **Cooperatively** – Abraham worked with and inspired others to work with him.
 - a. He involved his wife in ministering to the Lord (Vs. 6). Note: Sarah was available as his helpmeet and was clearly a good cook and homemaker. She wasn’t working in another’s man’s tent somewhere! In a day when women are encouraged to be “professional” and “skilled” in so many areas, we are sadly losing the biblical “profession” and “skills” that really matter for a Christian woman.
 - b. He involved a young man in ministering to the Lord (Vs. 7). A good leader not only serves himself but encourages others to serve also. Some Christians approach Christian service as lone rangers. They are autonomous and independent and can’t be counted on to get in the harness with others.
7. **Hospitably** – Abraham was serving the Lord through hospitality. This is another forgotten art in the realm of Christian service but an important and a biblical one.
 - a. Pastors are to be “given to hospitality” (1 Tim. 3:2) and “lovers of hospitality” (Titus 1:8).
 - b. Christians are to extend hospitality to the saints.
 - i. Romans 12:13 “Distributing to the necessity of the saints; **given to hospitality.**”

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- ii. 1 Peter 4:9 “**Use hospitality one to another** without grudging.”
- iii. Acts 2:46 “And they (the Jerusalem church), continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and **breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat** with gladness and singleness of heart,” The early church is noted for the practice of hospitality.
- c. Believers are to extend hospitality to strangers. Hebrews 13:2 “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.”
- d. By lovingly serving others, we serve Jesus Christ our Lord (Matt. 25:34-40), and we promote the spread of God’s truth (3 John 5-8).

A friend of God is one who:

II. TRUSTS IN THE LORD’S PROMISES (VS. 9-15)

God again speaks to Abraham about His promise of a son but this time in Sarah’s presence. Abraham had come to a place of trust in God’s promise but God detected unbelief in Sarah’s heart and graciously comes to draw it out and deal with it. Sarah is the primary one in focus in these verses.

A. The Revelation to Sarah (Vs. 9-10)

- 1. God made a point of asking where Sarah was located. The promise was spoken to Abraham but it appears it was the Lord’s intention that Sarah hear it also.
- 2. God promised that Sarah would have a son within a year (compare Gen. 17:21 and 18:10).

B. The Response of Sarah (Vs. 11-12)

- 1. Abraham and Sarah were now aged (Abraham 100 and Sarah 90). Sarah’s monthly cycle had ended so it was humanly impossible for her to conceive (Vs. 11).
- 2. Sarah was well aware of this and responds to the Lord’s promise in her heart with laughter and scepticism. Sarah was human and was looking at the impossibility of the situation from man’s point of view. We all naturally tend to walk by sight rather than by faith!
- 3. There is one spiritual point revealed in Sarah’s thoughts that the New Testament picks up in 1 Peter 3:6 – she used the term ‘lord’ in reference to her husband. This was a term of respect. It would equate to something like ‘Mr’ or ‘Sir’ in our vocabulary today. The same word is used by Lot in Genesis 19:2 when speaking to the two angels – “Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant’s house, and tarry all night...”
- 4. Note: There are some who suggest titles of respect are not biblical and that we should call everyone by their first name. This is not a biblical concept. We should be prepared to use titles of respect.

C. The Rebuke of Sarah (Vs. 13-15)

God asks two questions in response to Sarah’s scepticism and also makes a further affirmation of His plan.

- 1. The Omniscience of the Lord (Vs. 13)

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- a. We are reminded that the Lord knows our hearts, including our inmost thoughts and feelings.
 - b. We are reminded that "...all things *are* naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." (Heb. 4:13)
 - c. Note: It is interesting that God addresses the question to Abraham, not Sarah. Perhaps because he bore a measure of responsibility as head of the home for his wife's spiritual temperature?
 - d. Note: Sometimes in a marriage, you have a situation where one is stronger in faith and godliness than the other, even though both know the Lord. In marriage, strive to be on the same page spiritually!
2. The Omnipotence of the Lord (Vs. 14)
 - a. The question concerning the Lord's Omnipotence (Vs. 14a). The answer is implied in the question. Nothing is too hard for the Lord! God specializes in things thought impossible. The answer to this question is found in Jeremiah 32:17 – "Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, **and there is nothing too hard for thee:**" The answer is found in Matthew 19:26 – "...with God, all things are possible.
 - b. The affirmation of the Lord's Omnipotence (Vs. 14b). God reaffirms that He WILL do exactly as He said He would do. God says what He means and means what He says.
 - c. When we doubt the Lord, we are really questioning His Veracity and Ability. Does He keep His promises? Does He have the power to do what He says He will do?
 3. The Objection of Sarah (Vs. 15). Sarah denies that she laughed. Denial is often our first response to a rebuke from the Lord but the Lord again affirms the truthfulness of what He has said.
- D. The Revival of Sarah (Heb. 11:11)**
1. Sarah's life should be an encouragement to all of us that a season of unbelief and doubt does not have to be permanent. We can move from unbelief to faith by God's grace. It is possible to have our name moved from the register of the faithless to the hall of faith!
 2. Hebrews 11:11 gives us some insight into the change of heart that took place in Sarah. It appears she responded to the Lord's rebuke in the end and began to exercise faith, like her husband, that God would do as He had promised. "**Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed**, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, **because she judged him faithful who had promised.**"

A friend of God is one who:

III. LEARNS OF THE LORD'S PLANS (VS. 16-21)

In these verses we learn of the thoughts of God towards Abraham and His determination to reveal His plans. It highlights the closeness between Abraham and God. John 15:15 "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for

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all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” “If we live near God, we shall have many things revealed to us which are hidden from the wise and prudent.” (Meyer)

A. Why God Revealed His Plan to Abraham (Vs. 17-18)

God would reveal His plan to Abraham because of:

1. Abraham's Influence (Vs. 17-18)
 - a. God's plan was to make Abraham a great nation and bless the nations through him. Therefore, God wanted Abraham to have knowledge of his ways so that he could influence coming generations.
 - b. God's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah would be a significant display of Divine Justice that would go down as a marker in Biblical history so it was important that Abraham and his descendants have an understanding of what God was doing.
 - c. What an amazing thought that God Almighty desired to share His heart with Abraham His friend about what He was about to do.

2. Abraham's Integrity (Vs. 19)

This is a tremendous statement of confidence from the Lord and concerning Abraham's godly character. What an incredible vote of confidence from the Lord Himself! God was confident in:

- a. Abraham's leadership of the home (Vs. 19a)
 - i. What happens in the Christian home is of great interest and importance to Almighty God.
 - ii. That the home be structured and ordered according to God's Design is of great importance to Almighty God and God's plan is for the husband/father to be the head of his home and "command" his children and his household. God will reveal Himself to such a man!
 - iii. A godly father is to be actively interested and involved in the affairs of the home and the training of his children. The wife and the children need to be submitted to God's model for the Christian home.
 - iv. 1 Cor. 11:3 "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God."
- b. Abraham's followership in the home (Vs. 19b)
 - i. God knew that Abraham and his family would walk in holiness and obedience. It is interesting that God specifically mentions that they would keep His way "to do **justice** and **judgment**." So, God wanted Abraham to learn something of His justice and judgment through God's just dealings with the cities of the plain.
 - ii. Because of this, God would bless Abraham and fulfill his promises. Obedience brings blessing from the Heavenly Father's hand!

B. What God Revealed of His Plan to Abraham (Vs. 20-21)

1. The iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrah (Vs. 20)

The depth of the depravity in these cities is described in two ways:

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- a. “the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great” = a descriptive way of describing the wickedness of these cities. The sin and its associated suffering came up before God like a great cry. Cain’s sin in murdering his brother Abel is described in similar terms (Gen. 4:10). The angels who came to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah use the same terminology (Gen. 19:13). “There, far down the valley, bathed in the radiance of the westering sun, lay the guilty cities, still and peaceful. No sound travelled to the patriarch’s ear... Quiet though Sodom seemed in the far distance, and in the hush of the closing day; yet to God there was a cry. The cry of the earth compelled to carry such a scar. The cry of inanimate creation, groaning and travailing in pain. The cry of the oppressed, the down-trodden – the victims of human violence and lust. The cry of the maiden, the wife, and the child. These were the cries which had entered into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth. And each sin has a cry (example of Cain & Abel). And, if each sin has a cry, what must not be the volume of sound for a life, and for a city!” (F.B. Meyer)
 - b. “their sin is very grievous” = it means their sin was very severe and serious. No matter how much our wicked society tries to normalise and whitewash the sins of Sodom, God has not changed. The sins of Sodom are just as abominable and repugnant to our Holy God as they were in Abraham’s day and our nation promotes them at our great peril. God is not asleep to the cry of our sins that rises up before His throne.
 - c. Abraham knew more about Sodom’s future than the citizens themselves, including Lot. It is the separated believer who shares God’s secrets. (See Psalm 25:14)
2. The investigation of Sodom and Gomorrah (Vs. 21)
- a. To emphasise that the judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah will be according to God’s perfect Omniscience, the Lord describes His actions in investigative terms. The language is similar in reference to the tower of Babel (See Gen. 11:5).
 - b. This is what is referred to by Theologians as an Anthropomorphism; that is, God revealing Himself in terms we can understand as humans. It is calculated to impress upon our minds the fact that God’s judgment will be according to perfect knowledge of the situation.
 - c. Henry Morris explains, “It was not, of course, that God could not know the full facts without actually going down into the city, since He is Omniscient. He no doubt did this for appearance’s sake, that men might know directly that God had actually seen the full situation before He acted in judgment.”
 - d. God’s checking on Sodom does not imply that He is ignorant of what is going on. Rather “God chooses this mode of procedure to make apparent the fact that He, as Just Judge of all the earth, does nothing without first being in full possession of all facts” (Leupold)

To be continued in next message...

A friend of God is one who:

IV. INTERCEDES IN THE LORD'S PRESENCE (VS. 22-33)

A. The Motivation behind Intercessory Prayer (Vs. 23, 25)

Abraham was motivated by:

1. A concern for the righteous.
2. A concern for God's honour.

B. The Method of Intercessory Prayer (Vs. 22-33)

Abraham's prayer of intercession is rich in instruction for us on this aspect of prayer. Some of the lessons we note are as follows:

1. Intercessory prayer takes place in the context of a relationship with Almighty God (Vs. 22)
2. Intercessory prayer takes place in God's presence (Vs. 22)
3. Intercessory prayer involves drawing near to God (Vs. 23)
4. Intercessory prayer involves appealing to God's character (Vs. 23-25)
5. Intercessory prayer is motivated by a concern for the reputation of God (Vs. 25)
6. Intercessory prayer is motivated by a concern for the righteous (Vs. 23-25, 28, 29, 30, 32).
7. Intercessory prayer requires persistence before God.
8. Intercessory prayer needs to be approached with humility and reverence.
9. Intercessory prayer involves boldness and confidence before God.
10. Intercessory prayer brings great and miraculous answers from God.
Genesis 19:29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, **that God remembered Abraham**, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

Conclusion:

1. Are you a child of God? You cannot be a friend of God without first being born again.
2. If you are saved, are you pursuing a friendship with the Saviour? Do we serve our Heavenly Friend? Do we trust His promises to us? Do we seek His help?

Abraham the Intercessor

Text: Gen. 18:1-33

Introduction:

1. This chapter forms a prelude to the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19. Abraham receives a visitation from God and two angelic beings. God reiterates His promise concerning Isaac in Sarah's hearing and then reveals His intentions judge the cities of the plain viz. Sodom and Gomorrah.
2. In our last lesson we considered the theme of Abraham as the friend of God and spent time on the first three points of the below outline. Today we focus on the last point dealing with Abraham's ministry of intercession.
 - Serves in the Lord's Providence (Vs. 1-8)
 - Trusts in the Lord's Promises (Vs. 9-15)
 - Learns of the Lord's Plans (Vs. 16-21)
 - Intercedes in the Lord's Presence (Vs. 22-33)
3. Abraham responds to the news of Sodom's impending doom with intercessory prayer. This is the first recorded example of intercessory prayer and it is rich in instruction for this aspect of the believer's prayer life. Moses is also another example of a great Intercessor in the Old Testament (Gen. 32:30-33; Deut. 9:18-29).
4. We note two very important aspects of the Christian life at this point in Abraham's life. We see him both:
 - Serving before the Lord.
 - Standing before the Lord.
5. Vine provides a simple and helpful definition of intercessory prayer. Intercessory prayer is "seeking the presence and hearing of God on behalf of others." It means "to plead or intercede on behalf of someone." Robertson remarks that "It is a picturesque word of rescue by one who happens on or happens upon another in trouble and in his behalf pleads". So intercessory prayer is not so much praying for people in a general sense as it is praying for people in a place of danger or great need.
6. We will learn **7 principles** for effectual intercessory prayer from Abraham's godly example in this chapter.

I. THE PREREQUISITES FOR INTERCESSORY PRAYER (VS. 17-21)

It is important to briefly remind ourselves of Abraham's spiritual position before God which put him on praying ground to intercede in this way.

Abraham had:

A. A Relationship with God (Gen. 15:6)

1. You cannot intercede before God until you first know God! Abraham had come to saving faith in God years earlier and this meant He could pray to God on the basis of a real and personal relationship.
2. You cannot approach God as your Heavenly Father until you have been made His child through the New Birth.

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B. A Friendship with God (Vs. 17-19)

1. We need to be reminded that not only did Abraham have a relationship with God through salvation, Abraham was also walking in close fellowship with God as His friend.
2. While Abraham had his ups and downs as we have seen, overall, he was growing in faith and closeness and conformity to God and His will. A life of trustful obedience goes hand in hand with an effective prayer life. The believer who is living in disobedience to God will not know real power in the place of prayer.
3. We can only intercede in proportion as we abide in close fellowship with God – “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7). This is why we pray in Christ’s Name. “In my Name” means, not simply using His Name as a plea, but praying in union with Him and with all that we know of His will.
4. Abraham’s prayer was also prompted by Divine Revelation. This prayer was Abraham’s response to what God had just Revealed to him. Be sensitive to the promptings of the Lord in the area of intercessory prayer.

II. THE PLACE OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER (VS. 22-23)

Intercessory prayer takes place in:

A. The Presence of God (Vs. 22)

1. “but Abraham **stood** yet before the LORD” – Abraham’s posture is of interest. He is standing in God’s presence. Abraham’s reverence is profound (we will note this soon) but he also has confidence and boldness in God’s presence. All that stood between God and judgment at this time was godly Abraham. He pictures our Lord Jesus Christ who is our Advocate with the Father (1 Jn. 2:1).
2. In this passage we see God seeking a man to “stand in the gap” to intercede on behalf of the doomed cities. It is a reminder that judgement is God’s strange work (Is. 28:21) and not something in which He delights (Ez. 33:11).
3. Ezekiel 22:30 “And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and **stand in the gap before me** for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.”

B. The Nearness of God (Vs. 23a)

1. Abraham not only “stood before the LORD” he “drew near” to the Lord. Abraham was alone with God! There are times when we need to pray with others. There are times when we need to just get alone with God in a quiet place and pour out our hearts before Him.
2. We are reminded that for the believer, prayer takes place in the holiest of all, where Christ is. Hebrews 10:19-22 “Having therefore, brethren, **boldness to enter into the holiest** by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And *having* an high priest over the house of God; **Let us draw near** with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.”

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3. We are reminded that when we draw nigh to God, He will draw nigh to us. James 4:8 “**Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.** Cleanse *your* hands, ye sinners; and purify *your* hearts, ye double minded.”

III. THE PLEA OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER (VS. 23B-25)

Note two aspects to the appeal Abraham makes to God:

A. It was a Specific Appeal (Vs. 24, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32)

1. Abraham made six specific appeals to God and received an answer for each. There was a common theme of pleading on behalf of the righteous in Sodom but it was expressed in six specific requests.
2. It is a reminder that prayer needs to move from the general to the particular. Intercessory prayer is clear on what the need is and seeks God accordingly.

B. It was a Spiritual Appeal (Vs. 23b-25)

1. Abraham appealed to the righteousness of God. Intercessory prayer involves appealing to God’s Holy character. Abraham was close enough to God to know something of His Nature and that it would be inconsistent for God to mete out the same judgment to the righteous as to the wicked.
 - a. Knowing God’s heart and character are key if we would be effective prayer warriors. It brings our praying in line with the will of God.
 - b. 1 John 5:14-15 “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, **if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:** And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”
 - a. Note: Perhaps God intended to remove Lot and his family all along but it demonstrates how that God has chosen to include the intercessory prayers of the saints in the carrying out of His plans.
2. Abraham was concerned for the reputation of God. It is clear that Abraham was also concerned for God’s glory in all of this.

IV. THE PERSISTANCE OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER (VS. 26-32)

There are two aspects of Abraham’s praying that highlight this principle of importunity¹ in intercessory prayer. Take note of:

A. The Season of his Praying

1. This was clearly a protracted period of praying. Abraham “stood **yet** before the LORD.” The LORD was “communing² with Abraham” (Vs. 33). How long Abraham was in God’s presence we don’t know. It only takes us a couple of minutes to read the account but it is very likely this season of prayer took much longer.

¹ Pressing solicitation; urgent request; application for a claim or favor, which is urged with troublesome frequency or pertinacity. (Webster 1828)

² Share one’s intimate thoughts or feelings with (someone), especially on a spiritual level. (Oxford Dictionary)

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2. There is a time for brief prayer in the Christian life. Nehemiah is a great example of a man who was in touch with the Lord and would put through those lightening prayers to heaven when needed. However, there needs to be seasons of prayer in the Christian life where we spend greater lengths of time in the Lord's presence, pleading with Him for others. It is important that we have such seasons in our lives individually but also corporately as a church.
3. Col. 4:2 "**Continue in prayer**, and watch in the same with thanksgiving;"
4. Luke 18:1 "And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought **always to pray, and not to faint**;"
5. Matt. 7:7-8 "**Ask**, and it shall be given you; **seek**, and ye shall find; **knock**, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that **asketh** receiveth; and he that **seeketh** findeth; and to him that **knocketh** it shall be opened."
6. F.B. Meyer writes, "We cannot climb the more elevated pinnacles of prayer in a hasty rush. They demand patience, toil, prolonged endeavour, ere the lower slopes can be left, and the brooding cloud-line passed, and the aspiring soul can reach that cleft in the mountain side, where Moses stood beneath the shadow of God's hand...How much we miss because we do not wait before God! We do not give the sun a chance to thaw us. We do not linger long enough upon the quay to see the vessels return freighted with the answers we had been praying for. If only we had remained longer at the palace door, we might have seen the King come out with a benediction in His face and a largess in His hands."
7. John Butler notes, "God is anxious to grant us answers to our sanctified request, but we are too often not interested enough to pray for as many answers as God would like to give us. We cut short our own blessings, for we do not persist in our tasks and are not determined enough in our efforts to accomplish much."

B. The Stages of his Praying (Vs. 24, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32)

1. Abraham's prayer progressed in stages. Each "yes" answer from the Lord helped Abraham to discern that His praying was headed in the right direction and gave him confidence to ask for more.
2. On this point F.B. Meyer notes, "It looks at first sight as if he forced God back from point to point, and wrung his petitions from an unwilling hand. But this is a mistake. In point of fact, God was drawing him on...He did not learn the vast extent of God's righteousness and mercy all at once; he climbed the dizzy heights step by step; and, as he gained each step, he was inspired to dare another...It is so that God educates us still. In ever-widening circles, He tempts his new-fledged eaglets to try the sustaining elasticity of the air."
3. Abraham did what the old timers often called "praying through". He prayed the matter through to a conclusion and a definite answer was obtained from the Lord.

V. THE POSTURE OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER (VS. 27, 30, 31, 32)

We note Abraham's attitude and spirit as he interceded before God. We see a combination of both confidence and reverence.

A. Confidence before God

1. Abraham was confident in the petitions he brought before the Lord. He had confidence to plead with God on the basis of His relationship with God.
2. We are exhorted by the writer to the Hebrews to come boldly to the throne of grace. Hebrews 4:16 "Let us therefore **come boldly** unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."
3. Boldness is not a fleshly brashness or a prideful arrogance. It is simply confidence before God. We come not with self-confidence, but with confidence in God and the fact He has brought us into a right standing with Himself.

B. Reverence before God

This is the right combination. A confidence that is coupled with a deep spirit of reverence for God. There were two perspectives that influenced this reverential attitude in Abraham. He had:

1. A humble view of himself.
 - a. "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes" (Vs. 27).
 - b. Even though Abraham was called a "friend of God" he still had an accurate view of himself. A spirit of deep humility is required for effectual prayer.
 - c. Isaiah 57:15 "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of **a contrite and humble spirit**, to revive the spirit of the **humble**, and to revive the heart of the **contrite** ones."
 - d. Psalm 9:12 "...he forgetteth not the cry of the **humble**".
2. A high view of God.
 - a. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Vs. 25)
 - b. "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak" (Vs. 30)
 - c. "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord" (Vs. 31)
 - d. "Oh let not the Lord be angry" (Vs. 32)
 - e. There is not the slightest hint of presumption in Abraham's praying. It is all in the spirit of reverential, humble entreaty. He is not commanding or ordering God around as an equal or a subordinate. He is deeply conscious of his smallness and God's greatness and presents his requests as humble pleas and petitions.
3. "This is always the consciousness of the true child of God as he abides in the Divine presence. God's holiness and our sinfulness, God's greatness and our nothingness, are the overwhelming experiences." (Griffith Thomas)

VI. THE PASSION OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER (VS. 30, 32)

We note the 'oh' was in Abraham's praying. This was not cold, clinical appeal. The kind of praying that touches God's heart is praying that comes from your heart. Some people approach prayer like they would a speech. They may use exact grammar and well-formed sentences, but their praying is cold, a mere exercise of the mind. I would rather hear a halting prayer from the heart than a clinical one from the head. Not so with Abraham. We could say that:

A. Abraham's Praying was Urgent

1. He had compassion towards Lot and his family.
2. He had compassion towards the doomed cities.

B. Abraham's Praying was Earnest

VII. THE POWER OF INTERCESSORY PRAYER (Vs. 26b, 28b, 29b, 30b, 31b, 32b)

This account should strengthen our confidence in the power of prayer. We note that:

A. God Answered Each of Abraham's Requests (Vs. 26b, 28b, 29b, 30b, 31b, 32b)

B. God Answered Beyond Abraham's Requests (Gen. 19:29)

1. Genesis 19:29 "And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that **God remembered Abraham**, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt." Notice it doesn't say God remembered Lot. He remembered Abraham, the intercessor, and moved in mercy in the life of Lot. Intercessory prayer brings great and miraculous answers from God.
2. Eph. 3:20-21 "Now unto him that is able to do **exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think**, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."
3. Vance Havner wrote, "If we are beset by an unseen foe we are also befriended by an unseen friend. Great is our adversary but greater is our Ally."

Conclusion:

1. As we consider this example of Abraham, let us be encouraged in the intercessory ministry of Christ. We can see a clear picture of Christ who is our intercessor in this account. Hebrews 7:25 "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, **seeing he ever liveth to make intercession** for them."
2. As we consider this example of Abraham, let us be challenged about the ministry of intercession in our own prayer lives. Are you praying and pleading for others?

On the Streets of Sodom

Text: Gen. 19:1-13; 23-29; Romans 1:18-32

Introduction:

1. This chapter documents the fearful judgment of God upon Sodom and its sister cities. It also records the sad conclusion to Lot's life; a warning to the backslidden believer of the kind of dishonour one can bring to the Name of Christ through living a defeated, worldly life.
2. In this message we will focus on the city of Sodom, its wickedness and its judgment by God with reference to Romans 1. Sodom, Gomorrah and the other cities of the plain are "set forth for an example" (Jude 1:7) in the Word of God as a warning of sinful depravity and God's judgment upon it. God willing, next lesson we will consider Lot and his sad end.
3. We will study the sins of Sodom and God's judgment upon them under four headings as follows:
 - The Cause of Sodom's Sins
 - The Culture promoting Sodom's Sins
 - The Character of Sodom's Sins
 - The Consequences of Sodom's Sins

I. THE CAUSE OF SODOM'S SINS (Vs. 4-5; Rom. 1:20-24)

At this juncture, we could pose the question, "How did Sodom get to such a depraved place as a society?" Romans 1 answers that question and reveals that there are at least five steps involved that lead to the sins of Sodom. We could call this "the staircase to hell". We can summarize these five steps with five words. The first word is...

A. Irreverence (Vs. 21a)

1. They failed to glorify the Creator – "glorified him not as God".
 - a. They started with a knowledge of God but turned from the Creator and failed to glorify Him. Since the chief end of man is to glorify God (Rev. 4:11), this is a most serious sin and is the starting point of the slippery slope downwards.
 - b. Note: Romans 1 teaches the opposite to what Evolutionists insist in relation to religion. The Evolutionist applies his "evolving" idea to religious belief and claims that mankind started with primitive beliefs and eventually evolved to the Christian concept of One God. Of course, they then believe they are the most enlightened and can scrap the concept of God altogether! The Bible (the Truth!) demonstrates the opposite. Man begins with a knowledge of the Creator and then over time, degenerates into idolatry. So, it is not polytheism to monotheism but monotheism to polytheism, pantheism and all the other "isms" of man!
2. They failed to thank the Creator – "neither were thankful". Unthankfulness to God is the fountainhead of wickedness.

B. Imaginations (Vs. 21b)

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1. Vain thoughts – the word ‘vain’ means empty, futile, foolish. When man empties his mind of honourable thoughts towards the One True God, he leaves a vacuum that will inevitably be filled with evil.
2. Darkened hearts – the rejection of the light brings spiritual darkness over the heart.

C. Ignorance (Vs. 22)

1. The Illusion – they thought they were wise (Vs. 22a).
 - a. professing’ = they affirm or claim this of themselves.
 - b. Speaks of one puffed up in pride. How tragic and foolish to be proud about that which they ought to be ashamed!
 - c. The Philosophers of Greece and Rome indulged in “boundless extravagances of skepticism, doubting or denying what was evident to common sense!” (Haldane)
 - d. How we see this self-delusion in the 21st century denial of God under the banner of “intellectualism” falsely so called.
2. The Reality – they were fools (Vs. 22b). The English word ‘moron’ comes from this Greek word. This is the worst kind of ignorance when one thinks they are enlightened and wise when in reality they are deceived and deluded.

D. Idolatry (Vs. 23, 24)

1. The Deification of Man (Vs. 23a)
 - a. It is no surprise that when man rejects the Creator God, the first idol he worships is himself!
 - b. What a tragic change - “incorruptible God...corruptible man”.
 - c. Consider the following excerpt from the Humanist Manifesto 2:

In the best sense, religion may inspire dedication to the highest ethical ideals. The cultivation of moral devotion and creative imagination is an expression of genuine “spiritual” experience and aspiration. We believe, however, that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species. **Any account of nature should pass the tests of scientific evidence** (does Evolution qualify!!!!??); in our judgment, the dogmas and myths of traditional religions do not do so...We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of survival and fulfillment of the human race. **As nontheists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity. Nature may indeed be broader and deeper than we now know; any new discoveries, however, will but enlarge our knowledge of the natural.... While there is much that we do not know, humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.**¹

2. The Deification of Animals (Vs. 23b)
 - a. Birds – e.g., the Romans worshipped the Eagle.
 - b. Beasts – e.g., the golden calf.
 - c. Creeping things. For example:
 - i. Snakes were worshipped by the Greeks.
 - ii. Dung beetles were worshipped by the Egyptians.

¹ <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/manifesto2/>

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- iii. Note the progression downwards! Man does not evolve in his intellect when he rejects the Creator God; he devolves into ignorance and blindness.
 - d. Note: It is of interest that with the rise of humanism in the West, there has been a corresponding rise in the popularity of Eastern idolatrous Religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism and the New Age).
3. The Deification of Nature (Vs. 25)
- a. The word 'changed' carries the idea of an exchange (e.g., exchanging trade). It refers not to a turning of a thing into something else but the replacement of one thing for another. They exchange truth for falsehood and the worship of the Creator for the worship of the creature.
 - b. We see this worship of nature in the green movement of today which not only elevates animals and nature above God but also above mankind. We are living in a day where animals and trees have more rights and protections than the unborn. The sins of Sodom go hand in hand with the worship of nature. We shouldn't be surprised that the Greens party which promotes the religion of environmentalism is also the party most vehemently committed to the Sodomite agenda.

E. Immorality (Vs. 24)

- 1. The human side. The phrase "for this cause" means "because of this". It is a reference to the preceding actions by man.
- 2. The Divine side. Notice that God is the one who gives them up to this sin as an act of judgment. God is not a neutral by stander when it comes to man's rebellion against Him.

II. THE CULTURE ENCOURAGING SODOM'S SINS (Ez. 16:49)

This verse reveals the climate in which the depravity of Sodom flourished. Sodom was:

- A. Proudful** – "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, **pride**, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy." (Ez. 16:49)
 - 1. Is it not significant that the slogan and catch cry of the Sodomite movement is the word 'pride'? It is all about an arrogant flaunting of their depravity in the face of Almighty God.
 - 2. The word 'PRIDE' has been associated with the Sodomite agenda from the 1960s. PRIDE was an organization formed in Los Angeles, California in 1966 by Steve Ginsburg and stood for "Personal Rights in Defence and Education".
- B. Pleasure driven (hedonistic)** - "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, **pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters,**" (Ez. 16:49)

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1. A society that makes pleasure the chief end of man's existence is a society that slides very rapidly into depraved perversion.
2. Henry Morris writes, "The prosperity of the region that so impressed Lot was likely also the cause of the extreme wickedness of the cities. With all their material needs taken care of, and with an abundance of leisure time, the people developed a moral laxity which soon became gross corruption, until finally God could endure it no longer."

C. Pitiless – "...neither did she strengthen the hand of **the poor and needy**." (Ez. 16:49) A society that becomes taken over with the pursuit of the fulfilment of fleshly lusts will become cruel and uncaring towards the vulnerable and needy. We see this very thing happening in our own country. While there is much rhetoric about compassion and care of the vulnerable, we now have state sanctioned murder of society's most vulnerable.

III. THE CHARACTER OF SODOM'S SINS (GEN. 19:4-11; ROM. 1:24-27)

A. The Popularity of their Sin (Vs. 4)

1. The sin of Sodomy was accepted and promoted by old and young alike. Like a cancer, it had permeated the whole society. Notice the language used by the Biblical writer to emphasis this point – "the men of Sodom...both old and young, all the people from every quarter."
2. You know a nation is in a terrible state when the sins of Sodom are being promoted to its children. It is wicked and evil thing for full grown adults to choose such a lifestyle but to promote such depravity to children and young people in their formative years is unspeakably wicked, vile and demonic.

B. The Publicness of their Sin (Vs. 4)

1. Sodom's citizens had no shame at all about seeking to commit this heinous act in public. Isaiah 3:9 "They declare their sin as Sodom, **they hide it not**".
2. When a society goes public with its perversity, this is not a sign of progress! It is a sign that as a nation we are on the bottom rung of the Romans 1 ladder.

C. The Perversity of their Sin (Vs. 5)

Let us remind ourselves of God's Mind on the sin of Sodomy. There are at least 10 Biblical points that expose this sin for what it is. It is:

1. An Abominable Sin (Lev. 18:22)

- a. The Sodomite activity is an abomination. Lev 18:22 "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is **abomination**."
- b. The Sodomite appearance is an abomination. God's Word is crystal clear that the distinction of the sexes is to be maintained in outward appearance.
 - i. Deut. 22:5 "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so **are abomination** unto the LORD thy God."

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- ii. 1 Cor. 6:9 “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor **effeminate**, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,” The word ‘effeminate’ is translated ‘soft’ three times in the New Testament and in this context is a reference to the sin of Sodomy.²
- iii. 1 Cor. 11:14-15 “Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have **long hair, it is a shame unto him?** But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for *her* hair is given her for a covering.”
- iv. God’s Word is clear. The masculinization of women and the feminization of men is repulsive to Almighty God. It is right and Biblical to maintain a clear distinction in dress between the sexes and this is more important than ever in our day of gender confusion.

2. A Death Deserving Sin (Lev. 20:13)

- a. The law of God reveals the mind of God. Only certain sins attracted the death penalty, revealing that while all sin is serious to God, not all sin is the same to God. Some sins are more serious than others!
- b. Lev. 20:13 “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.”
- c. Note: Capital punishment is not the role of the church. The church’s role is to proclaim the Gospel of God’s saving grace to all sinners. But the law is to be used by the preacher of the Gospel to demonstrate the “exceeding sinfulness” (Rom. 7:13) of sin and to warn the sinner of God’s certain judgment except they repent. To use the law with the Sodomite is a lawful use of the law according to 1 Tim. 1:8-10.

3. An Unclean Sin (Rom. 1:24a)

- a. Sodomy is unclean morally. It comes about when God gives men over to the “lusts of their own hearts” as an act of judgment.
- b. Sodomy is unclean physically. It is significant that God’s Word labels this practice ‘uncleanness’. Such sins of the flesh are unhygienic and filthy. People who live depraved lives tend to also live dirty lives. The old saying “cleanliness is next to godliness” is not far from the truth.

4. A Dishonourable Sin (Rom. 1:24b)

- a. Marriage is “honourable in all, and the bed undefiled” (Heb. 13:4) but Sodomy is ‘dishonourable’ to the body. The word ‘dishonour’ means to maltreat or treat shamefully. The same word is translated “entreated shamefully” in Luke 20:11 in the parable
- b. The coming together of a man and woman in marital intimacy is a wholesome, pure thing with the sanction of Almighty God. The

² According to Strong’s Concordance the word was used figuratively of a catamite. A catamite according to Websters dictionary (1828) was “a boy kept for unnatural purposes”.

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coming together of two men or two women in such a way is a shameful misuse of the body which was created to bear God's image.

- c. It is self-abuse – “**abusers of themselves** with mankind” (1 Cor. 6:9). This phrase is translated from the Greek word αρσενοκοιτη (‘arsenokoites’) which is made up of two words – ‘man’ and ‘bed’ (the marriage bed. Same word translated ‘bed’ in Heb. 13:4). It therefore means “one who lies with a male as with a female, a sodomite” (Strong).
- d. It is self-defilement – “them that **defile themselves** with mankind” (1 Tim. 1:10). This phrase comes from the same Greek word used in 1 Cor. 6:9 (point above).

5. A Vile Sin (Rom. 1:26a)

- a. The word ‘vile’ means morally despicable or abhorrent, physically repulsive.³
- b. The word ‘affections’ means ‘passions’ and is always used in a negative light in the New Testament (See Col. 3:5 & 1 Thess. 4:5 for other occurrences of the word).

6. An Unnatural Sin (Rom. 1:26b-27)

- a. The Bible exposes the lie that is promoted far and wide that individuals are “born that way”.
 - i. “for even their women did **change the natural use** into that which is **against nature**” (Vs. 26)
 - ii. “likewise also the men, **leaving the natural use of the woman**” (Vs. 27)
- b. Note the phrase “for even their women”. “Paul first refers to the degradation of females among the heathen, because they are always the last to be affected in the decay of morals, and their corruption is therefore proof that all virtue is lost.” (Hodge)
- c. The claim that some people are “born that way” is also debunked by scientific evidence. “Perhaps the most powerful line of evidence is found in twin studies. Since identical twins have identical genetics, it would follow that if one twin was homosexual, the other would also have to be homosexual 100% of the time. But both twins are homosexual in less than 15% of the cases.”⁴

7. A Lustful Sin (Rom. 1:27b)

This sin is all about unrestrained indulgence in depraved lust.

- a. The word ‘burned’ means to be inflamed, set on fire. Wuest defines it as, “The rage of lust.”
- b. It is not uncommon for homosexual males in the USA & other western countries to have 300 partners a year. (JM)

³ “Vile.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vile>. Accessed 11 Aug. 2022.

⁴ https://www.str.org/w/are-homosexuals-born-that-way-1#_edn1. Accessed 12 Aug. 2022.

See also the following article - <https://americanvision.org/8136/new-twin-study-people-not-born-gay/>

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- c. Jude 1:7 “Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, **giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh**, are set for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

8. An Obscene Sin (Rom. 1:27c)

- a. The word ‘unseemly’ means “shameful, indecent. It refers to a “shameless or disgraceful act, obscenity”. (Linguistic Key)
- b. We are certainly living in a day where the obscene is flaunted openly and brazenly for all to see. Immodesty, indecency and immorality are displayed all around us in a society that has all but abandoned Biblical morality.

9. A Delusional Sin (Rom. 1:27d)

- a. The word ‘error’ means “a wandering, a straying about” and refers to “one led astray from the right way” (Strong).
- b. The same word is also translated ‘deceit’ and ‘delusion’.

10.A Disease-ridden Sin (Rom. 1:27e)

- a. The word ‘recompense’ means a reward or penalty. The word here “refers to that natural result of their sin which pays them back for what they have done. Like a person who contemplates doing something wrong says, “I suppose I shall pay for this.” (Wuest)
- b. The word ‘meet’ means fitting, necessary (as ordained by Divine law).
- c. Examples: STD’s, AIDS etc....According to the WHO, “more than 30 different bacteria, viruses and parasites are known to be transmitted through sexual contact.”⁵ **Depraved lifestyles lead to disease, death and destruction.**
- d. 1 Cor. 6:18 warns, “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication **sinneth against his own body.**”

D. The Perniciousness of their Sin (Vs. 6-11)

The Biblical record makes it clear that the Sodomite lifestyle is an aggressive lifestyle. It is aggressive in:

- 1. It’s Pursuit – they aggressively pursued these two angels who had the appearance of clean, pure men.
- 2. It’s Persistence – these men would stop at nothing to achieve their perverted aims.
 - a. Threatening (Vs. 6-9a). Lot found out that to suggest that this sin is ‘wicked’ (Vs. 7) is to provoke a heated torrent of abuse. We see the same attributes of those who promote the sins of Sodom today.

⁵ [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sexually-transmitted-infections-\(stis\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sexually-transmitted-infections-(stis)). Viewed 12.8.22.

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- b. Violent (Vs. 9b). They pushed hard against Lot and attempted to break the door down.
- a. Brutish (Vs. 10-11). Despite being smitten with blindness by the angels, they grope for the door like brute beasts. There comes a time when those engaged in this sin become 'reprobate' and can no longer be saved (See Rom. 1:28). Robertson says, "Like an old abandoned building, the home of bats and snakes, left "to do those things which are not fitting," like the night clubs of modern cities, the dives and dens of the underworld, without God and in the darkness of unrestrained animal impulses."

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF SODOM'S SINS (GEN. 19:12-13; 23-29)

A. For the Unrepentant (Gen. 19:12-13; 23-29)

God's answer to Sodom's depravity was the fire of His righteous wrath.

1. The Consuming Fires from Heaven Above (Vs. 23-29)
 - a. God rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon these wicked cities. This is the first mention of 'fire' in the Bible and speaks of Divine judgment on man's sin.
 - b. 2 Peter 2:6 "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha **into ashes condemned them with an overthrow**, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;"
2. The Everlasting Fires of Hell Beneath (Jude 1:7).
 - a. Jude 1:7 "Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, **suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.**"
 - b. The inhabitants of Sodom perished in the torment of fire on this earth only to open their eyes in the next life engulfed in the everlasting flames of hell for all eternity. The inhabitants of Sodom are still "suffering" (present tense) the eternal fires of hell right now. What a sobering thought.

B. For the Repentant (1 Cor. 6:11)

1. "...abusers of themselves with mankind...And such were some of you: but **ye are washed**, but ye are **sanctified**, but ye are **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. 6:9, 11)
2. Praise God there is no sin the blood of Christ can't wash away if the sinner will repent and turn to Christ in faith including the sin of Sodomy.

Conclusion:

1. Are you caught up in an immoral lifestyle? God offers you cleansing and forgiveness if you will turn in repentance and faith to Him.
2. Are we living a pure, distinct Christian life in a culture that is becoming increasingly like Sodom?
3. Are we thinking biblically and seeing sin from God's perspective?

The Tragic End to a Backslidden Life

Text: Gen. 19:1-38

Introduction:

1. This chapter documents the fearful judgment of God upon Sodom and its sister cities. It also records the sad conclusion to Lot's life; a warning to the backslidden believer of the kind of dishonour one can bring to the Name of Christ through living a defeated, worldly life, yielded to the dictates of the flesh.
2. In this message we will focus on the central character Lot and his sad end. Lot's life is a warning of the potential we have, even as saved individuals, to bring shame and dishonour upon the name of Christ. Lot is not an example of a false professor but of a defeated believer. We know from 2 Peter 2:8 that he was a "righteous man".
3. The lives of Abraham and Lot stand in stark contrast to each other. "Throughout the biographical portions of Scripture, we find the Holy Spirit frequently brings together two men of widely different character and places them in juxtaposition so that we might the better learn the salutary (useful, helpful) lessons He would teach us. Abel and Cain, Moses and Aaron, Samuel and Saul, David and Solomon, are well known examples of this principle." (Pink)
4. The final chapter of Lot's life is a reminder of what we lose when we walk out of fellowship with God. Let's seek to answer the question, "**What did Lot lose?**" There are at least **four areas** of loss we can discern in this final record of Lot's life.

I. THE LOSS OF HIS SPIRITUAL POSITION (VS. 1-3)

We find Lot sitting in the gate of Sodom. How did he get here and what did this position represent?

A. The Steps that led to this Position

We can trace **7 steps** in Lot's life from this point that led to his spiritual ruin. We covered these in a previous message but let us briefly review:

1. Lot's Desire for Sodom (Gen. 13:10) "And Lot **lifted up his eyes**, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, *even* as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar." Walking by sight rather than by faith is a dangerous game as the world's mirages look so convincing. Everything looked so right down there in the plain!
2. Lot's Decision for Sodom (Gen. 13:11) "Then Lot **chose** him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other."
3. Lot's Direction towards Sodom (Gen. 13:12) "Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and **pitched his tent toward Sodom.**" Remember, your decisions determine your destiny. Learn to ask yourself the question, "which

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direction is this decision taking me? Is it taking me nearer to God and the separated walk or nearer the world and compromise?"

4. Lot's Dwelling in Sodom (Gen. 14:12) "And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son, **who dwelt in Sodom**, and his goods, and departed." Lot's righteous soul was vexed by the sights and sounds of Sodom as he dwelt there (2 Pet. 2:7).
5. Lot's Determination to stay in Sodom (Gen. 14). Lot despised the chastening hand of God and despite the sobering experience of capture by Chedorlaomer's confederacy, chose to return there after God miraculously delivered him through Abraham's intervention.
6. Lot's Development within Sodom (Gen. 19:1)
7. Lot's Devastation in Sodom (Gen. 19)

B. The Success represented in this Position

1. We now find Lot sitting in the gate, implying he has attained a position of leadership in Sodom. Lot had reached a level of success in the city but what a price he would pay in the long run for that "success". Concerning the "gate", Henry Morris writes, "The "gate" of the city was the place where the business and commercial activities centred and also where the judicial councils took place. Evidently Lot himself was now some kind of magistrate of the place." (Note Vs. 9)
2. Morris adds, "What a perfect picture Lot exhibits of a modern-day carnal Christian! He thinks he has the best of both worlds – the eternal benefit of knowing the Lord as Saviour, but also all the temporal benefits that result from worldly influence and possessions, together with acceptance by and fellowship with men of the world. Their gross wickedness may vex his soul a bit, and he may not wish to enter into quite all of their activities, but in general he gets along with them just fine, and is quite pleased with himself that he does. A day of reckoning will come, however."
3. Remember, things can appear to go very well for the backslider for a season. Sometimes they go on in apparent prosperity for years but the law of sowing and reaping will always come into play. Lot may have been on the ascent materially but he was on the descent spiritually. Do not make the mistake of equating worldly success with spiritual success.
4. The fact that Lot was in a compromised place is highlighted by the reluctance of the angels to accept his offer of hospitality. Quite a contrast to their response to Abraham's hospitality just a few hours earlier. Is the Lord at home at your home?

II. THE LOSS OF HIS SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION (Vs. 4-11; 15-22)

Sodom had clearly caused Lot to lose his spiritual sharpness. Allowing oneself to be conformed to the world results in the believer's moral compass being off target in many areas. We see this illustrated with Lot in several areas:

A. In Reference to the Depraved Sodomites (Vs. 4-7)

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1. That Lot's moral sharpness has been blunted is evidenced by the title he used of the Sodomites – 'brethren'. To call such vile men 'brethren' shows that Lot's morals had been dumbed down. He didn't see sin as seriously anymore.
2. This is a prominent feature of the backslider. They haven't given up all morality but their moral standards have been dumbed down. You will invariably go soft on sin when you have allowed sin and the world's influence to make inroads into your life.
3. In short, Lot had been 'conformed' to the world rather than 'transformed' for godliness (See Rom. 12:1-2).
 - a. Trench defines the world as, "All that floating mass of thoughts, opinions, maxims, speculations, hopes, impulses, aims, aspirations, at any time current in the world...being the moral, or immoral atmosphere which at every moment of our lives we inhale, again inevitably to exhale."
 - b. The word 'conformed' in Romans 12:2 means 'molded', 'fashioned' and is the same word translated 'fashioning' in 1 Peter 1:14. We are not to allow our lives to be shaped by the values, philosophies, fashions, attitudes, culture, ideals and priorities of this world's system. Rather, we are to allow God's Word to shape our whole person and worldview.
4. Lot was having an adulterous love affair with the world.
 - a. James 4:4 "Ye **adulterers** and **adulteresses**, know ye not that **the friendship of the world is enmity with God**? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." Today the bride of Christ broadly speaking is having an adulterous affair with the world rather than staying pure for her Heavenly husband the Lord Jesus Christ."
 - b. 1 John 2:15-17 "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love 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 pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."
5. Illustration: A ship in the water is perfectly right but water in the ship is perfectly wrong. A Christian is to be in the world but not of it.

B. In Reference to his Daughters (Vs. 8)

1. Lot then makes the unthinkable offer of his daughters to this perverted mob. Thankfully for them they didn't take Lot up on the offer!
2. That Lot could suggest such a thing reveals how mixed up his thinking and priorities had become. Can you imagine a godly man like Abraham suggesting such a thing? Some backslidden parents seem willing to surrender their children's morals on the streets of Sodom.

C. In Reference to his Delay (Vs. 15-22)

Clearly in his heart, Lot didn't really want to leave Sodom. Though warned by the angels of the impending doom of the city, Lot lacked a sense of godly urgency. His worldliness had taken away his spiritual earnestness.

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1. The lingering of Lot (Vs. 15-16a). The word 'lingered' means to hesitate, be reluctant. How hard it can be to get the backslider out of the world even when they begin to see the danger; the tendrils of the flesh life have become so intertwined with the world system under whose sway the backslider has lived for some time.
2. The laying hold of Lot (Vs. 16b). Lot's inclination to procrastinate is further highlighted by the fact the angels had to physically grab the hands of Lot, his wife and two daughters and pull them out of the city. The mercy of God was the motivation behind this action.
3. The laxness of Lot (Vs. 17-23). We note this by observing:
 - a. His Attitude towards the Angels Instruction (Vs. 17-18)
The angel's instruction was clear and unequivocal:
 - i. Escape for your life. Run! Get out! Flee! Your spiritual and even your physical life is at risk in Sodom!
 - ii. Don't look back. Take steps away from the world towards spiritual victory and don't look back.
 - iii. Don't stay in the valley. Notice the little word 'all'. None of Sodom's plain was safe. The safest position for the believer is one of zero compromise with this world's wicked system.
 - iv. Escape to the mountain. Higher ground is the place of safety. Scriptural standards should not be viewed negatively as a form of bondage but positively as providing spiritual safety. In reality, the higher ground of truth is the place of true freedom and liberty.
 - b. His Attitude towards the Coming Destruction.
 - i. Lot refused the instruction, pleading with the angel to not send him so far away – "Behold now, this city is **near** to flee unto."
 - ii. Lot seemed to think that a little compromise would be acceptable "and it is a **little** one: Oh, let me escape thither, (is it not a **little** one?)." How often this is our excuse also but in reality, it is the "little foxes, that spoil the vines" (Song 2:15). Hudson Taylor writes, "The enemies may be small, but the mischief done great. A little spray of blossom, so tiny as to be scarcely perceived, is easily spoiled, but thereby the fruitfulness of a whole branch may be for ever destroyed. And how numerous the little foxes are! Little compromises with the world; disobedience to the still small voice in little things; little indulgences of the flesh to the neglect of duty; little strokes of policy; doing evil in little things that good may come; and the beauty and the fruitfulness of the vine are sacrificed."
 - iii. How strange that Lot felt he would somehow be safer if he stayed nearer to Sodom than if he fled further away! He preferred the half way point between what God had said and what he wanted.

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- iv. In reality, the closer you are to the world, the more spiritual danger you are in. The safest thing for the Christian is the separated life, away from the world.

III. THE LOSS OF HIS SPIRITUAL POWER (Vs. 14, 26)

Lot's compromise meant his testimony was tarnished with his family and his influence for good and godliness severely diminished. This powerlessness is demonstrated in his lack of influence over:

A. His Sons in Law (Vs. 14)

1. It appears Lot had a family of daughters. There is no clear mention of a son. Evidently, he had at least four daughters as two were unmarried and the text mentions "sons in law" so he would have had at least two married daughters, maybe more.
2. Sadly, his sons in law and married daughters didn't take his warning seriously. Why should they? Lot had worked his way up the corporate ladder in Sodom and built a home there. Now he was saying God was going to destroy it! The word 'mocked' means to "laugh outright (in merriment or scorn)" (Strong). It is frequently translated 'laugh' in the Old Testament. For example, "Sarah laughed within herself" (Gen. 18:12).
3. Can you imagine what this scene might have looked like? Lot comes to one of his daughters houses and knocks on the door. His son in law answers the door and Lot warns him "Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city." His son in law and daughter, who have seen Lot a bit tipsy on other occasions on wine from Sodom's Sip and Save, think he is joking! After Lot leaves after trying to no avail to reason with them, they look at each other. "What do you make of all that" says Lot's son in law to his daughter. "No idea. Dad's been so full of grace for so many years since we moved here to Sodom. It must be a flash back to the Bible bashing days he had at Canaan Baptist Church with Uncle Abraham years back. The poor man is obviously still suffering some of the mental scars from all that fire and brimstone theology he was taught. We left the Independent Baptist Church up there because it had too many rules."
4. Lot is now trying to save his children from Sodom but he led them there in the first place and is still reluctant to leave himself. Lot was trying to get his family out of Sodom but sadly he couldn't get Sodom out of his family. **Why on earth did he take his family there in the first place?!** Sodom (the world) is NOT a safe spiritual place for your family! Things may seem to go so well for years for you there but by the time you realize the danger it may be too late.
5. F.B. Meyer warns, "An inconsistent life cannot arrest the wanderer, or startle the sleeper into wide-awakeness about his soul."

B. His Spouse (Vs. 26)

1. Sadly, Lot's wife was another casualty of Lot's compromise. The idea is not that she took a quick glance back at Sodom but that she indulged in a lingering gaze. Her delay meant she got overtaken in the overthrow and perished.

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2. Warning to husbands: To take the line of least resistance and drift out into the world with your wife is a very treacherous game. It may bring superficial peace to your home for a time to give in to the pressure of the world's temptations but in the long run you will pay dearly for it and may even lose your marriage.

IV. THE LOSS OF HIS SPIRITUAL PURITY (Vs. 30-38)

Lot ends up contradicting himself and going to the mountain. Backsliders are often inconsistent, reflecting the truth of James 1:8 that "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." There the inspired record of his life comes to an end. How did his life end? Lot's life ended with:

A. Drunkenness (Vs. 32-35)

1. Isn't it amazing that despite losing everything in the overthrow of Sodom, they still managed to bring some wine with them to the cave! Lot may have left Sodom, but he took Sodom's drink with him. They probably bought it in Zoar, the town that would have been destroyed had it not been for God's mercy and longsuffering towards Lot in his spiritually dull state.
2. When the believer stops drawing on the Lord and His Word for joy and happiness, he turns to the world's substitute joys and wine is one of them. Casual drinking is a sure symbol of a backslidden life.
3. The Word of God shows us plainly that fermented, alcoholic wine produces drunkenness which in turn promotes sinful behaviour. Take wine out of the picture and Lot would never have consented to such a wicked thing. Drunkenness and depravity are Siamese twins. The Bible makes the mind of God clear on the question of alcoholic wine with its plain denunciations as well as its plain accounts such as these that show it for what it really is.
 - a. Isaiah 5:22 "**Woe** unto *them that are* mighty to drink **wine**, and men of strength to mingle **strong drink**:"
 - b. Prov. 20:1 "**Wine** is a mocker, **strong drink** is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."
 - c. Prov. 23:31-32 "**Look not thou upon the wine** when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, *when* it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."
 - d. Hab. 2:15 "**Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink**, that putteth thy bottle to *him*, and maketh *him* **drunken** also, that thou mayest look on their **nakedness!**"
 - e. Eph. 5:18 "**And be not drunk with wine**, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;"
4. Billy Sunday, the firebrand Evangelist, preached against liquor in the strongest of language. Concerning the saloon, he said this, "The saloon is the sum of all villainies. It is worse than war or pestilence. It is the crime of crimes. It is the parent of crimes and the mother of sins. It is the appalling source of misery and crime in the land. And to license such an incarnate fiend of hell is the dirtiest, low-down, damnable business on top of this old earth. There is nothing to be compared to it... The saloon is a liar. It promises good cheer and sends sorrow. It promises health and causes disease. It promises prosperity and sends adversity. It promises happiness and sends

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misery. Yes, it sends the husband home with a lie on his lips to his wife; and the boy home with a lie on his lips to his mother; and it causes the employee to lie to his employer. It degrades. It is God's worst enemy and the devil's best friend. It spares neither youth nor old age. It is waiting with a dirty blanket for the baby to crawl into the world. It lies in wait for the unborn. It cocks the highwayman's pistol. It puts the rope in the hands of the mob. It is the anarchist of the world and its dirty red flag is dyed with the blood of women and children."

B. Debauchery (Vs. 33, 35-38)

1. The plan Lot's daughters came up with was a depraved and diabolical one but don't forget, not too long before this time they had heard their dad offer them to the immoral whims of the enflamed Sodomites. Could this really be any worse? It almost seemed tame in comparison. Clearly Lot's daughters had lost all respect for their father.
2. The elder of the two girls made the proposal to the younger sister. Never underestimate the influence of an older sibling for good or evil!
 - a. If you are in that position of influence, use it for God and godliness.
 - b. If you a younger sibling, determine to follow God even if your older sibling (s) don't.
3. What was Lot's legacy? The Moabites and the Ammonites who would be source of constant temptation and trouble to God's chosen people. The fruit of the flesh is always corrupt and wretched.

Conclusion:

1. Have you commenced a similar downward direction to Lot? Turn back to the Lord now before the damage is great.
2. Have you been a Lot in your life and wonder if it is too late to return to the Lord? Remember, it is never too late to surrender your life to God afresh.
3. The solution for you is: Escape, don't look back, get back to higher ground!

Old Habits Die Hard

Text: Gen. 20:1-18

Introduction:

1. This chapter records another sad event of Abraham's life. This is the third major failure in the life of Abraham recorded in Scripture. The first was his lie in Egypt that Sarah was his sister. The second was taking Hagar to wife. The third is the repeat of his first failure – he again lied about Sarah being his sister.
2. This episode in Abraham's life reminds us that the old nature and its potential to lead us astray is present with the believer throughout the entirety of his earthly pilgrimage. It warns us of the possibility of repeating old failures apart from the grace of God.
3. "The Bible tells the truth about all people, and that includes God's people. It does not hide the fact that Noah got drunk and exposed himself (Gen. 9:20-23), or that Moses lost his temper (Num. 20:1-13), or that David committed adultery and plotted the death of a valiant soldier (2 Sam. 11). Peter denied the Lord three times (Matt. 26:69-75), and Barnabas lapsed into false doctrine (Gal. 2:13). These things are recorded, not to encourage us to sin, but to warn us to beware of sin. After all, if these great men of faith disobeyed the Lord, then we "ordinary saints" had better be very careful!" (Wiersbe)
4. In this message we will study Abraham's deceitfulness and the pertinent lessons we can learn for our own walk of faith.

I. THE REPITITION OF ABRAHAM'S LYING (VS. 1-2)

Abraham repeats the sin of lying about his wife Sarah.

A. The Season of his Fall

1. Abraham is now nearly 100 years old and Sarah 90. Abraham repeats a mistake from approximately 30 years earlier when he did the same thing when he and Sarah sojourned in Egypt during a time of famine (See chapter 12).
2. Abraham's failure at this point in his earthly pilgrimage is a solemn reminder that no matter how mature a believer may be in the Lord, the possibility of dishonouring the Lord is present until we go home to glory on account of the presence of the old nature within us. Abraham was a justified man (Gen. 15:6) with a new nature (symbolized by his new name – Gen. 17:5) but that did not alter the fact that the old nature was still present with him. Paul referred to it as "sin that dwelleth in me" (Romans 7). One old doctrinal creed refers to it as "the infection of nature" that is not taken away in either the regenerate or sanctified.
3. The only way to get victory over the old nature is not by the law of eradication but by the law of counteraction. Romans 8:2 "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath **made me free** from the law of sin and death."
4. We need to be reminded of four victory words from Romans 6 & 8.

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1. Know – Rom. 6:6-7 “**Knowing this**, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”
2. Reckon – Rom. 6:11 “Likewise **reckon** ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”
3. Yield – Rom. 6:13 “Neither **yield** ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but **yield** yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”
4. Mortify – Rom. 8:13 “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do **mortify** the deeds of the body, ye shall live.”

B. The Site of his Fall (Vs. 1)

1. This incident took place in Philistine territory. After living in Hebron (“fellowship”) for approx. twenty years, he decided to go to the land of the Philistines. Unlike Genesis 12, the text does not tell us what motivated this move. Some suggest that the rout of Sodom and Gomorrah influenced the move as Abraham wanted to get away from the place. Others suggest it was for trade since Abraham was by this time a powerful chieftain with some means at his disposal.
2. Henry Morris notes, “At this time Abraham decides to take a trip down through the Negev into Gerar, the capital city at that time of the land of the Philistines, near the Egyptian border. This was a prosperous city, as revealed by archaeological excavations there, and it may be that Abraham had some kind of business dealings in mind. The city controlled a lucrative caravan route and Abraham by this time was a wealthy and powerful chieftain.”
3. Whatever the case may be, we can say with a degree of confidence that a sojourn in Philistine territory was not wise. We see this highlighted later in the life of David. Dwelling in Philistine territory is akin to dwelling in Egypt. It is a reminder to us that moving off victory ground to compromise with the world inevitably leads to spiritual defeat in some area.
4. John Butler writes, “Temptation will come no matter where we are, but in the wrong place temptation has more power to overcome us than when we are in the right place.”

C. The Sin of his Fall (Vs. 2)

1. Evidently deceitfulness was one of Abraham’s besetting sins. “This repetition of an old sin would be astonishing were it not for the close consistency it bears to human nature, even among the people of God. Believers are often found to slip and fall where they have fallen previously.” (Thomas)
2. We all have our own brand of flesh. We manifest the sin nature in different ways but it is all from the same rotten source. Hebrews 12:1 exhorts us to lay aside the “**sin which doth so easily beset us**”.
 - a. A.T. Robertson defines it as “The easily besetting sin”. He remarks that it is a double compound verbal made up of ‘eu’

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(well) and 'periistemi' (to place or stand around. So, it has the idea of "the sin standing around us" or the "easily encompassing (or surrounding) sin." In this case apostasy from Christ was that sin. In our cases it may be some other sin."

- b. Albert Barnes adds, "It properly means, "standing well around;" and hence, denotes what is near, or at hand, or readily occurring... Tyndale renders it "the sin that hangeth on us."
- c. Adam Clarke notes, "What we term the easily besetting sin is the sin of our constitution, the sin of our trade, that in which our worldly honour, secular profit, and sensual gratification are most frequently felt and consulted."

II. THE RESULTS OF ABRAHAM'S LYING (VS. 3-7)

Deceit always bears a bitter crop and Abraham's lying was no exception. Look at what resulted from his deception. It fruited in:

A. Suffering for Sarah (Vs. 2b)

1. Sarah was taken into Abimelech's harem and had it not been for God's gracious intervention, things could have ended up very tragically.
2. This highlights the selfishness of Abraham in this whole affair. Instead of loving Sarah selflessly, he was putting his own welfare first. This is the opposite of the kind of love husbands are exhorted to exercise towards their wives in Ephesians 5.
3. Leading one's spouse into a deceitful course of action will inevitably hurt a marriage.

B. Suffering for Abimelech (Vs. 3-7)

1. Abimelech comes under the chastening hand of God and he and his wife were stricken with some sort of malady which prevented them from having children (See Vs. 17-18). We now have an unsaved man and his family suffering because of the actions of a saved man and his wife.
2. God's intervention was really an act of mercy towards both Abraham and Abimelech. God ensured that the promised seed was not interfered with and that Abraham didn't get the full reward of his foolish behaviour he deserved. God also prevented Abimelech from sinning (Vs. 6).
3. God's visitation to Abimelech gives us a window into the mind of God on adultery early on in the Bible prior to the giving of the Decalogue under Moses. To take another man's wife is "sinning" according to God. To his credit, Abimelech appears to have been in agreement with this even as a pagan ruler.

C. Shame upon Abraham (Vs. 9-10)

1. Abraham's testimony before a heathen king and his people was marred and damaged.
2. When we live in a carnal, selfish manner, it brings reproach on the Name of Christ.

III. THE REBUKE OF ABRAHAM'S LYING (VS. 8-10)

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C.H. Spurgeon said, "God does not allow His children to sin successfully." When we sin, we suffer from the consequences of our sins and from the chastening hand of God.

A. The Mouthpiece of the Rebuke (Vs. 9a)

1. What a sad thing when a man of God needs to be rebuked by an unbeliever! In many ways Abimelech stands out as the more characterized of the two men in this account, even as an unbeliever.
2. Interestingly God spoke directly to Abimelech in this account but not Abraham. God chose to use Abimelech as his mouthpiece of rebuke to Abraham and Sarah (Note verse 16). How humbling! This will not be the last time God uses a unique mouthpiece to issue a rebuke. God would even use a donkey to issue a rebuke to Balaam. 2 Peter 2:16 "But was **rebuked** for his iniquity: **the dumb ass speaking with man's voice** forbade the madness of the prophet."
3. A big test of a man's character is not whether he can give a rebuke but whether he can take a rebuke. Do you have the humility to receive a rebuke, even if the Lord uses an unlikely source? This is an important question as often we are inclined to focus on the faults of the messenger in order to excuse ourselves from the reproof. Receiving a rebuke takes real humility and grace but it brings blessing. Be prepared to receive a:
 - a. Pulpit rebuke – 2 Tim. 4:2 "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, **rebuke**, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." Titus 2:15 "These things speak, and exhort, and **rebuke** with all authority. Let no man despise thee." If Abraham could receive a rebuke from a heathen king, how much more should we be prepared to receive a rebuke from a Spirit-filled man of God as he declares the Word of God.
 - b. Personal rebuke – Prov. 9:8 "Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: **rebuke** a wise man, and he will love thee." Ecc. 7:5 "*It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.*" How do you respond when you are corrected by an authority, a spouse or a peer?
 - c. Our attitude should be like that of the Psalmist who said "Let the righteous smite me; *it shall be* a kindness: and let him reprove me; *it shall be* an excellent oil, *which* shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also *shall be* in their calamities." (Psalm 141:5)

B. The Message of the Rebuke (Vs. 8b-10)

Abimelech issues a scathing rebuke of Abraham's action. He rebukes him for:

1. The Hurtfulness of his Action – "What hast thou done unto us? And what have I offended thee?" Indulging in fleshly habits hurts others.
2. The Sinfulness of his Action – "that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin?" This is a plain and straight forward rebuke of the reality of what Abraham had done. It was a sinful course of action, pure and simple.
3. The Inappropriateness of his Action – "thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done". Believers ought not to lie! Col. 3:9 "**Lie not one to another**, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;"

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4. The Foolishness of his Action – “What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing?” In reality this decision of Abraham’s had not been made based on facts but upon his own perceptions and carnal thinking.

IV. THE REASONING BEHIND ABRAHAM’S LYING (VS. 11-13)

We now discover the heart problem that led to Abraham taking this sinful course of action. His carnal actions were a result of a carnal heart condition. Take note of Abraham’s:

A. Carnal Thinking (Vs. 11)

The root of the whole problem is found in the phrase “**Because I thought**”. This verse reveals the inner thoughts of Abraham that were behind the carnal action he took. Wrong thinking leads to wrong living. If there is one thing we need to learn as Christians it is this, our thoughts are often wrong! Learning from the errors of Abraham’s thinking can help us to detect wrong thinking in our own lives. Where did Abraham go wrong? We note several errors:

1. The faith in his thinking. Don’t trust your own mind. Always be careful to check your thoughts against God’s thoughts in the Bible. Visit good books but live in the Bible!
2. The fear behind his thinking. Faith was absent from this thought process. Fleshly fear and worry were driving his thoughts in this direction. Abraham had proved God’s faithfulness over several decades to this point. Could he not trust the Lord to protect him and his family now? A good question to ask myself is this, “Are these thoughts the thoughts of faith or the whisperings of doubt?”
3. The falseness of his thinking. Abraham made an assumption based on a perception he had of the people among whom he was living. That they were not worshippers of the true God was true but to assume they would kill him was in error. Be careful about what you assume about others, especially your brothers and sisters in Christ! Be careful about thinking too much about what you think others are thinking!
4. Illustration: David erred in his thinking during a trial in his life and sought refuge amongst the Philistines; a mistake that would put him and his family in grave danger. 1 Samuel 27:1 “And **David said in his heart**, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: *there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines; and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand.*”

B. Carnal Excusing (Vs. 12)

1. Abraham offers the excuse that in reality Sarah was his half sister so the claim was true. However, in this case, the truth was calculated to deceive. The key fact was left out, namely, that she was also his wife. This is a clever and more sophisticated way of lying but it is lying nonetheless. Wiersbe notes that “A half-truth has just enough fact in it to make it plausible and just enough deception to make it dangerous.”
2. F.B. Meyer elaborates, “In a certain sense, no doubt, Sarah was his sister. She was the daughter of his father, though not the daughter

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of his mother. But she was much more his wife than his sister; and to withhold that fact was to withhold the one fact that was essential to the maintenance of his honour, and the protection of her virtue. We are not bound to tell the whole truth to gratify an idle curiosity; but we are bound not to withhold the one item, which another should know before completing a bargain, if the knowledge of it would materially alter the result. A lie consists in the motive quite as much as in the actual words...like Abraham we may utter true words, meaning them to convey a false impression, and, in the sight of Heaven we are guilty of a deliberate and shameful falsehood.”

C. Carnal Scheming (Vs. 13)

1. This verse provides further enlightenment as to the root of the problem. Abraham and Sarah had a long-standing understanding and agreement on this from years back. It went all the way back to when Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees, some 25 plus years earlier.
2. Within the boundaries of God’s revealed will, a husband and wife have liberty to make decisions together on many things but there are limits and no couple is authorised to make a sinful agreement. Learn to agree together to do right as a couple, not wrong! Decisions as married couples need to be made with careful consideration to the Word of God and Scriptural principles. Learn to re-evaluate decisions and don’t stick stubbornly to them in pride just because you made them together! Beware of being united on an unbiblical course of action!
3. Illustration: Ananias and Saphira – Acts 5:9 “Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have **agreed together** to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband *are* at the door, and shall carry thee out.”
4. There is a lesson in this for the wife that submission to a husband’s headship has limits and a wife should not submit to an unrighteous, dishonest demand from a husband. Acts 5:29 reminds us that God is the supreme authority and there are times when we have to disobey an earthly authority in order to obey the Heavenly authority of God.
5. However, the primary lesson in all of this is for the husband. A husband should not put his wife or his children in a position where they are in conflict between his authority and God’s. This was Abraham’s initiative and idea and it caused suffering and hurt to Sarah as the subordinate. Sadly, Abraham is not alone in this. Many Christian husbands make unbiblical decisions and demands that damage their wives and families.

V. THE RESTORATION AFTER ABRAHAM’S LYING (VS. 14-18)

If there is one thing we learn from this lapse in Abraham’s life it is that God is merciful and gracious to His children and so often prevents us from experiencing everything we deserve from a bad decision. God did a work of repair and restoration in this situation. If you find yourself in a bad place on account of a bad decision, the sooner you cooperate with the Lord and let Him work, the sooner you will experience restoration and recovery. All three parties involved experienced the grace of God.

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A. Abraham's Restoration (Vs. 14-15)

Abimelech took God's warning seriously and was very generous in giving to Abraham. Be prepared to give and sacrifice where needed to repair damage in a relationship.

1. He gave what he did not owe (Vs. 14a).
2. He restored what he had taken (Vs. 14b).
3. He gave Abraham freedom to dwell in the land (Vs. 15).
4. This all represented a fear of God on the part of Abimelech and is a credit to him as a pagan ruler. His actions were also selfless and gracious. He went beyond what was required in the situation. All God demanded was that he restore Sarah and allow Abraham to pray for him. Abimelech not only obeyed what God had said, he went further and gave generously.
5. "All through we see the manifest moral superiority of a heathen man over children of God. When believers are out of the line of God's will they will sometimes go lower than other people. Abimelech is at his best. Abraham is at his worst." (Thomas)

B. Sarah's Restoration (Vs. 16)

1. Sarah also was reproved by Abimelech for her role in this affair.
2. John Gill explains Abimelech's statement to her as meaning "a protection of her person and chastity: so an husband, in our language, is said to be a cover to his wife, and she under a cover: thus Abraham being now known to be the husband of Sarah, would for the future be a covering to her, that no one should look upon her, and desire her, and take her to be his wife; and he would also be a protection to her maidens that were with her, the wives of his servants, that these also might not be taken from him:"

C. Abimelech's Restoration (Vs. 17-18)

1. The means God chose to use was Abraham's prayer for Abimelech. This would have been another humbling thing for Abraham to pray for the healing of the one he had damaged through his own selfishness.
2. God healed Abimelech, his wife and his household so that they could again have children. We are reminded of God's sovereignty over the womb, a repeated theme in the Scriptures.

Conclusion: What sinful habit are you entertaining in your life? Are you seeking victory God's way over the sins of the flesh? Do you need to humble yourself, admit your wrong and submit to God's work of restoration in your life?

God Keeps His Promises

Text: Gen. 21:1-7

Introduction:

1. This chapter records several key events that take place in Abraham's journey of faith as he reaches the milestone of 100 years of age. There is:
 - The fulfillment of God's promise with the birth of Isaac (Vs. 1-7).
 - The separation of Hagar and Ishmael from Abraham's camp (Vs. 8-21).
 - The covenant between Abimelech and Abraham (Vs. 22-34).
2. In this message we will focus on the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham and be encouraged that we too can trust God's Word.

I. THE MIRACLE OF ISAAC'S BIRTH (VS. 1-2)

Concerning the birth of Isaac, Robert Candlish, a famed Scottish pastor of the 1800s, said, "If there be an occasion on earth fitted to call forth the songs of heaven, next to the birth of Jesus, and not second to the birth of his forerunner John, it is the birth of Isaac. Upon no event, between the fall and the incarnation, did the salvation of men more conspicuously depend."

A. The Performance of this Miracle (Vs. 1-2)

In the miracle birth of Isaac we are reminded of several truths about the Person and Character of the God we serve.

1. The Faithfulness of God's Word (Vs. 1, 2b)
 - a. Isaac's birth represented **the fulfillment of God's promises**.
God had promised to make of Abraham a great nation that would bless the whole world (12:1-3). Then He repeatedly promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants (17:7) and to multiply them greatly (13:15-17). Abraham would be the father of the promises seed (15:4), and Sarah (not Hagar) would be the mother (17:19; 18:9-15).
 - b. God's faithful fulfillment of His Word is emphasised three times in these two verses.
 - i. "And the LORD visited Sarah **as he had said**" (Vs. 1a)
 - ii. "the LORD did unto Sarah **as he had spoken**" (Vs. 1b)
 - iii. "at the set time of which **God had spoken** to him" (Vs. 2b)
 - c. We are reminded of the absolute and total reliability of God's Word.
 - i. Psalm 33:11 "The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."
 - ii. Psalm 100:5 "For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and **his truth** endureth to all generations."
 - iii. John 17:17 "Sanctify them through thy truth: **thy word is truth.**"
 - iv. Proverbs 30:5 "**Every word of God is pure**: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him."

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- d. Joshua's testimony to the promises of God. "And, behold, this day I *am* going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, **that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.**" (Josh. 23:14)
 - e. Solomon's testimony to the promises of God. "Blessed *be* the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, **according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.**" (1 Kings 8:56)
 - f. 2 Cor. 1:20 "For all the **promises** of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."
 - g. 2 Peter 1:4 "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious **promises**: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."
2. The Perfectness of God's Ways (timing) (Vs. 2b)
 - a. Notice that Isaac's birth occurred "at **the set time** of which God had spoken" (Vs. 2) That means it happened according to God's perfect timing. Remember, God fulfills His promises in His time and in His way.
 - b. This is often where we struggle. As believers, we believe God keeps His Promises but our faith then gets tested when it comes to:
 - i. The waiting for God to accomplish His will.
 - ii. The way God accomplishes His will.
 - c. Hebrews 6:12 reminds us that it is "through **faith and patience** inherit the promises."
 - d. John Butler writes, "God is always on time, in time, at the right time, at the best time, and at the promised time.... If we want to keep our lives from many troubles, we must submit to God's set times and adjust our walk to God's cadence."
 3. The Powerfulness of God's Working (Vs. 2a)
 - a. This truth is also emphasized three times.
 - i. "For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age" (Vs. 2a)
 - ii. "And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him." (Vs. 5)
 - iii. "for I have born him a son in his old age" (Vs. 7)
 - b. God demonstrates His power through the fulfillment of His promises. The birth of Isaac is a reminder that God's power is unlimited and that He can do anything. God often sets the stage for the fulfillment of His promises with multiple impossibilities in order to magnify Himself. No doubt God also does it this way so that we won't try and take the credit for what God has done.

B. The Picture of this Miracle

1. How it pictures the Saviour. In the birth of the promised seed to Abraham and Sarah, we can't but see a foreshadowing of the birth of the Messianic Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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- a. Both births were foretold. They were both promised sons.
 - b. Both had their names revealed before birth. Isaac meaning “laughter” and Jesus meaning “Saviour”.
 - c. Both involved the miracle working power of God for the conception to take place. In the case of Abraham and Sarah, God did a miracle in both their bodies so that Isaac could be conceived. In the case of Christ, His conception was an even greater in that He was conceived by a direct act of the Holy Ghost without the aid of a human father.
 - d. Both births brought great joy (e.g., the responses of Sarah and Mary).
 - e. Both births provoked persecution – Isaac at the hands of Ishmael and Christ at the hands of Herod.
2. How it pictures salvation.
- a. It pictures salvation in the fact it was the second birth in Abraham’s family and the one God blessed. In the Old Testament we often see the picture of God rejecting the firstborn and accepting the second born (e.g., Jacob instead of Esau, Ephraim instead of Manasseh) In Ishmael we have a picture of the natural man. We all have the Ishmael birth – we are born into this world physically and inheriting the sin nature from Adam. Ishmael was “born of the flesh” whereas Isaac was “born of the Spirit”. We need the second birth symbolised in Isaac. Jesus said John 3:5-7 “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, **Ye must be born again.**”
 - b. It pictures salvation in that it was a miraculous birth. The new birth is a miracle God performs by His Holy Spirit when we repent and come to God by faith through Christ Jesus. John 3:6 “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of **the Spirit** is spirit.”
 - c. It pictures salvation in that a deadness was present. Abraham was considered dead in his ability to father children and Sarah was considered dead in her ability to conceive and bear children (Rom. 4:19). God brought life out of death. Before salvation we are dead in trespasses and sins but God makes us alive again through salvation. Ephesians 2:1 “And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;”
 - d. It pictures salvation in that it was the fruit and reward of faith. Ishmael was a child of the flesh; the best Abraham and Sarah could produce but God did not accept even their best- and well-intentioned efforts. Isaac was a child of faith and something only God could do by His power. Salvation is only by “grace through faith” (Eph. 2:8-9).
 - e. It pictures salvation in that a new creature was produced. God did not reform Ishmael but provided Isaac, an entirely new creature. When we get saved, we are made new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

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- f. It pictures salvation in that Isaac gained a new inheritance by virtue of his birth. He became his Father's heir. As believers we are now "heirs of God". "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then **heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ**; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together." (Rom. 8:16-17) The Apostle Peter reminds us of our inheritance.

II. THE MANDATE AT HIS BIRTH (VS. 3-4)

The obedience of Abraham is again highlighted at the birth of Isaac. In fact, while Abraham had some downfalls and was far from perfect, a humble spirit of submission to God and His will characterised his whole life. While Abraham made some unwise choices, we don't see Him rebelling against God's commands. At the birth of Isaac, Abraham obeyed in:

A. The Naming of the Child (Vs. 3)

1. God had commanded Abraham about the name for the child in Gen. 17:19 "And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and **thou shalt call his name Isaac**."
2. On a simple level, parents can learn from this that it is wise to seek God's leading on the naming of their children.
3. We are reminded that God's blessings come with responsibilities. Children are a blessing but they also come with responsibilities. There are commands God has for us as parents relating to how we are to raise our children and it is so important that we are obedient to raise our children God's way. Happy the child who is born into a Christian home where the parents are submitted to God and His Word.

B. The Circumcising of the Child (Vs. 4)

1. Circumcision is not binding on the New Testament believer but again the principle of Abraham's obedience is highlighted – "as God had commanded him."
2. The truth of God's statement of confidence in Abraham's character as a father is demonstrated upon the birth of Isaac. Genesis 18:19 "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and **they shall keep the way of the LORD**, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him."

III. THE MARVEL AT HIS BIRTH (VS. 6-7)

These verses record Sarah's joyful response to Isaac's birth.

A. The Source of Sarah's Rejoicing (Vs. 6a)

1. Sarah's first laugh was the laugh of unbelief (Gen. 18:12) but now her laugh is that of fulfilled hope. The laughter of the world is hollow and empty - "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so *is* the laughter of the fool: this also *is* vanity." (Ecc. 7:6) The laughter of the believer is the fruit of genuine joy on account of God's goodness and grace.
2. Sarah's example should encourage you that God is able to take you from the laughter of doubt into faith and the confident expectation in

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the promises of God and then to the laughter of joy as you witness God's faithfulness in keeping His Word.

3. Ishmael, the fruit of Abraham and Sarah's own efforts brought nothing but pain and sorrow but Isaac, the fruit of God's miraculous power brought joy and blessing. Prov. 10:22 "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth **no sorrow with it.**" Wiersbe writes, "Isaac pictures the child of God not only in his birth but also in the joy that he brought. There is joy in heaven each time there is a miraculous birth of a sinner into the family of God. Nowhere do we read that Ishmael caused great joy in Abraham's home. Abraham loved his son and wanted the best for him (Gen. 17:18). From before his birth, Ishmael was a source of painful trouble (Gen. 16); and after he matured, he caused even greater conflict in the family (21:9). The old nature is not able to produce the fruit of the Spirit, no matter how hard it tries."

B. The Sharing in Sarah's Rejoicing (Vs. 6b)

1. Sarah anticipated that others would join in her laughter as they heard of what God had done. This speaks of the theme of testimony. Our joy is a part of our testimony as believers before the unsaved. Psalm 40:3 "And he hath put **a new song in my mouth**, *even* praise unto our God: many shall see *it*, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD."
2. On a practical level, do you have the capacity to rejoice with others when God blesses them? This is also a test of Christian maturity.

C. The Song of Sarah's Rejoicing (Vs. 7)

1. Some suggest that Sarah's words here were a song. We don't know for sure but whatever the case maybe we can certainly say that songs of joy are the believer's response to the mighty workings of God.
2. Psalm 100:1-5 **A Psalm of praise.** "Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. (2) Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. (3) Know ye that the LORD he *is* God: *it is* he *that* hath made us, and not we ourselves; *we are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture. (4) Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name. (5) For the LORD *is* good; his mercy *is* everlasting; and his truth *endureth* to all generations."

Conclusion:

1. Have you experienced the second birth?
2. Are you waiting on the Lord for the fulfillment of His promises or are you tempted to take things into your own hands?
3. Do you have total and complete trust in God's Perfect Word?
4. Are you being a good testimony by rejoicing in the Lord?

Cast out the Bondwoman & Her Son

Text: Gen. 21:8-13; Gal. 4:21-31

Introduction:

1. In this message we come to another key event in the life of Abraham with the division that takes place between his two wives and two sons which results in the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael.
2. The Book of Galatians (4:21-31) draws on this account in Genesis to teach an important lesson concerning law vs. grace. The Apostle Paul follows the development of the two branches of Abraham's family; one branch through Hagar and the other through Sarah. Paul was particularly interested in the spiritual principles that characterized and governed these two lines of Abraham's descendants. In the allegory, the Holy Spirit testifies that these two family lines are associated with two covenants; the Descendants of Hagar are associated with the Mosaic Covenant (the covenant of works) and the descendants of Isaac are associated with the Abrahamic Covenant (the Covenant of Promise). Please remember that the Abrahamic covenant includes a blessing on a vast multitude of Gentiles who appropriate the promise of salvation by faith in Christ, who is the Seed (Gen. 12:3, 15:5).
3. In the account we note two mothers and two sons. There are lessons to learn from the two sons and from the two mothers so we will consider both pairs under two headings and some of the spiritual lessons they contain.

I. **ISHMAEL & ISAAC: THE FLESH VS. THE SPIRIT (VS. 8-9)**

A. **The Character of the Two Sons**

Let us briefly remind ourselves of the origin of the two boys.

1. **Ishmael** was the product of Abraham and Sarah's own energies, the best they could produce without God. He was the product of their own works rather than the product of God's power in response to faith. Ishmael therefore represents the flesh.
2. **Isaac** was the product of faith and was something only God could do. It was wholly of God. Abraham and Sarah could not contribute anything to it as they were both in a state of 'deadness'. They could contribute no works of their own to produce Isaac. The only thing they were to do was exercise faith in God's promises and trust God to do the work in them and through them. Isaac therefore represents the Spirit.

B. **The Conflict between the Two Sons (Vs. 8-9)**

1. The timing of the conflict (Vs. 8).
 - a. The arrival of Isaac. We have no record of any trouble from Ishmael for the first 13 years of his life before Isaac arrived. In fact, he is barely mentioned between Genesis 16 and 21. Isaac represents the new nature. The flesh is stirred up with the impartation of the new nature. The Ishmael nature reacts to the Isaac nature. Illustration: One Christian brother said he didn't realize he had such a bad temper until he got saved.

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- i. We note that Ishmael is not changed or reformed. Ishmael's nature cannot be altered. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. In like manner, salvation is not the reforming of the flesh but the impartation of new life as represented in Isaac.
- ii. C.H. Mackintosh notes, "Isaac proved, in principle, to be to the household of Abraham was the implantation of the new nature is in the soul of a sinner. It was not Ishmael changed, but it was Isaac born. The son of the bond-woman could never be anything else but that...Regeneration is not the change of the old nature, but the introduction of a new; it is the implantation of the nature or life of the Second Adam, by the operation of the Holy Ghost. This introduction of the new nature does not alter, in the slightest degree, the true, essential character of the old. This latter continues what it was, and is made, in no respect, better; yea, rather, there is the full display of its evil character in opposition to the new element. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other." He goes on to point out, "The birth of Isaac did not improve Ishmael, but only brought out his real opposition to the child of promise. What was the remedy? To make Ishmael better? By no means, but "cast out this bondwoman and her son..."
- iii. A.W. Pink writes, "It was the birth of Isaac which revealed the true character of Ishmael. We know practically nothing of Ishmael's life before the birth of Isaac, but as soon as this child of promise made his appearance the real nature of Hagar's son was made manifest. He may have been very quiet and orderly before, but as soon as the child of God's quickening-power came on the scene, Ishmael showed what he was by persecuting and mocking him. Here again the type holds good. It is not until the believer receives the new nature that he discovers the real character of the old. It is not until we are born again we learn what a horrible and vile thing the flesh is."
- iv. The discovery of the flesh is not evidence you are not born again. "The truth is that the recognition of the true character of the flesh and a corresponding abhorrence of it, is one of the plainest evidences of our regeneration, for the unregenerate man is blind to the vileness of the flesh. The fact that I have within me a conflict between the natural and the spiritual is the proof there are two natures present, and that I find the Ishmael-nature "persecuting" the Isaac-nature is only to be expected. That the Ishmael-

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nature appears to me to be growing worse only goes to prove that I now have capacity to see its real character, just as the real character of Ishmael was not revealed until Isaac was born.” (Pink)

- b. The maturing of Isaac. We note with interest that while Isaac was still in infancy, Ishmael appears to have taken a low profile but when he “grew and was weaned”, he began to assert himself. This teaches us some important principals:
 - i. The believer needs to move from infancy to maturity. There is nothing wrong with infancy. A newborn babe needs milk for that phase of his development. 1 Peter 2:2 says, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grown thereby:” There is however something wrong with a state of prolonged infancy. This is the problem with the carnal Christian described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. The problem with the carnal Christian is not that he was once an infant. The problem with the carnal Christian is that he should have and could have grown beyond infancy to greater maturity but has chosen not to. Moving to meat does not mean you never drink milk again. An adult still benefits from a glass of milk as a part of his diet but an adult reliant only on milk will be a very sick and weak adult.
 - ii. There comes a time when every believer needs to “grow and be weaned”. That doesn’t mean that we ever get to the place where we are self-sufficient and independent, with no need for any ministry from others. But it does mean that you mature and develop the capacity to eat the meat of the Word as well as drink the milk of the Word.
 - iii. The flesh life particularly begins to assert itself as the believer begins to mature beyond the fresh flush of infancy. Don’t be surprised at the internal struggle when you seek to take steps forward in Christian maturity.
2. The Manifestation of the Conflict (Vs. 9)
 - a. Ishmael mocked Isaac. Galatians uses the word persecuted. This represents the fierce battle the believer experiences between the flesh and the Spirit.
 - b. Galatians 5:16-17 “*This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.”
 - c. The only instrument strong enough to deal with the Ishmael nature (the flesh) within us is the cross of Christ, applied by the power of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 2:20, Rom. 6:6, 8:13). The cross of Christ is the instrument to “cast out Ishmael” in a practical way in our lives.

II. HAGAR AND SARAH: LAW VS. GRACE (VS. 10-13)

A. Hagar – Sinai, the Law and bondage (Gal. 4:24-25)

Understanding the facts about Hagar will help us better understand the relationship between Law and grace in the Christian life. Note the five facts about Hagar that will help us to better understand the law:¹

1. **Hagar was Abraham's second wife.** She was added alongside Sarah. Likewise, the Law was "added" alongside God's already existing promises to expose sin and lead the sinner to Christ (Gal. 3:19, 24-25). God did not start with Law; He started with grace.
 - a. Gal. 3:19 "Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was **added** because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; *and it was* ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator."
 - b. Gal. 3:24-25 "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."
2. **Hagar was a servant.** The law was God's servant (schoolmaster or child tutor) to keep the infant nation of Israel under control and prepare them for the coming of the Redeemer (Gal. 3:19, 24-25). The Law was given to reveal sin (Rom. 3:20) but not to redeem us from sin. Grace does not serve Law; it is Law that serves grace! The Law reveals our need for grace, and grace saves us completely apart from the works of the Law (Rom. 3:20, 28).
 - a. Romans 3:19-20 "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin."
 - b. Romans 3:28 "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."
3. **Hagar was never supposed to bear a child.** The Law cannot give life (Gal. 3:21). All the law can do is condemn me. Like a mirror, it can show me how unclean I am but it cannot cleanse me.
4. **Hagar gave birth to a slave.** If you decide to live under the Law, then you become a child of Hagar, a slave; for the Law produces bondage and not freedom. The first major doctrinal battle the church had to fight was on this very issue.
5. **Hagar was cast out.** There was no compromise. She was cast out permanently and took Ishmael with her. You cannot live under both the systems of law and grace. You cannot have Hagar and Sarah, Ishmael and Isaac together. This is true in relation to both salvation and sanctification.
 - a. In relation to Salvation. Reliance upon law works must be cast out for one to be saved. No one can be saved by a mixture of law and grace. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone to the glory of God alone.
 - i. Romans 11:6 "And if by grace, then *is it* no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if *it be* of

¹Adapted from Wiersbe's commentary on Genesis.

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- works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”
- ii. Eph. 2:8-9 – “For by grace are ye saved through faith...”
 - iii. Titus 3:5 – “Not by works of righteousness which we have done...”
 - iv. The only function the law has in relation to your salvation is to show you how sinful you are that you might then run to Christ who alone has the power to cleanse and save you (See Gal. 3:24-25).
 - v. Abraham’s struggle to part with Ishmael (Gen. 21:11) is representative of the struggle so many have to come to terms with the fact all their religious works and efforts cannot contribute anything to their salvation.
- b. In relation to Sanctification. The believer must “cast out” any reliance on a legal system for sanctification. We live by the power of the Heavenly Jerusalem above, not by the thunderings of Mount Sinai below. Instead of subduing the flesh, the Law arouses the flesh (Rom. 7:7-12) because the “strength of sin is the Law” (1 Cor. 15:56). Believers are not sanctified by living under a legal framework. They are sanctified by living by grace through faith as the life of Christ works in them. It is the life of Christ, not the law of Moses that makes the believer Christlike. Like Abraham, believer’s struggle to come to terms with letting go of their Ishmaels, representing the best of their own efforts in the strength of the natural man.

B. Sarah – Jerusalem above, grace and freedom (Gal. 4:26-31)

1. Jerusalem above – this is clearly a reference to heaven. Hebrews also speaks of Mount Sinai vs. Mount Zion.
 - a. Hebrews 12:18,22 “For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,”
 - b. Hebrews 12:22 “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,”
 - c. You need to be born from above. You need the Sarah birth, not the Hagar birth! All Hagar can produce is a slave and all the law can do is enslave you.
2. Grace – Isaac was produced by grace through faith. There was nothing Abraham and Sarah could do to produce Isaac.
3. Freedom – Sarah represents Jerusalem above and therefore true freedom. Note the emphasis on the word ‘free’ in Galatians 4.
 - a. Gal. 4:26 “But Jerusalem which is above is **free**, which is the mother of us all.”
 - b. Gal. 4:31 “So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the **free**.”
 - c. Question: The question/objection that naturally comes up at this point is “if we are not under the law does that mean we can just do whatever we want and sin?” The Word of God deals plainly with that objection.

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- i. The Apostle Paul deals with that very objection in Romans 6. “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom. 6:14-16)
 - ii. Our liberty is not to be used as an occasion for the flesh. Galatian 5:13 “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.”
 - iii. Grace influences us in the direction of holiness, not worldliness. Titus 2:11-13 “For **the grace of God** that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;”
- d. There are three words in relation to sanctification you need to be familiar with as a believer. They are legalism, license and liberty.
- i. **Legalism** – this is a legal system of sanctification. We might call this sanctification by prescription; Do A + B + C etc. and you will become a mature Christian. The result will be the same. The prescription method tempts the believer to self-effort and thereby forfeits the free workings of the Holy Spirit through faith.
 - ii. **License** – this is often what is promoted as Christian liberty in this Laodicean age. The Christian who swings over to license thinks that God’s grace means he can indulge the flesh, be worldly and live a sloppy and careless Christian life. It is this very wrong interpretation of grace that the Apostle Paul tackles head on in Romans 6 as well as in his other Epistles. In reality, license is not freedom at all but a new kind of bondage. Bondage to the sinful appetites of the flesh.
 - iii. **Liberty** – this is the place of true freedom. Liberty means freedom from sin and bondage to an abundant life in Christ. “It means the freedom to be and to do all that God has for us in Jesus Christ.” (Wiersbe) This life is not lawless! Far from it! In fact, under Christ the standard is higher (take the sermon on the Mount as an example) but there is a big difference. The law demands but gives no power to obey. Christ gives us not just the command but the power to obey! One author put it this way, “Do this and live, the law commands, but gives me neither feet nor hands. A better word the Gospel brings. It bids me fly and gives me wings.” Someone wisely commented, “No man

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in this world attains to freedom from any slavery except by entrance into some higher servitude” (Phillips Brooks)

Conclusion:

1. Are you living under a law system, trying to earn your salvation? This is bondage. You need the Sarah birth (from heaven above by grace through faith), not the Hagar birth (bondage and slavery).
2. What system are you living under as a believer? Is it the power of the heavenly life above working in you and through you or self-effort under a legal system?

The Faithfulness of God

Text: Gen. 21:14-34

Introduction:

1. In our last lesson we considered the spiritual lessons to be learned from the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael, drawing on the Apostle's allegory in Galatians 4. Now we return to the study of the text itself and the lessons we can learn from what takes place next in this chapter.
2. This section of Genesis 21 deals with two important events:
 - The separation of Hagar and Ishmael from Abraham's camp (Vs. 14-21).
 - The peace treaty between Abraham and Abimelech (Vs. 22-34).
3. Both events bear testament to the faithfulness and mercy of God. We will note this in both the trial of Hagar and Ishmael (Vs. 14-21) and the treaty between Abraham and Abimelech (Vs. 22-34).

I. THE TRIAL OF HAGAR & ISHMAEL (Vs. 14-21)

A. The Catalyst of their Trial (Vs. 8-13)

1. The failure of Abraham. In many ways Hagar and Ishmael suffered due to Abraham's lapse of faith. We could say that in some ways they were the victims in the situation. It is a timely reminder that in a sin cursed world, suffering is sometimes inflicted upon others and the solution is not to turn against God in bitterness but to turn to God for solace, comfort and help.
2. The mocking of Ishmael. Ishmael's response to Isaac revealed his true character and that it would be unworkable to have the two together. It is of interest to note that Ishmael's antagonism towards Isaac was particularly manifested when Isaac was weaned and growing in maturity. While Isaac was still in infancy, Ishmael appears to have taken a low profile but when he "grew and was weaned", he began to assert himself. This teaches us some important principals:
 - a. The believer needs to move from infancy to maturity. There is nothing wrong with infancy. A newborn babe needs milk for that phase of his development. 1 Peter 2:2 says, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." There is however something wrong with a state of prolonged infancy. This is the problem with the carnal Christian described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4. The problem with the carnal Christian is not that he was once an infant. The problem with the carnal Christian is that he should have and could have grown beyond infancy to greater maturity but has chosen not to. Moving to meat does not mean you never drink milk again. An adult still benefits from a glass of milk as a part of his diet but an adult reliant only on milk will be a very sick and weak adult.
 - b. There comes a time when every believer needs to "grow and be weaned". That doesn't mean that we ever get to the place where

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we are self-sufficient and independent, with no need for any ministry from others. But it does mean that you mature and develop the capacity to eat the meat of the Word as well as drink the milk of the Word.

- c. The flesh life particularly begins to assert itself as the believer begins to mature beyond the fresh flush of infancy. Don't be surprised at the internal struggle when you seek to take steps forward in Christian maturity.

B. The Conditions of their Trial (Vs. 14-16)

They were:

1. Drifting (Vs. 14) – ‘wandered’. It appears that they lost their way in the wilderness of Beersheba. They had likely set out with the aim of getting to another settlement but got lost on their way. Henry Morris notes, “Archaeology has revealed that there were numerous settlements at this time in the vicinity of what later was known as Beersheba, and it seems that Hagar and Ishmael set out in this direction.”
2. Destitute (Vs. 15) – “the water was spent”. Their meagre resources soon ran out and they were in a desperate condition. Imagine the terrible thirst that must have gripped them both. Hagar was Ishmael's guide but she could not lead him to water. What a picture of the world's guides who may appear to sustain you for a time but in reality, it is short lived and soon you find yourself lost and on the brink of destruction.
3. Dying (Vs. 16a) – “let me not see the death of the child”. It appears that Ishmael was worse off than his mother and was now on the brink of death.
4. Despairing (Vs. 16b) – “she...lift up her voice, and wept”. Hagar and Ishmael were broken hearted and filled with sorrow.

C. The Compassion in their Trial (Vs. 17-21)

In His mercy, God intervened in this tragic and hopeless seen, speaking to Hagar out of heaven, calming her fears and showing her water for Ishmael. There are at least two lessons we can draw from this account. There is a lesson in the area of:

1. Suffering – the answer to our trials is seen in God's gracious dealings in the account before us. We can be comforted and helped in our trials by:
 - a. The Presence of God – God heard Ishmael's cries (appears he appealed to God in prayer whereas his mother just cried in despair) and answered in the form of a Christophany – “the angel (messenger) of God speaks out of heaven.” God speaks those words of comfort and assurance – “fear not”.
 - b. The Promises of God – evidently Hagar had forgotten God's promises of Genesis 16 or had come to the point where she seriously doubted them. How often we are inclined to doubt God's promises in times of testing but in reality, it is those very promises to which we must cling in faith, trusting that God will come through in faithfulness.
 - c. The Provision of God – interestingly Hagar was blind to the well of water that was right there and available. How true this can be

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- of us also in our trials. Our tears cloud our vision so that we fail to see that God has made provision for our refreshment and sustaining. So often in the trials of life we fail to see the Divine Provisions God has made for us, and we forget the promises He has made to us. "We open our hands to receive what we think we need instead of asking Him to open our eyes to see what we already have. The answer to most problems is close at hand, if only we have eyes to see (John 6:1-13; 21:1-6)." (Wiersbe)
- d. The well of water reminds us that in our trials we have available to us:
 - i. The wellsprings of the Spirit (John 7:37-39)
 - ii. The water of the Scriptures (Eph. 5:26)
 2. Salvation – by way of application, we can see a touching salvation picture in this account. It is a good picture of:
 - a. The lost condition – Hagar and Ishmael were strangers, lost, destitute, dying, hopeless and broken. How well that describes our lost condition without Christ.
 - i. Strangers – they were outside of Abraham's camp and strangers to the covenant of promise. In like manner, without Christ we are "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise" (Eph. 2:12).
 - ii. Lost – the sinner is one who wanders in the wilderness of this world without any true hope, purpose or meaning. Ephesians 2:12 describes it well, "without Christ...having no hope, and without God in the world."
 - iii. Destitute – one's own resources quickly run out. The world has no real and lasting solution to the sin problem.
 - iv. Dying – the lost sinner is one who is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). "...sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (James 1:15).
 - v. Broken – sin, while offering temporary satisfaction, leaves the sinner in a hopeless and broken condition. Sin produces great sorrow. Unless the sinner repents, weeping in this life will translate into "weeping and gnashing of teeth" in the afterlife (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).
 - b. The Divine solution
 - i. God seeks – "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Lk. 19:10)
 - ii. God hears – the cry of a lost sinner is heard and responded to by a God who loves sinners and desires to reconcile them to Himself. "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13)
 - iii. God saves – God provides living water to thirsty souls if they will come to Him. Sadly, like Hagar and Ishmael, so many fail to realise that the well of water to quench their thirst is right there and available in Christ for all who will repent, believe and receive. Jesus said to the people of His day, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have

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- life.” (John 5:40) It is a reminder that God must open the sinner’s eyes to see that Christ is the answer (Acts 26:18).
- iv. Illustration: We are reminded of another encounter at another well many years later in Samaria as recorded in John 4. There Christ met a Samaritan woman who came to the well to draw water. Christ saw a woman whose heart was thirsty to know true joy and fulfillment. She had sought comfort for the thirst in her heart in relationships with men but that failed. Christ now reveals Himself as “the living water” for thirsty souls.
 - v. John 4:13-14 “Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but **the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.**”
 - vi. Rev. 22:17 “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. **And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.**”
 - vii. Isaiah 12:3 “Therefore with joy shall ye draw **water out of the wells of salvation.**”

II. THE TREATY OF ABRAHAM AND ABIMELECH (VS. 22-34)

God’s grace and faithfulness to Abraham is also seen in what now takes place between him and Abimelech, the Philistine king. It is quite remarkable considering the events recorded in Genesis 20 happened only a few years before (approx. 4-6 years).

A. The Request for the Treaty (Vs. 22-23)

- 1. The Testimony that inspired the Treaty (Vs. 22)
 - a. The recognition of Abraham’s testimony.
 - i. Abimelech and Phichol, the chief captain of his army, come seeking a peace treaty with Abraham. The reason stated by Abimelech is truly remarkable – “**God is with the in all that thou doest:** Now therefore swear unto me”.
 - ii. It is a truly wonderful thing when we so walk with God that the unsaved around us recognize a difference in our lives. Can your unsaved family, friends and work contacts see that God is with you in all you do? Do you have the kind of testimony that would even prompt them to approach you to ask “you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). We need to be a witness both by our **life** and with our **lips**.
 - iii. Considering the typology of the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael (previous sermon), it is significant that this event is said to have occurred “at that time” (Vs. 22). When believers die to the flesh and begin to allow the life of

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Christ to live through them, they will have a testimony that begins to impact others.

- iv. W.H. Griffith Thomas notes, “The ordinary uneventful days of a believer’s life are usually a better test of his true character than an emergency or crisis. It is sometimes possible to face a great occasion with wisdom and courage, and yet to fail in some simple, average experiences of daily living.”
 - b. The restoration of Abraham’s testimony.
 - i. This represents God’s gracious restoration of Abraham’s testimony considering the events that transpired between Abimelech and Abraham in Genesis 20. While Abraham was living deceitfully and leaning upon his own understanding, the result was a bad testimony before Abimelech. In fact, you would think that Abimelech would never come to trust Abraham again after that, that his testimony would be permanently marred in his eyes.
 - ii. Abimelech’s approach to Abraham is a blessed reminder that God is able to restore a broken testimony. You may have marred your testimony for Christ through backsliding and fleshly living, but if you will get right with God and let Him work with you, your testimony can be restored back to a place of usefulness.
 - c. The regard for Abraham’s testimony. That Abimelech would seek a covenant with a godly man like Abraham says something for the wisdom and character of this heathen king. Most rulers today are far more interested in seeking alliances with the wicked rather than the righteous.
2. The Terms of the Treaty (Vs. 23)

Abimelech then outlines the proposed terms of the treaty. It was to be characterized by:

 - a. Truthfulness – “that thou wilt not deal falsely”. No doubt this aspect of the treaty was partly motivated by Abimelech’s previous experience with Abraham.
 - b. Durableness – “with me, nor with my son, nor with my son’s son”. This was to be a lasting covenant. The request speaks again of the calibre of Abimelech. He wasn’t just concerned for his own welfare and reign but for the next generation who would follow him. What a contrast to the self-centred politicians of our day! How we need believers who will be faithful to the commitments they make.
 - c. Kindness – “according to the kindness”. Abimelech points to his own history of showing kindness to Abraham as the standard to follow. Kindness should also govern our relationships with others.

B. The Rebuke before the Treaty (Vs. 24-26)

1. The Principle in Abraham’s Rebuke (Vs. 24-25)
 - a. Abraham agrees to make a treaty with Abimelech but wisely raises an issue that needed to be resolved before peace could be made.

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- b. This is an important principle for establishing and maintaining peace in relationships. Issues cannot be ignored and glossed over. They have to be discussed honestly and plainly. The elephant in the room cannot be ignored. Sin must be dealt with plainly before there can be true peace. Abraham was not interested in “peace at any price”. Many believers settle for superficial, fake peace, pretending a significant issue does not exist between them but that is not the Bible way.
 - c. The restoration of Abraham’s testimony is again highlighted in this rebuke. Previously Abimelech was the one reproving Abraham, now Abraham is reproving Abimelech.
2. The Point of Abraham’s Rebuke (Vs. 25)
- a. Abimelech’s servants had forcibly taken over a well of water that belonged to Abraham. This injustice would have to be resolved if they were to move forward from here.
 - b. Prov. 27:5-6 “Open rebuke *is* better than secret love. Faithful *are* the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy *are* deceitful.”
3. The Problem with Abraham’s Rebuke (Vs. 26)
- a. The problem was not in the content of Abraham’s rebuke but in its timing. Evidently, he had delayed doing anything about it and Abimelech rightly points out that it should have been brought to his attention earlier. “It is as much the duty of him who has a grievance to reveal it, as it is the duty of him who has caused the grievance to remove it.” (Whitelaw)
 - b. To his credit, Abimelech did not use his ignorance of the issue to justify inaction. Once he was made aware of the issue, he was prepared to rectify it. That is good leadership. Just because a leader is ignorant of something under his oversight does not mean he is released from all responsibility. Having been made aware of the issue, he must take ownership of the problem and deal with it.

C. The Ratifying of the Treaty (Vs. 27-32)

1. The Gifts of the Covenant (Vs. 27-30)
- a. The general gifts (Vs. 27). In the previous encounter with Abimelech and Abraham (Gen. 20), Abimelech gave gifts to Abraham. Now Abraham gives gifts to Abimelech. In the previous situation, Abimelech gave gifts to Abraham even though Abraham was in the wrong. Now Abraham gives gifts to Abimelech even though he is in the wrong. Reconciliation involves a selfless, sacrificial, giving approach.
 - b. The special gift (Vs. 28-30).
 - i. Seven ewe lambs are set aside. “The number seven represented completeness, sealing the covenant, and symbolizing Abraham’s permanent right to the well.” (Morris) This provokes a question from Abimelech as to the purpose of this to which Abraham replies, making it clear that it was to “be a witness” that the well belonged to Abraham.

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- ii. While it might appear that there is measure of mistrust in this agreement between the two men, in reality we see the principle of seeking to put things in place to avoid the same mistakes being repeated again in the future. While “seemingly betraying a secret suspicion of the prince’s veracity, the act aimed at preventing any recurrence of the grievance... Good men should not only rectify the wrongs they do to one another, but adopt all wise precautions against their repetition.” (Whitelaw)
 2. The Geographical Marker of the Covenant (Vs. 31-32)
 - a. Abraham names the location Beersheba because of this historical event that takes place there. “The word ‘Beersheba’ means “the well of the oath” or “the well of the seven”. It is interesting to know that seven wells have actually been found at the place which has been identified with Beersheba, twelve hours south-west of Hebron.” (Thomas)
 - b. Beersheba would go on to become a significant place in the lives of the patriarchs and the nation of Israel.
- D. The Reverence after the Treaty (Vs. 33-34)**
1. Abraham plants a grove. Groves would later become associated with idolatry and would be forbidden by God but we need to note that Abraham was not engaged in any kind of idolatry here. It seems he turned the well at Beersheba and surrounds into some kind of oasis, a place for rest and worship.
 2. Abraham calls on the name of the LORD. Abraham’s relationship with God is again highlighted. Abraham was a man who walked with God. No doubt this involved thanksgiving for what God had done. It is significant to note that Abraham also receives a fresh revelation of the Person of God as this is the first time God is referred to as “the everlasting God” in the Scriptures. Abraham already knew God as “the most high God” (14:18) and the “Almighty God” (17:1). Now here he uses a new name (as far as Abraham is concerned) for God, a name which expresses the eternal nature of God. Abraham has grown in the knowledge of God over the years since he has moved to Canaan. This new revelation of God’s character would prepare him for the next great crisis of his life – arguably the biggest trial of his life.
 3. Abraham sojourns in the land of the Philistines many days.

Conclusion:

1. Have you come to Christ for living water? Have you been saved or are you lost and trying to survive on the world’s meager resources?
2. To whom or what are you turning in your trial as a believer? Is it Christ the fountain of living waters or the empty, broken cisterns of this world (Jer. 2:13)?
3. Are you a peacemaker as a believer, prepared to sacrifice and deal with issues in order that the Lord might be magnified?

Is Your All on the Altar?

Abraham surrenders Isaac

Text: Gen. 22:1-24

Introduction:

1. We come now to what was the greatest test and at the same time, the highwater mark in Abraham's walk of faith.
2. There are two dominant themes intertwined throughout the passage:
 - The principle of total surrender to the will of God; placing all on the altar. Abraham's complete submission to God's will is on display at this time of his life like no other.
 - The picture of Christ and Calvary. Christ can be found in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27) but there are some O.T. passages of Scripture where the typology is especially rich and Genesis 22 is one of those passages. We know from Hebrews 11:17-19 that Isaac is a type of Christ in this passage so we are on solid grounds to read it in that way.
3. We often speak of a "mountain top" experiences as representing blessings and valleys as representing trials. In reality, some mountain top experiences are actually deep trials but they lift us to a higher understanding of God, His fellowship and His ways.
4. We will consider the theme of Abraham's surrender, the lessons it contains for our Christian walk and the pictures of Christ it provides under three headings.

I. THE PROVING OF ABRAHAM'S SURRENDER (VS. 1-2)

Abraham had experienced a number of tests in his walk of faith to date. Some he had passed, some he had failed but now he comes to what has been called "The grand crisis" in Abraham's life (James Murphy). Observe three truths about this test that came into Abraham's life.

A. The Suddenness of the Test (Vs. 1a)

1. The Bible says it "came to pass after these things". For some years after Isaac's weaning Abraham and his family lived in peace in the area of Beersheba. God had come through on His promise of the promised seed, Ishmael and Hagar had been removed, restoring peace to the home and all was happy. Suddenly, God breaks the silence with a demand that no doubt would have tried Abraham to the very depths of his being.
2. This is often the nature of a trial. We typically do not see it coming. All of a sudden, we find our faith is under test.

B. The Source of the Test (Vs. 1b)

1. Some trials are of our own making due to our own sinfulness. God's grace is needed to accept the chastening and repent of our wayward behaviour. But this was not the case with Abraham. This trial came from the hand of God Himself.
2. The word 'tempt' here does not mean 'tempt' in a sinful sense. James 1:13 that God never tempts someone to do evil. Here the word means "to try, to prove; to put to trial for proof." (Webster

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1828). The same Hebrew word is translated 'prove' in multiple places in the Old Testament (e.g., Ex. 15:25, 16:4, 20:20; Deut. 8:2, 16, 13:3, 33:8; Judg. 2:22, 3:1, 4, 6:39, 17:39, 1 Kings 10:1, 2 Chr. 9:1, Ps 26:2, Ecc. 2:1, 7:23; Dan. 1:12, 14). The below examples illustrate:

- a. Deut. 8:2 "And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, **and to prove** thee, to know what *was* in thine heart, whether thou *wouldest* keep his commandments, or no."
- b. Psalm 26:2 "Examine me, O LORD, and **prove** me; try my reins and my heart."
3. This trial was from the hand of God to refine Abraham and also use him as an example to all who would follow of total obedience and surrender to the will of God. Proverbs 25:4 "Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer."

C. The Submission to the Test (Vs. 1c)

1. Abraham's submission to the Lord is highlighted in the words "Here I am" (Vs. 1, 11). In fact, Abraham's submission to this trial from the Lord is seen throughout the entire passage.
2. God did not provide any explanation. He simply gave the command. So often we won't take a step of obedience until it all makes sense to us. We want to know all of the plan ahead of time. Faith requires stepping out in obedience to God's Word even if we do not understand.
3. Trials from the Lord present us with a choice. We either submit to the Lord's purposes in the trial or we resist and rebel. To whose purposes will you yield in your trial?

D. The Specifics of the Test (Vs. 2)

1. The Person he was to Surrender (Vs. 2a)
 - a. His lone son = "thy son, thine only son Isaac". This theme is repeated 3 times by the Holy Spirit for emphasis (Vs. 2, 12 & 16). The trial touched Abraham at his tenderest point.
 - b. His loved son = "whom thou lovest" (Vs. 2). Abraham was being tested in the area of loving God supremely.
 - c. It is interesting that the first mention of love is "not in connection with the love of a man for his wife, of a mother for her children, of brotherly love, of love for country, or even of man's love for God. Instead, it is used of the love of a father for his son – "Thy son whom thou lovest". Furthermore, it is used in connection with the sacrificial offering of that only, and beloved son. The deep love of a father for his only son (yet a father who is willing to slay him) is thus inferred to be representative of the most complete and meaningful concept of the very word "love" itself." (Morris)
 - d. It is breathtaking when you move into the New Testament and note the first mention of love in the four Gospels.
 - i. In Matthew, Mark and Luke the first mention of love is the Father's declaration "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17, Mk. 1:11, Lk. 3:22). We cannot even begin to plumb the depths of the love of God

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the Father for God the Son but Christ expresses it in his high priestly prayer in John 17:24, “for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

- ii. Then we come to John’s Gospel and the encounter the first reference to God’s love in John 3:16. See the picture? The Father’s love for the Son is repeatedly declared then the grand fact that the Father is willing to give his only Begotten, Beloved Son for the sins of the world.
 - iii. “Three times God shouts His love for His Son from the very heavens. But then, He tells us that He loved us (yes, us!) so much that He was willing to sacrifice His only and beloved Son, in order that we might be saved.” (Morris)
2. The Place of his Surrender (Vs. 2b)
- a. The place where Abraham was to offer Isaac is also of great significant. It was to be on a mountain God would show Abraham in “the land of Moriah”.
 - b. We know from 2 Chronicles 3:1 that “the land of Moriah” is in the area we know as Jerusalem. “Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at **Jerusalem in mount Moriah**, where *the LORD* appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.”
 - c. Again, this is significant from a typical standpoint. The temple was built on the very site of two very significant events. 1. The offering up of Isaac. 2. David’s offering at the threshing floor of Ornan when God was smiting Israel with pestilence. It was to this very location many years later that Christ, Isaac’s Seed would be dedicated. He would then die on a cross not far from this very place “in the land of Moriah” on the mountain of God’s choosing.
 - d. “Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac was to foreshadow all the sacrifices that would later be offered in this place, which in turn were types and shadows of the one great Sacrifice that would be offered one day nearby, when the Father would offer the Son as the Saviour of the world.” (Morris)

II. THE PATHWAY OF ABRAHAM’S SURRENDER (VS. 3-5)

Abraham and Isaac now embark on the journey together to the land of Moriah. There are some lessons we can learn about the path of surrender from the journey they took. It is:

A. The Path of Consecration to the Will of God (Vs. 3)

Abraham’s obedience is highlighted in his response to God’s command. It is seen in:

1. His Promptness to the Command of God (Vs. 3a)
 - a. Evidently God spoke to Abraham the previous night as we find Abraham rising up early in the morning to immediately set about obeying the Lord.
 - b. This is another powerful example of Abraham’s total submission to the will of God. He did not delay despite the difficulty of the command. We are often slow to obey God in small things that

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don't require much sacrifice, let alone surrendering to God the most precious thing in our lives!

2. His Preparation for the Command of God (Vs. 3b)
Abraham diligently prepares what is necessary to carry out God's command:
 - a. He saddles the ass for him to ride on.
 - b. He involves two servants to help.
 - c. He cuts the wood for the burnt offering.
3. His Preciseness with the Command of God (Vs. 3c-4)
 - a. Abraham went to the exact place God told him. True obedience does not modify God's instructions. Trusting obedience means complete submission to the Lord on every detail. Great blessings follow such sacrificial obedience as we shall see.
 - b. Abraham sees the place afar off on the third day. The reference to the third day is significant from a typical point of view. As our Lord was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, so for the same length of time Isaac was dead in the heart of Abraham. But the third day would come with a resurrection experience and Isaac would come back off the altar of death. In like manner, Christ's body was dead three days but on the third he rose triumphant.

B. The Path of Confidence in the Will of God (Vs. 5)

1. This verse highlights Abraham's faith as he told the two young men who stayed behind that he and Isaac would return. Abraham's faith in God was truly remarkable.
2. The writer to the Hebrews gives us insight into the faith that was in Abraham's heart that day. Hebrews 11:17-19 "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: **Accounting that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead**; from whence also he received him in a figure."
3. Here we encounter the first occurrence of the word 'worship' in the Bible. It is a timely reminder in a day when there is so much that goes on under the banner of "worship". True worship is total obedience and complete surrender to the will of God. True worship takes place when we lay all on the altar for God.
4. From this point, Abraham and Isaac would travel alone, leaving the two servants at the foot of the mountain. "The two men could accompany them to within sight of Mount Moriah, but they could not go all the way, just as the two men accompanied Christ to the place of death, even dying on crosses of their own. But they could not join Him in the awful experience of being forsaken of God and made an offering for sin." (Morris)

III. THE PICTURE OF ABRAHAM'S SURRENDER (VS. 6-14)

The final ascent up the mountain brings us to the heart of Abraham's surrender and the moving and breathtaking typology it represents. There are at least seven pictures of Christ in this inspired album:

A. The Wood Laid upon the Back of Isaac (Vs. 6a)

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1. The wood is mentioned four times in the narrative. Almost 2,000 years later, God the Father would lay a cross of wood upon the back of His Only Begotten Son – “And he **bearing his cross** went forth into a place called *the place* of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha:” (John 19:17)
2. Christ’s carrying of the cross up Calvary’s hill symbolized the laying of our sins upon Him – “the LORD hath **laid on him** the iniquity of us all.” (Is. 53:6)

B. The Instruments of death in the Father’s Hand (Vs. 6b)

1. Abraham carries the fire in one hand and the knife in the other; thus, prefiguring the Eternal Father as the primary Cause of the Eternal Son’s death on Calvary.
2. Isaiah 53:10 “Yet it **pleased the LORD to bruise him**; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”
3. “Abraham carried a knife and a torch, both of them instruments of death. Fire in the Bible often symbolizes the holiness of God (e.g., Deut. 4:24; 9:3; Heb. 12:29). The cross was the physical instrument of death; but at Calvary, Jesus experienced much more than death. He experienced the judgment of God for the sins of the world. Isaac felt neither the knife nor the fire, but Jesus felt both.” (Wiersbe)

C. The Journey of Father and Son Together (Vs. 6c)

This is emphasized three times in the narrative and foreshadows the intimate fellowship and unity of the Father and Son in the work of redemption.

1. “Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship” (Vs. 5). At this point in the journey Abraham dismounts from the ass and travels the rest of the way up the mountain on foot alone with his son Isaac. What was to take place was only for the father and son to witness. In like manner the first 3 hours on the cross was for all to see but the last three hours were covered in darkness as what transpired between the Father and the Son was too sacred and mysterious for human eyes to behold as the Son was made sin for us and forsaken by the Father.
2. “and they went both of them **together**” (Vs. 6)
3. “so they went both of them together” (Vs. 8)
4. The Gospel of John particularly emphasizes the Father and Son walking and working together. In fact, the word ‘love’ is used in the Gospel of John more than it is used in all three other Gospels combined.
5. The type has limitations as Abraham never forsook Isaac but at the cross the Father forsook the Son as he cried “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me”.

D. The Question from Isaac about the Lamb (Vs. 7-8)

1. Evidently Isaac had been with his father to sacrifices before as notes the absence of the lamb (Vs. 7). At this stage of the journey Isaac was still unaware of his father’s purpose.
2. Abraham’s answer comes ringing down the centuries to us – “God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering”.

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- i. "God Himself" = man could not and would not provide himself a Saviour. It would be God's Divine provision.
- ii. "a lamb" = God did provide a lamb to take the place of Isaac but most importantly, God would provide Jesus Christ, the perfect Lamb of God to die for our sins. John 1:29 "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, **Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.**"

E. The Laying of Isaac upon the Altar (Vs. 9-12)

1. The Submission of Isaac upon the Altar (Vs. 9)
 - a. What it would be to have witnessed this seen. F.B. Meyer imagines it in a touching way. "They came to the place which God had told him of, and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order" – "Can you not see the old man slowly gathering the stones; bringing them from the furthest distance possible; placing them with a reverent and judicious precision; and binding the wood with as much deliberation as possible? But at last, everything is complete; and he turns to break the fatal secret to the young lad who had stood wonderingly by. Inspiration draws a veil over that last tender scene – the father's announcement of his mission; the broken sobs; the kisses, wet with tears; the instant submission of the son, who was old enough and strong enough to rebel if he had had the mind. Then the binding of that tender frame; which, indeed, needed no compulsion, because the young heart had learned the secret of obedience and resignation. Finally, the lifting him to lie upon the altar, on the wood. Here was a spectacle which must have arrested the attention of heaven. Here was a proof of how much mortal man will do for the love of God. Here was evidence of child-like faith which must have thrilled the heart of the Eternal God, and moved Him in the very depths of His being. Do you and I love God like this? Is He more than our nearest and dearest? Suppose they stood on this side, and He on that side: would we go with Him, though it cost us the loss of all?"
 - b. By this stage, Isaac was probably a full-grown man or at the very least, a teenager so he could have easily resisted his elderly father if he desired. But we see his gracious and total submission to the father's will. What a picture of Christ who in the Garden of Gethsemane said with tears, "**O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.**" (Matt. 26:39). Christ was not forced upon the cross but lay down upon it willingly.
2. The Saving of Isaac from the Altar (Vs. 10-12)
 - a. Abraham was able to spare his son from that awful death. This is as far as the Lord would allow the test and the type to go. But when it came to God the Father, He did not spare the Lord Jesus the death of the cross. Romans 8:32 "He that **spared not his own Son**, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

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- b. The test was now complete. Abraham's fear of God, obedience and full surrender has been proven. Now that Abraham had fully surrendered Isaac, God could give him back.
- c. God notes that Abraham had not "**withheld** thy son, thine only son from me". This is repeated in verse 16. Is there anything in your life you are withholding from God? Is there something or someone you are withholding from God? Maybe you it is yourself. You have never fully surrendered your whole life as a believer for God to do with it whatsoever He deems best. You will never know the fullness of God's blessing and fellowship until you lay everything on the altar.

F. The Provision of a Ram to take Isaac's Place (Vs. 13)

1. We have a double type in the account. Isaac being laid on the altar pictures Christ. The ram provided to take Isaac's place also pictures Christ and the truth of substitution. The thorn crowned ram dies in Isaac's place so he could live.
2. The truth of substitution is clearly conveyed in the words "in the stead of his son". Romans 5:8 "But God commendeth his love..." 1 John 4:10 "Herein is love, not that we loved God..."

G. The Name Abraham called the Mountain (Vs. 14)

1. Abraham calls the mountain "Jehovah Jireh" meaning "the Lord will see to it, provide". It answers to Abraham's prophecy in verse 8. In fact, the word is made up of 'Jehovah' and 'Jireh' which is the same Hebrew word translated "provide" in verse 8 and "it shall be seen" (Vs. 14).
2. Moses inserts an editorial note at this point of the narrative under the leading of the Spirit that even in his day, it was a saying "In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen". This was a prophetic statement for the future. Abraham had seen God's provision of a lamb for Isaac on Mount Moriah but in the future God's provision of a lamb would be seen again. Almost 2,000 years later God's provision of the perfect Lamb was seen as Christ hung on the cross atop Mount Calvary in the land of Moriah.

IV. THE PROFIT FROM ABRAHAM'S SURRENDER (VS. 15-24)

A. The Swearing of the Promise (Vs. 15-16)

1. God had made these promises to Abraham before but now a touching feature is added. God makes a solemn oath guaranteeing the fulfillment of these promises. He gives assurance to Abraham in the strongest possible way by saying, "By myself have I sworn". Never before had God confirmed the covenant promises in this manner. This expression is only found very rarely in Scripture, and indicates the most solemn oath possible (Is. 45:23; Jer. 23:5, 49:13; Heb. 6:13-14).
2. According to Hebrews 6:13-14, this is the strongest, most solemn oath and confirmation God could possibly make. "For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee."

B. The Specifics of the Promise (Vs. 17-18b; 19-24)

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Abraham's obedience brought great blessings. There would be blessings:

1. To Abraham Personally (Vs. 17a). "God never short changes anyone. **If you must give up something for God, He will pay you back so very much more! The blessings will far outweigh any price paid, even if it is hard.**" (Butler)
2. To Abraham's Seed (Vs. 17b)
 - a. They would be a multiplied people.
 1. As the stars of the sky.
 2. As the sand of the sea shore.
 3. Note: This prophecy clearly looks beyond just the natural seed of Abraham to the innumerable number of people who would become children of Abraham spiritually by faith in Christ.
 - b. They would be a victorious people. Total surrender to the Lord brings power and victory over the enemy!
3. To the World (Vs. 18a). Through Abraham's seed would come the Messianic Seed, bringing salvation for all people of every nation. If you have been saved, you are a fulfillment of this prophecy. You have been blessed because of faithful Abraham.
4. To Isaac (Vs. 20-24). The Biblical Writer introduces us to Rebekah. Including a woman in the genealogy was an uncommon thing but no doubt her name was included as she would become Isaac's wife.

C. The Secret of the Promise (Vs. b)

1. God gives the reason for all these blessings – "because thou has **obeyed my voice**". This is the first occurrence of the word 'obey' in the Bible. What a vivid picture the Holy Spirit gives us of the heart and soul of true obedience in this account.
2. Barnhouse calls Abraham's obedience "obedience unparalleled". With the exception of the obedience of Jesus Christ, it would be hard to find any act of obedience that surpasses the excellence of Abraham's conduct in this experience.
3. Oh how obedience brings rich blessings! How disobedience forfeits so many blessings!

Conclusion: Have you received God's free gift of salvation? Have you surrendered all upon the altar as a Christian? Practically, nothing that we hold dear in our lives, is truly safe, until it has been passed over the alter, through death and then received in resurrection power. Isaac would have been all the more precious to Abraham, and the relationship between Abraham, and Sarah would have been all the more fragrant, because of God's call to Mt. Moriah.

"If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." (C.T. Studd)

Funeral for a Princess

A Christian perspective on death and burial

Text: Gen. 23:1-20

Introduction:

1. We now come to the first recorded burial service/funeral in the Bible with the death of Abraham's wife Sarah. It is therefore a foundational and significant passage of Scripture that informs the Christian view of death, burial and ultimately, resurrection. This is important in a day when few have a Christian perspective on death, dying and burial.
2. The chapter also affords a timely opportunity to reflect on the life of Sarah, a woman who goes down in Biblical history as a woman of great faith and godliness. Sarah is an inspiring example to Christian women concerning the kind of godly ideals they should aim for, in contrast to the ideals of the world.
3. We will consider Sarah's funeral under three headings.

I. THE MEMORY AT SARAH'S FUNERAL (VS. 1)

Verse 1 gives us a brief summation of Sarah's life in terms of its longevity. She lived to be 127 years old and is the only adult woman who had her age recorded in the Bible. Imagine the memories that must have flooded the old Patriarch's heart as he knelt beside the lifeless form of his beloved that day. Sarah had not been a perfect woman. She went along with the lie in Egypt about her relationship with Abraham, urged Abraham to have a child by Hagar, treated Hagar cruelly, laughed in unbelief when God promised a son and joined in with Abraham for a second round of dishonesty in Gerar. And yet, she had many fine, godly qualities and she is preserved in Scripture as a godly woman of faith and an example for Christian women to follow. If we were to write a brief epitaph as a summation of Sarah's life it might read something like this: "Sarah, beloved and faithful wife of Abraham, much loved mother to Isaac, daughter of the Almighty God and forever with the Lord." Let's consider those three facets of Sarah's life:

A. As a Wife – Sarah was a wonderful model of the ideals of a Christian wife in a number of key areas. They are very contrary to the world's concept of what a woman should be but they are very biblical and precious. We could summarize her godly example as a wife in three words:

1. Helper – Sarah was clearly a woman who understood and embraced her biblical role as a helpmeet to Abraham. She was his faithful companion and helper throughout their many years together. She was a Proverbs 31 woman who "did him good and not evil all the days of her life" (Prov. 31:12).
2. Homemaker – Sarah was a good homemaker and this is illustrated for us in the hospitality she extended to the heavenly visitors in Genesis 18. She was not in another man's tent being a helpmeet to someone who was not her husband. She was available when Abraham needed her! She was a "keeper at home" (Titus 2:5). To

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embrace this aspect of your role as a Christian woman takes real courage and conviction in our day when most woman spend the majority of their time working outside the home. Ladies, the world is against you, the government policies are against you, the popular culture is against you, the media is against you, family members will often be against you, many professing Christians are against you but **God and His Word are for you!**

3. Follower – Sarah is held up in Scripture as an example of godly submission. 1 Peter 3:6 “Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord...”
 - a. She obeyed Abraham – “obeyed Abraham”. She followed Abraham when he left Ur of the Chaldeas at the command of God. His call was her call also. She followed him to Egypt, even though it was a wrong decision. She followed him in the land of promise as he moved about in the will of God. We don’t ever read of her bucking against his leadership or usurping his authority.
 - b. She honoured Abraham – “calling him lord”. This would be the equivalent to a title of respect such as ‘sir’. This refers back to the incident in Genesis 18:12 – “Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”

B. As a Mother – Sarah’s example truly demonstrates the high value the Word of God places upon motherhood. Think about how long Sarah waited before she was blessed with a child!

1. She believed God for her son – Sarah went from scepticism in the promise of God to faith in the promise of God.
2. She praised God for her son – Sarah acknowledged her son as a gift from God and laughed the laugh of joy.
3. She protected her son – her response to the Ishmael and Hagar was carnal and wrong but her desire to protect her son was honourable.
4. She was close to her son – this is evidenced by the heartache which Isaac felt after his mother’s death (See Gen. 24:67).
5. She trained her son for the Lord – while specific details are not afforded, as we follow Isaac’s life after his mother’s death, we can’t but see evidence she had trained him well.

C. As a Believer – Sarah was most importantly a woman of great faith and consecration to God. Her faith was:

1. A personal faith – she knew God personally and had a living relationship with Him. Do you know Christ as your personal Saviour?
2. A practical faith – Sarah’s godly faith found expression in a life of practical godliness. 1 Peter 3:1-6 highlights these. She expressed her faith in:
 - a. **Purity** (Vs. 2) – “While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.” (1 Peter 3:2) Sarah was a woman with a purity of heart and lifestyle. How we need such woman in a day when the pressure is to conform woman to the perverted morals, fashions, attitudes and ideals of the strange woman.

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- b. **Modesty** (Vs. 3-4) – “Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” (1 Peter 3:3-4). Sarah was a stunningly beautiful woman but she adorned herself appropriately and modestly. She was beautiful but not sensual and seductive.
- c. **Beauty** (Vs. 4-6) – “But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.” The point in view here is one of emphasis. Some Christian women have wrongly understood these verses to mean that to be a godly woman, you have to make yourself look ugly. Sarah was a woman of great natural beauty but most importantly the Bible highlights that she was a woman of inner beauty. Her spiritual ornaments of a meek and quiet spirit (the heart) were the emphasis rather than a gaudy, excessive external adornment. Godly Christian women possess a beauty the world knows nothing of.

II. THE MOURNING AT SARAH’S FUNERAL (VS. 2)

A. Sarah died (Vs. 2a)

- 1. Sarah was blessed to live to an age most will never attain (127 years), her death is a reminder of the reality of the fact all will face death, saint or sinner.
- 2. Hebrews 9:27 “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:”
- 3. Sarah died in the Lord and would spend eternity in heavenly bliss but what about you? Are you ready to die? If you died today, would you go to heaven or hell?

B. Abraham mourned (Vs. 2b)

- 1. This is a natural and appropriate response to the death of a loved one. The Bible knows nothing of a cold-hearted stoicism where in the face of heart break no tear is ever shed.
- 2. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 “(1) To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: (2) A time to be born, and a time to die... (4) A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance... (11) He hath made everything beautiful in his time.”
- 3. F. B. Meyer writes, “There are some who chide tears as unmanly, un-submissive, unchristian. They would comfort us with chill and pious stoicism, bidding us meet the most agitating passages of our history with rigid and tearless countenance. With such the spirit of the Gospel, and of the Bible has little sympathy. We have no sympathy with a morbid sentimentality; but we may well question

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whether the man who cannot weep can really love; for sorrow is love, widowed and bereaved – and where that is present, its most natural expression is in tears. Religion does not come to make us unnatural and inhuman; but to purify and ennoble all those natural emotions with which our manifold nature is endowed. Jesus wept. Peter wept. The Ephesian converts wept on the neck of the Apostle whose face they thought they were never to see again. Christ stands by each mourner, saying, “Weep, my child; weep, for I have wept.”

4. Ecclesiastes 7:3 “Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.”

III. THE METHOD OF SARAH’S FUNERAL (VS. 3-20)

This is the first record of a burial in the Bible and is therefore a foundational passage that informs our understanding of Christian burial.

A. The Place for the Burial Site (Vs. 3-14)

1. Abraham’s Request for a Burial Site (3-4)
2. Abraham’s Negotiations for a Burial Site (Vs. 5-15)
 - a. The faith behind his negotiations. Abraham’s desire to bury Sarah in the land of Canaan was a testament to his faith. He was fully assured that Canaan was the place for him and his descendants as promised by God. The only piece of land Abraham actually owned in Canaan was a burial site for his family! Apart from that, by his own confession, he was “a stranger and a sojourner” (Vs. 4). This same “sojourner” attitude was carried on in the life of Israel (See Lev. 25:23; 1 Chr. 29:14-15; Ps. 39:12).
 - b. The humility of his negotiations. Abraham bows himself on two occasions which was a great act of humility considering the fact he was a mighty and powerful man.

B. The Price of the Burial Site (Vs. 15-16)

C. The Particulars of the Burial Site (Vs. 17-18)

1. We get a sense that Abraham’s private cemetery was a place tranquil and beautiful place. There was:
 - a. A field.
 - b. A cave.
 - c. A border of trees.
2. It was also located “before Mamre” which was the home of Abraham and Sarah so the burial site appears to have been within sight of their home.
3. Other famous patriarchs would go on to be buried there. There Isaac and Ishmael buried Abraham; there they buried Isaac, and Rebecca his wife; there Jacob buried Leah; and there Joseph buried Jacob his father.

D. The Practice of the Burial (Vs. 19-20)

In a day when cremation is an increasingly popular choice even among Christians, it is a good opportunity to re-affirm the Christian view of burial from this and other passages. Consider 7 reasons why we believe in burial rather than cremation:

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1. Cremation is a pagan practice that has its origins in eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism.
 - a. "In Hindu religion, fire is considered a sacred gateway to the spiritual world. Cremation of the body has to occur within six hours of the person's death in the simplest ceremonial way. We don't have open fires in Australia but we use the consecrated fire as we do back home. Using clarified butter, the eldest son kindles a fire in a terracotta pot at home. The fire is then taken to the crematorium and put on top of the coffin as it is pushed into the chamber. We chant sets of mantras to cleanse the body and indicate to the soul that it can proceed to the spiritual world. We then release the ashes into flowing water." Purohit Rama Chandra Athreiya, Domestic Hindu Priest ¹
 - b. David Cloud, who ministers in the predominantly Hindu country of Nepal, recounts one of his personal experiences with cremation in his book "Cremation: What does God think?"

"Some years ago, I stood three or so feet from a burning corpse with a missionary pastor from Singapore and his wife who were visiting us. The head was already burnt beyond recognition and the skull was split open due to internal expansion from the heat of the fire. The lower legs and feet were unscorched, as they were protruding from the pile of burning wood and stubble upon which the man's body lay. The professional Hindu burners were poking the body from time to time to keep the members in the fire and adding stubble and wood as needed. The bones were contracting and popping; the bodily organs were frying and the juices sizzling in the intense heat. My wife, a nurse with experience working with lepers in a hospital in a very remote part of Asia and in an intensive care ward in the United States, stood with another friend observing the ghastly sight from a distance, unwilling to come closer. The air for a hundred yards or more was filled with the unmistakable, stomach-turning stench of burning human flesh. When the fire had burnt most of the body, the ashes and remaining members were shoved into the river. This is cremation as has been practiced by heathen religions for centuries, but without the sanitization adopted in more technically advanced areas. Would you treat your loved ones so? Is this an acceptable Christian practice? No sir, cremation is a heathen practice. It is of heathen origin and serves heathen purposes. Why do the Hindus and those of other heathen religions cremate? It has a connection with their belief in reincarnation. There is nothing Christian about cremation. We were standing that day, as I have many other times, observing cremation in the surroundings from which the practice arose--idolatrous, Christless heathenism."

2. Believers were buried in the Bible. The following are a few examples:
 - a. Sarah was buried (Genesis 23:1-4)
 - b. Abraham was buried (Genesis 25:8-10)
 - c. Rachel was buried (Genesis 35:19-20)
 - d. Isaac was buried (Genesis 35:29)
 - e. Jacob was buried (Genesis 49:33; 50:1-13)
 - f. Joseph was buried (Genesis 50:26). Joseph's body was kept for over 400 years in Egypt and then carried through the 40 years of wilderness wanderings before being buried in Palestine, the Promised Land. We read of this in Genesis 50:24-25; Exodus

¹ <https://australian.museum/about/history/exhibitions/death-the-last-taboo/disposing-of-the-dead-cremation/> Viewed 21/10/22.

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13:19 and Joshua 24:32. Such was the importance the people of God placed on burial!

- g. Joshua was buried (Joshua 24:29-30)
 - h. Eleazar was buried (Joshua 24:33)
 - i. Samuel was buried (1 Samuel 25:1)
 - j. David was buried (1 Kings 2:10)
 - k. John the Baptist was buried (Matthew 14:10-12)
 - l. Ananias and Sapphira were buried (Acts 5:5-10)
 - m. Stephen was buried (Acts 8:2)
 - n. Christ Himself was buried (1 Cor. 15:1-4)
3. God Himself Practiced Burial with the body of Moses (Deut. 34:5-6, Jude 1:9).
 4. Lack of a proper burial viewed as dishonourable in the Bible. A key example of this is Jezebel who, because of her wickedness, was eaten of dogs (1 Kings 21:23-24). Again, we read of the Midianites "which perished at Endor: they became as dung for the earth" (Psalm 83:9-10).
 5. Burial honours the body and memory of the deceased. This is demonstrated in the account before us where Abraham went to great lengths and great expense to ensure he had a place to give his wife an honourable burial. W. H. Griffith Thomas notes, "The possessive pronouns "his dead" (Vs. 3), "my dead" (Vs. 4) and "thy dead" (Vs. 6) are very noteworthy in this connection. The body of his beloved wife was precious to him and was regarded by him and by others as his own property of which he was about to take special and loving care."
 6. The believer's body is not his own (1 Cor. 6:19-20). God has purchased our whole person – spirit, soul and body by his precious blood. Romans 14:8 reminds us that "...whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." The body is not ours to desecrate and destroy. If God as Lord and Master chooses an unusual death for one of his children (e.g., perishing in a fire), that is His sovereign prerogative but we are not authorised to dishonour and desecrate the body of a deceased saint.
 7. Burial anticipates the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:35-44; Rom. 8:22-23) "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:22-23)
 - a. The physical body is called the seed for the resurrection body. When planted, a seed decomposes, and the new plant comes forth. The Bible uses this to illustrate resurrection. See 1 Cor. 15:35-44

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- b. “Such is burial and the resurrection. When we bury a Christian loved one, we are planting the seed for the resurrection body! It is a powerful testimony of our unwavering faith in God’s Word regarding the promise of bodily resurrection.” (Cloud)
- c. The Old Testament saints clearly had this hope and hence their practice of burial. Job, commonly considered to be the oldest Book in the Bible, reveals that Job had a very good knowledge and hope of bodily resurrection (See Job 19:25-27).
- d. Contrast this with the lack of hope and meaning in unsaved funerals! Take for example the Mornington Green (Melbourne), a group that vigorously promotes cremation as the better environmental choice, treats your ashes and plants them with a tree, encouraging a reincarnation idea of death. Consider the below drawn from their website as an illustration of the hopelessness and lack of meaning often espoused by the pro cremation crowd.
 - i. On the front page of the website, you will find the words “Continue Your Legacy and Become a Tree”. How hopeless and ridiculous! <https://morningtongreen.com.au/>
 - ii. **Why is cremation a popular choice?** It might not surprise you to know that up to 70% of Australians are choosing cremation over traditional burials. The growing popularity in choosing cremation ashes is due to a number of reasons, including the environmental impact, the lower costs associated with cremation but perhaps more relevant is the changing view around death.
 - iii. There is an introductory video on the website with an interview with Warren Roberts, the founder.

“Basically, we transform a person’s ashes to become a beautiful tree and then that person is a part of a community that’s creating a profoundly beautiful forest for people to visit and enjoy and this way we’re basically creating these botanic garden-like situations and people can connect to the beauty that that person’s life literally created.”

The interviewer then asks “So the person’s remains are literally a part of the tree, is that right, how does it work?”

“Yeah, so the person’s ashes get transformed into a nutrient that can be taken up by the tree and then that means you become the tree, you become the trees flowers, you become that trees thousands of seedlings and seeds that get perpetuated beyond the life of the tree and that’s the circle of life.”

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Pointing to the metal plaque at the base of the tree, he goes on to say, “Every day when the sun sets it passes through this plaque and it projects this symbol of the person, spirit and the earth and the tree and the circle of life on to the tree showing its connection to creation as a whole and that’s how we give back to the earth.”

E. The Practical Suggestions for a Christian Funeral

Let me conclude with some pastoral advice that might help you think through how to ensure your funeral honours the Lord.

1. Make sure you have a Christian funeral that honours Christ. The aim of a Christian funeral is **firstly** to honour the Lord for His faithfulness to the departed saint and **secondly** to honour the memory of the deceased.
2. Make sure the Gospel is presented at the funeral by a Bible believing man of God rather than the empty words of a pagan celebrant! Include the Gospel in the order of service with a Gospel tract. Many who will not attend church will attend for a funeral and while they are thinking about death, what better thing than to give them the message of salvation!
3. For seniors, write down your funeral wishes, sign it and make sure your pastor and each of your children are given a copy. Strange things can happen amongst family members after you have checked out to heaven and you want to do all that is possible to make sure your burial is not a wasted opportunity. It only happens once in your life so make it a good one! Think through the details. E.g., no rock music backing for photo slides, no rock music for the graveside! If you have a living spouse, talk it over with them and make sure they understand your wishes. When you go, it will be hard for them to think clearly through all the emotion and can buckle under pressure. If you don't have a living spouse, make it clear to the family as a part of your funeral plan who you have nominated to oversee and organise the funeral on your behalf (e.g., one of your saved children you trust to uphold your wishes).
4. For children and family members burying a loved one, remember that the funeral is NOT first and foremost about you. It is not your moment to shine but a moment to give glory to God, proclaim the Gospel clearly and reflect on the life and testimony of the deceased. Of course, the sharing of personal memories and thoughts is normal but don't be too big in the picture.

F. Advice from W.H. Griffith Thomas on how to behave in times of bereavement. From this simple and touching story of death in the home we may learn how we should behave in times of bereavement. The true attitude at such times is threefold:

1. Sorrowing love – this expression of love in sorrow is as natural as it is inevitable and beautiful. A consciousness of loss cannot fail to produce sorrow, and no one is to be blamed for feeling and expressing a sense of bereavement. It would be utterly unnatural if death were to come without eliciting sorrow.
2. Faithful service – At the same time, in order that the soul may not be swallowed up with over-much sorrow, there comes to us all at such occasions the call to and opportunity for definite service. The

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memory of a loved one is best treasured by doing what that loved one would wish were she here. Service always prevents sorrow from becoming dissipated in idle regrets and mere remembrance.

3. Blessed hope – Abraham laid Sarah's body to rest in sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection. It was this above all things that upheld and strengthened him as he bid farewell to the wife who had shared his joys and sorrows for so many years.

Conclusion:

1. Death is an inescapable reality. Are you ready to die? If you died today, where would you spend eternity?
2. What will you be remembered for as a Christian woman when its your turn to go home to heaven? How will you be remembered as a believer? What spiritual legacy are you leaving behind?
3. Do you have a Christian perspective of death and burial?

A Wife for Isaac Part 1

Love, romance and marriage from a Biblical perspective

Text: Gen. 24:1-27

Introduction:

1. This chapter is the longest in the Book of Genesis. It is intriguing to think about why the Holy Spirit chooses to amplify certain accounts more than others. Some key events in Biblical history are dealt with very briefly. Others are treated at length. A couple of possibilities for the lengthy treatment of this account are:
 - To highlight the importance of this moment in Biblical history. This was a key moment in Biblical history in relation to the Messianic line. Rebekah, as wife to Isaac, would form a very important link in this chain.
 - To reveal the importance of marriage, home and the family to Almighty God. While there are some unique elements to how God brought Isaac and Rebekah together, there are many timeless principles that can inform and inspire believers in the area of love, romance and marriage.
 - To provide another beautiful typical tapestry of Christ, the coming Messiah.
2. There are two main strands of thought that run through this passage of Scripture:
 - Principles for Marriage.
 - Pictures of the Messiah.
3. In this message, we will focus on the theme of marriage in a biblical love story that has captivated the hearts and imaginations of millions down through the centuries. These principles are more important than ever as we face a society where marriage, home and the family have largely been shipwrecked on the rocks of lust, immorality, perversion, adultery and divorce.
4. There is something for everyone to learn from this account:
 - For singles, it teaches vital truths for finding God's best in a spouse.
 - For married couples, it is a refreshing reminder of the spiritual qualities and principles that are foundational for the continuation of marital harmony and blessing.
 - For parents, it helps us to know what we should be praying and working towards when it comes to spouses for our children.
 - For every saint, there are helpful and practical lessons to be gleaned from the characters in this account. It also provides us a rich and beautiful type of Christ which will be the focus of our next message.

I. THE PARENTAL DESIRE FOR A GODLY SPOUSE (VS. 1-9)

A. The Timing of Abraham's Initiative (Vs. 1)

1. Abraham was Aged (Vs. 1a)

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- a. By comparing Genesis 21:5 and 25:20, we conclude that Abraham was 140 years of age at this time. He would live to 175 years of age (Gen. 25:7) so that means he had 35 years left on the clock of his life.
 - b. The consciousness of his age was no doubt spurred Abraham to urgently seek a godly wife for his only son Isaac before he passed into eternity. His age made him more dependent on his faithful steward to help him in the task of finding a suitable helpmeet for his son.
 - c. The mention of Abraham's age is a reminder to all of us of the brevity of life which is "even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James 4:14) Abraham, as his wife Sarah whose death is recorded in the previous chapter, was ready to die because he had been justified by faith. Are you ready to die? Have you received salvation by faith?
2. Abraham was Blessed (Vs. 1b)
 - a. Abraham was growing old but his life had been truly blessed by God. Old age does afford an opportunity for reflection upon a lifetime of walking with God and knowing His grace and goodness.
 - b. We would do well to pause and consider just how blest we are as the people of God.

B. The Terms of Abraham's Initiative (Vs. 2-6)

Abraham asked his servant to make a most solemn oath concerning who Isaac was to marry. This was no trifling matter to Abraham! The only other occasion we have a similar procedure was the time Jacob asked Joseph to put his hand under his thigh and promise he would not bury him in Egypt (Gen. 47:29).

1. Where Isaac's wife was not to come from (Vs. 3)
 - a. She was not to be taken from among the Canaanites. The Canaanites were heathen, pagan peoples.
 - b. This was not a prohibition on interracial marriage as some have wrongly interpreted. There is only one race, the human race! See Acts 17:26.
 - c. Abraham was concerned that his son not be in an unequal yoke. He was not to marry an unbeliever. This is the first and most important requirement for a spouse before any other criteria is considered (2 Cor. 6:14).
2. Where Isaac's wife was to come from (Vs. 4-6)
 - a. She was to come from the right family (Vs. 4). This reinforces the principle we just discussed. For Abraham, he wanted a wife for Isaac from among his own kindred. In our day we do not seek a wife from among our relatives as they did in ancient times, but we should seek a wife who is related to us spiritually (from the family of God). We want a wife who is both a "sister" and a "spouse" (Song 4:12; 1 Cor. 9:5).
 - b. She was to have the right followership (Vs. 5-6). Abraham made it clear that Isaac was not to be taken back to Mesopotamia where he was from originally. Abraham knew that God's call was for them to inherit the land of promise. The woman would need

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to be prepared to come to Isaac and follow him, not the other way around. This is the Biblical order. God created the woman to be a help meet for the man. It would be his career, not hers, that had priority in the marriage. This does not devalue the woman or make her inferior to the man. It simply highlights God's Divine order and structure for marriage and the home. 1 Cor. 11:9 "Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man."

C. The Trust of Abraham's Initiative (Vs. 7-9)

1. The servant was struggling with some doubt as to whether the woman would be prepared to follow him back to marry a man she had never met. Abraham expresses words of faith and assurance to encourage the servant.
2. The faithfulness of God to Abraham in the past gave him faith that God would also meet the need of a wife for Isaac.

D. The Teaching of Abraham's Initiative

1. Abraham's example teaches us that it should be the fervent prayer and aim of every Christian parent to help their children marry well in the will of God. That they marry a believer is of utmost priority!
2. Like Abraham, parents should be actively involved in their children's quest to find a life's partner and even take practical, prayerful steps to see that it happens. Parents should avoid two unbalanced extremes:
 - a. The silly attitude that the kids can just work it out for themselves and it doesn't really matter who they marry so long as they're happy. Parents should not have a careless, indifferent attitude about who their children marry!
 - b. The selfish attitude that carnally tries to stop children from marrying a good candidate because of uncrucified natural affection. Some parents are so selfish, they don't actually want their children to get married but to stay with them! They see them as a resource to serve their needs in their old age rather than desiring and seeking the happiness and blessing of married life for their children.

II. THE PRAYER FOR A GODLY SPOUSE (VS. 10-15; 26-27)

The servant prepares a caravan of 10 camels for the journey to Mesopotamia which was just over 800 kms away. This would be roughly the equivalent of a trip from Adelaide to Melbourne.

A. The Asking in the Prayer (Vs. 10-14)

Abraham's servant sought God's leading in the place of prayer. Earnest prayer is an essential part of seeking God's best for a spouse. There were several things he asked God for.

1. The Pleasure of God (Vs. 12)

He asks for:

 - a. Send me good speed – he is seeking the Lord's favour on his endeavour and a speedy answer to his prayer.
 - b. Shew kindness unto my master – he prays for God to shew kindness to Abraham.
2. The Providential workings of God (Vs. 13-14)

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- a. He asks God to providentially lead through circumstances so that he would be able to identify the right wife for Isaac.
- b. This was a well-considered request and reveals the kind of woman the servant was looking for. He was looking for a servant hearted woman with initiative.
- c. Henry Morris writes, "The servant was looking for a woman who was a godly, virtuous maiden. Further, she should be an industrious girl, harbouring no delusions of a life of ease and idleness just because Isaac had great possessions. Finally, she should be gracious and considerate, of sensitive and compassionate spirit, because these attributes would be most desirable in coping with her many responsibilities among her servants and the people of the land."
- d. The principle of God working through our circumstances in answer to believing prayer is one principle among several key biblical principles we need to utilize when seeking God's will for a spouse. Do not wrongly conclude from this account that this is all that is all that is to be relied upon for making such a big decision! Let's remind ourselves about the context:
 - i. Abraham's servant did not have the written Word of God. He had the truth of God that Abraham had passed down to him orally but as yet, the Book of Genesis had not been written by Moses.
 - ii. Abraham's servant had been given direction and strict criteria to work to for finding a suitable bride. He was not just throwing care to the wind and asking for a random set of circumstances to line up as evidence for God's will. There was careful thought and fervent prayer taking place here. He was not trying to orchestrate the circumstances and asking God to rubber stamp what he wanted. He was seeking God's leading in the circumstances.
- e. As New Testament believers, with the advantage of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the completed Word of God, we would be very unwise to rely solely on circumstances as a guide for determining God's will. We need to also seek guidance from the Scriptures, a peace and leading from the Holy Spirit and the godly council of others.
- f. Note: Be careful about relying upon "putting out fleeces"! If you take the time to study that account you will find that Gideon's use of the fleece was more to seek reassurance for his doubts as opposed to finding out God's will. God had already told Gideon what He was going to do through him but Gideon was fearful and doubtful, so he sought confirmation through the fleece. If you make a fleece your primary means of knowing God's will, you may end up misled! The devil might bring his watering can along and give your fleece a little sprinkle and send you right out of the will of God!
- g. John Butler notes, "Some students in our Christian colleges have resorted to their version of a "Gideons' fleece" test. As an example, they will tell the Lord in their devotions that if their

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current girlfriend or boyfriend wears a certain coloured sweater the next day, they will take that as a “sign” that he or she is the one.”

3. The Principle of asking from God
The servant’s actions highlight the importance of seeking God’s guidance in prayer generally but most importantly in this context, the importance of seeking God’s leading with your choice of a marriage partner.
 - a. Parents, pray for your children in this matter even from the time of their birth. While marriage may seem so far away, before you know it, your child will be of marital age and if you wait till then to start praying it might be too late!
 - b. Singles, pray for your future spouse, even while you are young. Pray for God’s keeping hand upon him or her and that God will bring you both together in His perfect timing. Unless it is God’s express will and calling for you to be single for life, your future spouse is probably alive somewhere today!

B. The Answer to the Prayer (Vs. 15, 26-27)

1. The promptness of the answer (Vs. 15a). Sometimes it is God’s will for us to wait for an answer. Other times He answers our requests speedily. Sometimes God answers a prayer before we have had time to properly pray about it! Isaiah 65:24 “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.”
2. The preciseness of the answer (Vs. 15b). Asking brings receiving. Specific prayers yield specific answers in the will of God. God sent a lady across the servant’s path who perfectly fit the criteria! She was from the right family.
3. The praise for the answer (Vs. 26-27)
 - a. The posture of his praise (Vs. 26). The servant demonstrates worshipful reverence to God for the answer to his prayer. Do we respond to answered prayer with worship and thanksgiving or do we forget to even thank God for answered prayer?
 - b. The point of his praise (Vs. 27). He thanks God for showing mercy to Abraham in this matter and for leading him in the way. This is an important reminder on how God leads us. As we are faithful to walk the path he has chosen for us, he leads, guides and directs. But you must first be “in the way”. Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

III. THE PROFILE OF A GODLY SPOUSE (VS. 10-15)

Rebekah appears on the scene and demonstrates the qualities of an ideal wife. In fact, these qualities can really apply to male or female. They are a reminder of the kind of character traits that are important in a marriage. Rebekah’s qualities are also a challenge to us in the area of service for the Lord. There are at least **5 qualities** we can identify. Rebekah was:

A. Charming (Vs. 16a)

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1. Rebekah was a very beautiful lady – “very fair to look upon”. Beauty is not evil in and of itself. Beauty is created by God and is one of the features of many aspects of His creation. The world and the devil use the natural endowment of feminine beauty in a corrupt way and evil way but it has its proper place within the marriage union and is a part of what God uses to draw a couple together.
2. Warning: Do not make this your only criteria when choosing a spouse! Beauty is only skin deep and you need to be most concerned to marry a spouse who possesses inner, spiritual beauty (See Prov. 31:30; 1. Peter 3:4-5). No doubt the beauty of Rebekah’s personality shone through, affecting her outward demeanour and attractiveness. Your value as a woman is not only determined by your outward appearance. The rest of the account demonstrates this clearly! Rebekah was much more than just a pretty face.
3. There is also an application that we should give some attention to the way we groom and dress ourselves. We are not talking about a worldly vanity and fixation on the external but as God’s people we should practice good personal habits of hygiene, modesty and seek to look our best for the Lord. After all, the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

B. Chaste (Vs. 16b)

1. There is a double statement of Rebekah’s purity.
 - a. She was “a virgin”.
 - b. No man had “known here”.
2. Your virginity as a single person is a precious thing. Don’t let the world and the devil rob you of your purity! Treasure and guard it and give it as a gift to the spouse God gives you on your wedding day.
3. If you have immorality in your history prior to salvation, be encouraged that the blood of Christ has washed the stain of impurity away, making you totally pure in God’s sight. But now that you have been made clean, keep yourself pure for your spouse!
4. Remember that your body as a believer was purchased by the blood of Christ and is now the temple of the Holy Ghost. To take that body and use it for immoral purposes is a grievous sin. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”
5. We are living in a society today where moral purity is despised and is under constant, relentless attack. But God has not changed and purity is still precious to Him.
6. Spiritually speaking, we need to keep ourselves pure for our Heavenly Bridegroom. 2 Cor. 11:2 “For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you as a chaste virgin* to Christ.” See also James 4:4 and James 1:27.

C. Courteous (Vs. 17-18a)

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1. Rebekah responded to the servant's request in a respectful and tactful manner. She responded with the words "Drink, **my lord**". She used a respectful title for this venerable, aged servant of Abraham. What a contrast to the loud, brassy, sassy women of today!
2. There are some who suggest the Bible knows nothing of titles of respect but not so! It is a good practice to use respectful titles for those in positions of authority or those who are our seniors.
3. If you are interested in a prospective wife, you should consider what kind of relationship she has with male authorities in her life (e.g., father, pastor). If she bucks against their authority and sasses them, she will do the same to you! If as a single woman you don't have a godly father, then cultivate appropriate relationships with godly men in the assembly and learn to interact properly with them.

D. Charactered (Vs. 18b-21)

Her character is highlighted in the fact that she was:

1. Servant-hearted (Vs. 18)
 - a. Rebekah was faithful to her duties. The first picture we get of her is walking to the well with a waterpot on her shoulder and then going down into the well, drawing water and then coming back up (Vs. 15-16). Her early arrival at the well before the other maidens says something of her character. Drawing water was a regular household chore in those days as it still is in many places even today. Little did she know that day as she went faithfully about her normal duties that her life was about to be swept up in the plan of God and moved in an exciting direction. F. B. Meyer writes, "Elastic in step, modest in manner, pure in heart, amiable and generous, with a very fair face, as the sacred story tells us – how little did she imagine that the wheel of God's providence was soon to catch her out of her quiet home, and whirl her into the mighty outer world that lay beyond the horizon of desert sand."
 - b. Rebekah was willing to serve others with enthusiasm – "she **hasted**, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink". She served with diligence, excellence and passion. There was a spring in her step and a sparkle in her eyes.
 - c. This is an essential quality for a good marriage. Both husband and wife will need to invest time and effort into the marriage. Marriage and home life is a wonderful blessing, a little taste of heaven on earth but it requires hard work. Laziness in either spouse causes problems in a marriage.
 - d. John Butler writes,

"A selfish husband is the kind who will seldom take his wife out for a nice outing but will not hesitate to leave her at home struggling with the care of the children while he goes out and has a good time with the boys going to ball games, playing golf, fishing, hunting or pursuing some other pleasure. A selfish wife is the kind who insists on having her own way in everything, demands that they see her relatives frequently but will not give equal time to his relatives, and spends nearly all her husband's hard-earned money on herself, caring not that she leaves very little for him."

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- e. Parents, are we training our daughters to be home keepers or do we indulge laziness? If your daughter can't cope with a few duties now, how will she handle married life?
- f. Dr. Bob Jones Sr:

"Young man, have you been going with one of those painted dolls who lets her mother do all the work? Have you been keeping company with a girl who does not get up in time for breakfast, who leaves it to mother to wash the dishes while she spends all her time on looking pretty and pleasing herself? If she one day tells you that she likes you very much and admires you but somehow she simply cannot love you and that she will always be just your good friend; and if you hear soon thereafter that she is engaged to marry another man, don't you play the fool and go and kill yourself! No, go and buy them a wedding present! And don't be stingy; make it a thank offering! Then get down on your knees and thank God that He saved you from marrying a parasite who never learned to work, and who could not make a good wife because she was not a good woman."

2. Second mile (Vs. 20-22)

- a. Rebekah volunteered to go beyond what was requested. She showed initiative. She would water the camels until they had "done drinking". That represents a lot of work for 10 thirsty camels!
- b. A thirsty camel can drink up to 200 litres in several minutes! That's over 44 gallons of water for one camel! If all 10 camels drank around that amount, it means Rebekah hauled somewhere in the order of 2,000 litres of water out of the well or 440 gallons. That is the equivalent of 100 2 litre bottles of milk per camel. Or to put it another way, that would be the equivalent of the volume of liquid it takes to fill 533 cans of coke. That's around 5,333 cans worth for the 10 camels! Let's be generous and say Rebekah's waterpot could hold 10 litres. That would represent 200 trips to the well!
- c. Rebekah clearly had the gift of serving. Servants have a wonderful way of discerning the needs and taking the initiative.
- d. Rebekah's example challenges us to think about whether we serve the Lord with all our might. Is our mindset to do the minimum for the Lord or are we prepared to work hard and go beyond the call of duty in our service for the King of kings?

E. Caring (Vs. 22-25)

Rebekah's care and compassion is highlighted in:

- 1. Her concern for the camels.
- 2. Her openness to showing hospitality to the visitors.

Conclusion:

- 1. Will you promise God that you will earnestly seek His will for your life's partner?
- 2. Will you promise God that with His grace and help, you will keep yourself pure for your future spouse?
- 3. Will you serve your Heavenly Master with passion and purpose?

The Father Seeks a Bride for His Only Son

Text: Gen. 24:1-67

Introduction:

1. There are two main strands of thought that run through this passage of Scripture:
 - Principles for Marriage.
 - Pictures of the Messiah.
2. In this message, we will focus on the beautiful typology of the passage. There is a beautiful salvation picture with the father sending his servant to seek a bride for his only son. We will consider this picture by looking at each character in the story and who they represent in the type.

I. THE FATHER DETERMINES (VS. 1-9)

We consider firstly how Abraham typifies the work of the Father.

A. The Father sacrifices his Son (Gen. 22)

1. We noted the beautiful type of the Father offering up his Son in Genesis 22. Abraham took Isaac, his only son, and offered him on the altar, picturing how God the Father offered His Only Begotten Son on the cross of Calvary.
2. Isaac came back off the altar alive, a picture of resurrection from the place of death. Christ rose victorious from the dead on the third day after his death on the cross in the will of the Father.
3. Interestingly, from Genesis 22, Isaac does not appear in the narrative until the end of this chapter (Genesis 24) where he comes out to meet his bride as she is being brought to him. In like manner, after Christ rose and ascended, he has not been seen again but will be seen when he returns to call his bride to Himself.

B. The Father sends his Servant (Vs. 1-9)

1. Abraham sends his faithful servant to find a bride for his son in a far country.
2. The servant pictures the work of the Holy Spirit who was sent by the Father on the Day of Pentecost to call out of the Gentiles "a people for his name" (Acts 15:14).
3. Salvation was God's initiative. We were "chosen in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4) and are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God" (1 Pet. 1:2).
4. The bride is the Father's love gift to His Son. We usually think of the Son as God's love gift to us and that is true (John 3:16) but let us not forget that we have been given to the Son by the Father.
 - a. Psalm 2:8 "Ask of me, and I **shall give thee** the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."
 - b. John 6:37 "All that **the Father giveth me** shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."
 - c. This is a major emphasis in Christ's High Priestly prayer (John 17). Refer John 17:2, 6, 9, 11-12, 24.

II. THE SERVANT SEEKS (VS. 10-49)

The servant's work in seeking a bride for Isaac occupies the larger portion of the chapter. We note several parallels between the work of the servant and that of the Holy Spirit.

A. The Servant Finds (Vs. 10-27)

1. The servant was the one who sought and found Rebekah. In like manner, it is God who takes the initiative to seek the sinner through the work of the Spirit. He does this through faithful servants who proclaim the Gospel.
2. The servant offers precious jewels as the tokens of engagement (Vs. 22). The servant makes the proposal for the woman to accept if she is willing.

B. The Servant Testifies (Vs. 28-49)

1. The servant does not testify of himself but of the Father and the Son throughout the account. It is interesting that the servant is unnamed. He is very active in the account but the focus is on the son.
2. The 'master' (Abraham) is mentioned at least 22 times in the passage and the 'son' (Isaac) 13 times.
3. John 16:13-14 "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for **he shall not speak of himself**; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you."
4. The servant testifies of the tremendous wealth that the son has inherited from his father (Vs. 35-36). Rebekah can share in that wealth if she will accept the marriage proposal. In like manner, Christ has been appointed as "heir of all things" by the Father (Heb. 1:2).
5. In like manner, the Spirit comes to us, speaking of Christ and the riches of salvation that can be ours if we will submit to his invitation. When we got saved, we received the "earnest of the Spirit" (Eph. 1:14; 2 Cor. 1:22) (the down payment) which is God's guarantee and assurance to us that He will give us all the rest of our inheritance that awaits us in heaven.
 - a. 2 Cor. 1:22 "Who hath also sealed us, and given **the earnest of the Spirit** in our hearts."
 - b. Eph. 1:14 "Which is the **earnest of our inheritance** until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."
6. Note: This does not mean we are not to emphasize the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as revealed in the Scriptures. The servant is visible and active in Genesis 24 but not the primary focus. In like manner, we cannot and should not ignore the Holy Spirit who is the third Person of the Godhead but we need to understand that the Spirit of God's desire and ministry is to make much of Christ.

III. THE BRIDE CONSENTS (VS. 50-61)

A. The Decision for the Bride (Vs. 50-58)

Rebekah was not forced to become Isaac's bride. She had a choice to make. Think about the choice that was before her and how it parallels the decision the sinner must make.

1. The Time for the Decision (Vs. 56-58)
 - a. The family's desire was to delay the departure but the servant insisted that they must go immediately. So, it is with the salvation invitation. Procrastination is a dangerous thing as it often leads to doubt which in turn leads to declining the invitation.
 - b. The sinner is to be reminded that life is as a vapour (James 4:14), that we are not guaranteed tomorrow (Prov. 27:1) and that today is the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2).
2. The Terms of the Decision. Consider for a moment what Rebekah was being asked to do.
 - a. She was asked to believe a man she had never met before. The only evidence she had was the faithful word of the servant and the tokens of the son's wealth he offered. This took a step of faith!
 - b. She was requested to go to a land from which she was never to return. In like manner, we are called to leave forsake this world for the life of a pilgrim and a heavenly city.
 - c. She was asked to marry a man whom she as yet had never seen. In like manner, we are invited to be the spiritual bride of Christ whom we have never yet seen with our eyes. 1 Peter 1:8 "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:" That's the miracle of salvation!

B. The Journey for the Bride (Vs. 59-61)

Now commenced the long journey to Abraham's house to meet his son Isaac. However, she was not alone. Throughout the journey she would enjoy:

1. The Servants Presence – he would be with her through this journey until she came face to face with her bridegroom. In like manner, once we are saved, the Holy Spirit never leaves us. He is with us throughout our entire earthly pilgrimage and will see us safely to the embrace of the Son. John 14:16-17 "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may **abide with you for ever**; *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."
2. The Servants Protection – such a journey in those days would be fraught with danger but the bride would be preserved and protected, kept safe for her marriage to the son. In like manner, the Holy Spirit seals us the day we are saved and that seal is permanent and unbreakable, all the way till the day of our redemption.

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- a. Eph. 1:13 “In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were **sealed with that holy Spirit of promise**,”
 - b. Eph. 4:30 “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are **sealed unto the day of redemption**.”
3. The Servants Preparation – no doubt the days of travel were occupied with discussions about the son as the servant prepared her to meet him. In like manner, the Holy Spirit is our teacher throughout our earthly pilgrimage, growing us in love for our Heavenly Bridegroom and preparing us to meet Him.

IV. THE SON RECEIVES (VS. 62-67)

As the caravan approaches the destination, Isaac lifts up his eyes and sees Rebekah approaching. Rebekah sees Isaac and lights off the camel in anticipation of meeting Isaac. What a beautiful picture of the moment when the bride is united with her bridegroom, face to face.

A. The Hour of the Meeting (Vs. 63)

1. Isaac came out to meet Rebekah in the eventide, as the day was drawing to a close.
2. In like manner, when this church age draws to an end, Christ will come forth out of the Father’s House and call us up to meet Him in the air.
3. For you personally, if the Lord tarries his coming, you will meet your Heavenly Bridegroom when the eventide of your life comes and you wake in God’s eternal day in the presence of your Beloved.

B. The Happiness of the Meeting (Vs. 64-67)

1. The joy of their meeting (Vs. 64-66)
 - a. The joy for the bride – Rebekah lighted off the camel when she saw Isaac (Vs. 64). What a joy it will be for us to finally see our Beloved Lord Jesus Christ on that day!
 - b. The joy for the bridegroom – Isaac was delighted to see his bride arrive. What a joy it will be to the Son of God to one day have His completed Bride with Him in glory and to see the reward of His sufferings.
2. The joy of their marriage (Vs. 67)

Conclusion: Summary of the type by Dr. M.R. Dehaan

We can see the typical and prophetic picture. God the Father too had an only Son. After He had offered Him up to die on the cross of Calvary, He too sent His servant, the Holy Spirit, represented and typified by Eliezer, into the far country of this old, wicked world to call out a bride, the Church, for His Son, the Lord Jesus. And that Servant was sent out on the day of Pentecost and has been on this journey now for nineteen hundred years, asking men and women to come and become the bride of

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the Master's Son. The same questions are put to sinners today, which Abraham's servant expected Rebekah to answer:

1. Believe a person you have never met before, even the Holy Spirit of God.
2. Go with Him, and allow Him to lead and guide you by faith into a far country from which you will never return as you leave.
3. Be married to a man whom you have never seen before. See 1 Peter 1:8.

This, then, is the simple plan of salvation. It is by faith. When we believe on Him, and accept the offer of the Son of God, immediately the Servant, the Holy Spirit, opens up the treasures of His grace to our eyes, even as Eliezer opened up the bags of jewels to show the riches of the son to the prospective bride. Then He clothes us with the raiment which the Son has provided, even His sinless righteousness. We set out on a new journey with the Holy Spirit, with only Him and the Bible as our guide. We may not know the next step, but we trust Him, and permit Him to lead.

Sometimes the days are dreary and hard, but when the journey seems long, the Holy Spirit tells us more about the One whom we soon are to meet and we take courage and plod on again. And then the Holy Spirit takes some of those precious jewels from the Book of our blessed Master, and with the glittering blessed promises of truth encourages us all along the way. All the way the Servant talks, not of Himself, but only of Him whom we are going to meet. And then one of these days, as the evening shadows or the closing day of this dispensation came to an end, and the night of the world approaches we will lift up our eyes and there suddenly in the field of Heaven we shall see Him, and the Spirit within us will answer, "That's Him," and lighting of the camel of our mortality, we shall rise to meet Him in the air, into the open arms of him whom, though we had never seen Him, we had learned to love. In His eternal tent of many mansions, He will bring us, introduce us to His Father and our Father, and the eternal honeymoon of bliss and happiness, where sorrow and pain can never come, shall be ushered in with all of its glory and splendour forever.

A Wife for Isaac Part 2

Love, romance and marriage from a Biblical perspective

Text: Gen. 24:18-67

Introduction:

- Concerning this chapter, Henry Morris writes, “Genesis 24 is the longest chapter in the Book of Genesis, and it tells a story that has charmed and enthralled readers for generation after generation. Entire books have been written around this one chapter.”
- 1. There are two main strands of thought that run through this passage of Scripture:
 - Principles for Marriage.
 - Pictures of the Messiah.
- 2. In this message, we will focus on the theme of marriage in a biblical love story that has captivated the hearts and imaginations of millions down through the centuries. These principles are more important than ever as we face a society where marriage, home and the family have largely been shipwrecked on the rocks of lust, immorality, perversion, adultery and divorce.
- 3. We will briefly review what we covered in Part 1 and then continue on with a study of the rest of the chapter.

I. THE PARENTAL DESIRE FOR A GODLY SPOUSE (VS. 1-9)

Abraham had recently heard about the family of his brother Nahor and that Nahor had a young granddaughter named Rebekah (Gen. 22:20, 23). It is possible Abraham had heard about her qualities and had hopes she might be Isaac's future wife.

II. THE PRAYER FOR A GODLY SPOUSE (VS. 10-15; 26-27)

III. THE PROFILE OF A GODLY SPOUSE (VS. 16-25)

Rebekah appears on the scene and demonstrates the qualities of an ideal wife. In fact, these qualities can really apply to male or female. They are a reminder of the kind of character traits that are important in a marriage. Rebekah's qualities are also a challenge to us in the area of service for the Lord. There are at least **6 qualities** we can identify. Rebekah was:

A. Charming (Vs. 16a)

1. Rebekah was a very beautiful lady – “very fair to look upon”. Beauty is not evil in and of itself. Beauty is created by God and is one of the features of many aspects of His creation. The world and the devil use the natural endowment of feminine beauty in a corrupt way and evil way but it has its proper place within the marriage union and is a part of what God uses to draw a couple together.
2. Warning: Do not make this your only criteria when choosing a spouse! Beauty is only skin deep and you need to be most concerned to marry a spouse who possesses inner, spiritual beauty

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(See Prov. 31:30; 1. Peter 3:4-5). No doubt the beauty of Rebekah's personality shone through, affecting her outward demeanour and attractiveness.

B. Chaste (Vs. 16b)

1. There is a double statement of Rebekah's purity.
 - a. She was "a virgin".
 - b. No man had "known here".
2. Your virginity as a single person is a precious thing. Don't let the world and the devil rob you of your purity! Treasure and guard it and give it as a gift to the spouse God gives you on your wedding day.

C. Courteous (Vs. 17-18a)

1. Rebekah responded to the servant's request in a respectful and tactful manner. She responded with the words "Drink, **my lord**". She used a respectful title for this venerable, aged servant of Abraham. What a contrast to the loud, brassy, sassy women of today!
2. There are some who suggest the Bible knows nothing of titles of respect but not so! It is a good practice to use respectful titles for those in positions of authority or those who are our seniors.

D. Charactered (Vs. 18b-21)

Rebekah was an active, diligent woman with initiative and a zest for life. We find Rebekah moving in haste ("she hastened" Vs. 20) and running (Vs. 20, 28). Her character is highlighted in the fact that she was:

1. A Servant-hearted Woman (Vs. 18)

- a. Rebekah was faithful to her duties. The first picture we get of her is walking to the well with a waterpot on her shoulder and then going down into the well, drawing water and then coming back up (Vs. 15-16). Her early arrival at the well before the other maidens says something of her character. Drawing water was a regular household chore in those days as it still is in many places even today. Little did she know that day as she went faithfully about her normal duties that her life was about to be swept up in the plan of God and moved in an exciting direction. F. B. Meyer writes, "Elastic in step, modest in manner, pure in heart, amiable and generous, with a very fair face, as the sacred story tells us – how little did she imagine that the wheel of God's providence was soon to catch her out of her quiet home, and whirl her into the mighty outer world that lay beyond the horizon of desert sand."
- b. Rebekah was willing to serve others with enthusiasm – "she **hasted**, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink". She served with diligence, excellence and passion. There was a spring in her step and a sparkle in her eyes.
- c. This is an essential quality for a good marriage. Both husband and wife will need to invest time and effort into the marriage. Marriage and home life is a wonderful blessing, a little taste of heaven on earth but it requires hard work. Laziness in either spouse causes problems in a marriage.
- d. John Butler writes,

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“A selfish husband is the kind who will seldom take his wife out for a nice outing but will not hesitate to leave her at home struggling with the care of the children while he goes out and has a good time with the boys going to ball games, playing golf, fishing, hunting or pursuing some other pleasure. A selfish wife is the kind who insists on having her own way in everything, demands that they see her relatives frequently but will not give equal time to his relatives, and spends nearly all her husband’s hard-earned money on herself, caring not that she leaves very little for him.”

- e. Parents, are we training our daughters to be home keepers or do we indulge laziness? If your daughter can’t cope with a few duties now, how will she handle married life?
- f. Dr. Bob Jones Sr:

“Young man, have you been going with one of those painted dolls who lets her mother do all the work? Have you been keeping company with a girl who does not get up in time for breakfast, who leaves it to mother to wash the dishes while she spends all her time on looking pretty and pleasing herself? If she one day tells you that she likes you very much and admires you but somehow she simply cannot love you and that she will always be just your good friend; and if you hear soon thereafter that she is engaged to marry another man, don’t you play the fool and go and kill yourself! No, go and buy them a wedding present! And don’t be stingy; make it a thank offering! Then get down on your knees and thank God that He saved you from marrying a parasite who never learned to work, and who could not make a good wife because she was not a good woman.”

2. A Second mile Woman (Vs. 20-22)

- a. Rebekah volunteered to go beyond what was requested. She showed initiative. She would water the camels until they had “done drinking”. That represents a lot of work for 10 thirsty camels!
- b. A thirsty camel can drink up to 200 litres in several minutes! That’s over 44 gallons of water for one camel! If all 10 camels drank around that amount, it means Rebekah hauled somewhere in the order of 2,000 litres of water out of the well or 440 gallons. That is the equivalent of 100 2 litre bottles of milk per camel. Or to put it another way, that would be the equivalent of the volume of liquid it takes to fill 533 cans of coke. That’s around 5,333 cans worth for the 10 camels! Let’s be generous and say Rebekah’s waterpot could hold 10 litres. That would represent 200 trips to the well!
- c. Rebekah clearly had the gift of serving. Servants have a wonderful way of discerning the needs and taking the initiative.
- d. Rebekah’s example challenges us to think about whether we serve the Lord with all our might. Is our mindset to do the minimum for the Lord or are we prepared to work hard and go beyond the call of duty in our service for the King of kings? Do we run to do God’s will or drag our feet?
- e. Matthew 5:41 “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, **go with him twain.**”

E. **Caring (Vs. 22-25)**

Rebekah’s care and compassion is highlighted in:

- 1. Her concern for the camels (Vs. 19).
- 2. Her openness to showing hospitality to the visitors (Vs. 22-25)

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F. Conscientious (Vs. 28)

1. No sooner was Rebekah aware of the man's purpose, she went home to her household and informed them. If you feel you can't tell your parents about a prospective or ongoing relationship with a member of the opposite sex, you can be sure something is wrong! Never trust a decision you don't want your mum or dad to know about.
2. It appears Rebekah had a good relationship with her mother and father. Another desirable quality in a prospective wife!

IV. THE PROPOSAL FOR A GODLY SPOUSE (VS. 26-61)

There are two main components to the proposal that was made:

A. The Proposal Presented (Vs. 26-49)

These verses record the dealings of Abraham's servant with Rebekah's family as he seeks to win her for Isaac.

1. The Servant's Thanksgiving (Vs. 26-27)

The servant had acted by faith in the God of Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 24:12). He believed the **promise** of God and trusted the **providence** of God to direct him (Vs. 27). Now he gives thanks. Observe...

- a. The posture of his praise (Vs. 26). The servant demonstrates worshipful reverence to God for the answer to his prayer. Do we respond to answered prayer with worship and thanksgiving or do we forget to even thank God for answered prayer? Note that bowing down is the true posture of the worshipper.
- b. The point of his praise (Vs. 27). He thanks God for showing mercy to Abraham in this matter and for leading him in the way. This is an important reminder on how God leads us. As we are faithful to walk the path he has chosen for us, he leads, guides and directs. But you must first be "in the way". Proverbs 3:5-6 "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Prov. 16:3 "Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established."

2. The Servant's Testimony (Vs. 28-49)

Having been invited by Rebekah's brother into the home for the night, the servant presents his case to Rebekah and the family with the aim of winning Rebekah for Isaac. Imagine what must have been going through Rebekah's mind as she heard all of this! He tells of:

- a. God's Goodness to his Master Abraham (Vs. 33-41)
How the servant loved to speak of his master! Abraham was blessed with:
 - i. Material provisions (Vs. 35-36). The servant could testify of God's blessings upon Abraham and his son Isaac. He notes that this included material provisions. Isaac would inherit Abraham's wealth and would therefore be in a good position to sustain Rebekah as his wife. The jewellery given to Rebekah were tokens of Isaac's ability to care for her material needs (Vs. 22). There is a

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practical lesson here for young men who desire to be married. While you do not have to be wealthy by the world's standards, you do need to prepare financially before marriage so you can cover the costs associated with sustaining a wife and starting a family. Illustration: Grandma W – We started married life in two rented rooms and were happy!

- ii. Spiritual perception (Vs. 37-40). Rebekah and her family would get a sense of the spiritual tone of Abraham's family from the servants recounting of Abraham's instructions concerning what sort of wife was to be sought for Isaac. While we should not expect perfection, the spirituality of a potential spouse should be of paramount importance to us. First and foremost, Isaac was a man who was blessed spiritually.
- b. God's Guidance of Abraham's Servant (Vs. 42-49)
The servant went on to testify of how God had Divinely and Providentially guided him in his mission. Being able to clearly demonstrate the Lord's leading in the matter would add further weight to the proposal. The servant recounts:
 - i. The prayer he prayed (Vs. 42-44). This account is an important reminder of the central role prayer plays in finding a life's partner. It also reminds us of the truth that God is a prayer hearing and a prayer answering God when our request is in His will. The servant wanted God's choice for Isaac – "let the same be the woman whom **the LORD hath appointed** out for my master's son" (Vs. 44). When our hearts are earnest to truly know God's will, God will be faithful to direct us.
 - ii. The answer he received (Vs. 45-49). The answer was **speedy** – "And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold, Rebekah came forth". The answer was **specific** – it was according to what Abraham desired (she was of his kindred) and what the servant had prayed.

B. The Proposal Accepted (Vs. 50-61)

1. The Acceptance by Rebekah's family (Vs. 50-53)

- a. Both Rebekah's father Bethuel and brother Laban recognised God's leading in the situation and give consent – "**the thing proceedeth from the LORD**"; "let her be thy master's son's wife, **as the LORD hath spoken.**"
 - i. Parents need to be sensitive and open to the Lord's leading in relation a prospective spouse for their son or daughter. When God is at work, bringing a couple together, it will be evident and wise parents will be yielded to releasing their son or daughter to the will of God.
 - ii. Prospective husbands need to be able to demonstrate to a girl's parents the leading of God and be work with the parents to secure the girl's hand in marriage.

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- b. Celebration follows with the giving of gifts to Rebekah, Laban and her mother.
- 2. The Acceptance by Rebekah herself (Vs. 52-61)
 - a. Abraham's servant, having achieved the purpose of his journey is urgent to return to his master. Rebekah's mother and brother desired to keep Rebekah there for another 10 days but the servant appeals to be released immediately for the return journey. There is a time to wait but when God's will is made plain, we need to act without delay. **This is especially important in relation to the salvation invitation (2 Cor. 6:2)!** Charles Spurgeon, preaching on this text, said to his London congregation, "Ten days did not seem too long; but they might have been ten days too late. One day does not seem much; but one day more may be one day too late, and one day too late is to be too late forever; yea, one minute too late is an eternity too late!"
 - b. Note: While there is no hard and fast rule as to the length of an engagement, the Christian view is generally that shorter engagements are preferable. There was no lengthy engagement period for Isaac and Rebekah. Having found God's will for each other, their marriage proceeded without delay. One of God's purposes for marriage is to avoid sexual immorality – "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband." (1 Cor. 7:2).
 - c. Rebekah is called and she is asked "Wilt thou go with this man?" to which she replied "I will go". True Christian marriage is not a forced thing but a union that is voluntarily entered into. Though in the culture of the East, parental decisions were often binding on couples, yet Rebekah's parents wisely enquired as to her feelings in the matter. True love must be voluntary!
 - d. Rebekah is sent away with "her nurse" whom we later learn was named 'Deborah' (Gen. 35:8).
 - i. James Freeman in his book *Bible Manners and Customs* explains the role of a nurse in Bible times, "In an Eastern family the nurse is a very important personage. She is esteemed almost as a parent; and, accompanying the bride to her new home, there remains with her. She becomes the adviser, the assistant, and the friend of the bride. To the nurse, as to a mother, the bride will confide her greatest secrets. Thus, Rebekah took with her on her long journey to her future home the nurse who had cared for her since childhood, so that, besides the female servants she took with her, (Vs. 61), she might have one intimate familiar friend among strangers."
 - ii. There are some parents that have the mindset that they and they alone should have input into their children's lives. That was not the view of the saints of old and it is not wrong for a mother to enlist the help of another godly, trusted sister in her home and family as needed. There is nothing wrong with a church providing a "nursery"

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ministry for mothers for a couple of hours so they can hear God's Word undistracted.

- e. A blessing is pronounced upon Rebekah, wishing her a very fruitful marriage (Vs. 60). It would be hard to imagine such a blessing at a wedding today in a society that has become so anti-children!

V. THE PARTNERING TOGETHER WITH A GODLY SPOUSE (VS. 62-67)

The entourage arrives in Canaan and Isaac comes into view. We have noted the ideal qualities of a godly wife. We now note the essential qualities of a prospective husband.

A. The Character of the Man (Vs. 63)

Isaac was:

1. A Thinking Man (Vs. 63)

- a. We find Isaac going out "to mediate in the field at the eventide". On a basic level, we learn that Isaac was a thinker.
- b. The word 'meditate' here means "to muse" (Strong's). Isaac was a man who gave time to carefully think about things. Wiersbe notes, "Genesis 24:63 suggests that Isaac was a quiet, meditative man who pondered the things of the Lord in solitude (Ps. 1:2). She was a more active type so there would be a good balance in their home." It seems that very often God puts opposites together so that they might complement each other.
- c. Clear, rational thinking is an important quality for a man to have if he is going to be a good leader of his wife, home and family. In a day when "prolonged adolescence" is such a big problem amongst young men, it is vitally important that they learn maturity and how to exercise their minds in a godly fashion.
- d. Psalm 19:14 "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer."
- e. John Butler wisely noted, "**Faults in small letters before marriage come out in capital letters after marriage.**"

2. A Worshipping Man (Vs. 63)

- a. Meditation implies a worshipful state of mind in the Bible. In fact, as you trace the word through the Bible it is almost always used of meditation upon God, His Word, His Ways and His Work (e.g., Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2; 63:6; 119:115, 23, 48, 78, 148; 143:5).
- b. It appears this was an established habit/routine in Isaac's life. He was a devotional man. A man who walked with God.
- c. Ladies, the spiritual character of a prospective husband is of utmost importance. No man is perfect but you need to make sure he is a man who has a genuine walk with God and exercises his mind on the things of God before you marry him. Does he have the potential to be a good spiritual leader for you as a wife? Is he a saved, growing, Bible loving, church attending, serving Christian? Remember, you marry the man as he is now, not what you hope you are going to make him after

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marrying him! You need to make sure he is heading in the right direction before you even start a friendship.

3. A Loving Man (Vs. 67)

- a. The Bible notes that Isaac “loved” Rebekah as his wife. There was genuine love in this marriage. Love is a two-way street between husband (Eph. 5:25) and wife (Titus 2:4) but it is so important that husbands take the lead and be channels of Christ’s love to their wives. Eph. 5:25 “Husbands, **love your wives**, even as Christ also **loved the church**, and gave himself for it;”
- b. It should also be noted that Isaac evidently had a good relationship with his mother. He was “comforted after his mother’s death”. This was good preparation for marriage. We are not suggesting the model where a full-grown man stays tied to his mother’s apron strings even after he is married but we are saying it is healthy if a young man has a good relationship with his mother as it will help prepare him for marriage. The same can be said of a young lady’s relationship with her father. If you don’t have a godly parent who can fulfill that role, trust God to fill in the gap and learn to develop wholesome, appropriate relationships with members of the opposite sex in your local church.

B. **The Consummation of the Marriage (Vs. 67)**

1. The key elements of biblical marriage could be summarized in four words:
 - a. Christian (2. Cor. 6:14).
 - b. Ceremony (Compare Gen. 2:24 & Matt. 19:4).
 - c. Covenant (Mal. 2:14).
 - d. Consummation (Gen. 2:24, Matt. 19:5-6, Eph. 5:31).
2. Note: If you did not follow God’s criteria for marriage, God’s mercy, grace and forgiveness is available to you. If you are married to an unbeliever, pray for your spouse’s salvation.

Conclusion:

1. Are you committed to purity as a single person?
2. What is our approach to service as believers? Do we emulate Rebekah’s example?
3. Ladies, what godly ideals are you aiming for in your life? Men, what godly qualities are you building in your life?

The Sunset of Abraham's Life

Text: Gen. 25:1-11

Introduction:

1. This chapter forms an important transition from the life of Abraham to the life of Isaac. Abraham's story has been recorded under the "generations of Terah" (11:27). Now Scripture will take us on to "the generations of Ishamel" (25:12) and more particularly to the "generations of Isaac" (25:19).
2. In this chapter, Abraham's race comes to an end and the focus of inspiration turns next to Isaac. As someone put it, "God buries His workman and carries on His work." This final account of Abraham's life covers his final 35 years.
3. As with our study of Sarah's death and burial, there are lessons to be learned from this final chapter of the man who goes down in Biblical history as a man who was called "the Friend of God" (James 2:23). Wiersbe says, "After a person dies, we read the obituary; and after the burial, we read the will. Let's do that with Abraham."
4. We will divide our study of this final epoch of Abraham's life into three parts.

I. THE LEGACY OF ABRAHAM'S LIFE (VS. 1-6)

Abraham left behind a threefold legacy. It was:

A. Generational (Vs. 1-4)

1. Abraham re-marries a lady named Keturah after Sarah's death. Sadly, it appears she had the status of a lesser wife as she is referred to as a concubine (Vs. 6a).
2. Abraham has an additional 6 sons with Keturah. God had promised that Abraham would be "a father of many nations" (Gen. 17:4) so the six sons of Keturah appear to be a part of the fulfillment of that promise.
3. Over time the sons of Keturah merged with the sons of Ishmael and formed what we now know today as the Arab peoples. Henry Morris writes, "It seems likely that all of these peoples, together with the descendants of Ishmael, Lot and Esau, along with the earlier descendants of Shem and, in some cases, Ham, have gradually merged and become the modern-day Arabic peoples." Barnhouse notes that the six sons of Keturah "so mingled with Ishmael as to be indistinguishable".

B. Material (Vs. 5-6)

Abraham wisely disperses his estate prior to his death. We could say this was Abraham's last will and testament. We note there was:

1. A priority in Abraham's will (Vs. 5) – Isaac's portion of the estate.
 - a. Isaac would receive the majority of the inheritance since God had said he would establish his covenant with Isaac (See Gen. 17:21). Isaac was also the spiritual one amongst Abraham's sons who would pass on a godly heritage to his children and therefore it was fitting that he received a larger share of the

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inheritance. Ishmael, in contrast to Isaac, was a fleshly, wild man. The sons of Keturah were likely in a similar category.

- b. While everyone's family situation is different and the specifics of a will are private, a believer should try to reflect a spiritual priority in what they do with their estate. Don't make the wrong assumption that all the rebels in the family have to get equal share with those who are walking a godly, separated life. Ask God how He would have you allocate your resources. That may mean leaving something behind to aid the work of the Gospel.
 - c. John Butler writes, "Abraham was simply honouring God and His Word with his will. Abraham practiced what believers should always practice in regard to their wills; that is, they should always honour God and His Word with their wills. Therefore, let not the saints of God endow the world with their estates. Let not the saints of God give their estates to people and institutions that do not honour God and the Word of God."
2. A provision in Abraham's will (Vs. 6) – the other sons' portion of the estate. While Isaac received a greater share of the inheritance, Abraham did not neglect his other offspring, leaving them a gift each. This reveals something of Abraham's heart and wisdom. The Bible is silent on the details of how large or small this gift was but we can probably assume that if Abraham was sending them away to the east country, it would have been enough to sustain and help them for a while.

C. Spiritual (Vs. 11)

Abraham left behind material wealth for his family but more importantly, he left behind spiritual wealth for the whole world. Abraham's material wealth is long gone but his spiritual legacy remains.

1. Spiritual blessing for Isaac (Vs. 11)
 - a. Abraham passed on a godly heritage to his son Isaac. As God's hand was upon Abraham, so it was also upon Isaac.
 - b. What kind of spiritual legacy are we passing on to our children?
2. Spiritual blessing for the world (Gen. 12:3).

God had promised that all the families of the earth would be blessed through Abraham. What blessing has come down to us from this godly saint of old who was willing to heed God's call and consecrate Himself wholly to God's will.

 - a. The blessing of Abraham's godly example. Abraham left behind the example of a justification by faith and living by faith.
 - b. The blessing of Abraham's seed.
 - i. His natural seed – Israel. Through Israel God has blessed the world, using her to bring us both the written and the Living Word.
 - ii. His Messianic seed – Christ. The very first verse of the New Testament opens with these words, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." (Matt. 1:1).
 - iii. His spiritual seed – us! "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, **the same are the**

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children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” Galatians 3:6-9

- c. Challenge: God can use us to be channels of blessing to others too if we will but place ourselves totally in the hands of God for Him to take and use as He sees fit. Will you leave anything of spiritual value behind when you go to glory? D.L. Moody famously said, “The world has yet to see what God can do with a man fully consecrated to him. By God’s help, I aim to be that man.”

II. THE MEMORY OF ABRAHAM’S LIFE (VS. 7-8)

The years of Abraham’s earthly pilgrimage are noted in these verses. We note two truths about Abraham’s years.

A. The Quantity of his Years (Vs. 7-8a)

1. Abraham’s earthly life was long (Vs. 7). Abraham lived to the ripe old age of 175. That means Abraham lived for 100 years in the land of promise since he arrived in Canaan at the age of 75. That means Abraham lived to see Isaac reach the age of 75 – the age of Abraham when Abraham came to Canaan (12:4).
2. Abraham’s earthly life was limited (Vs. 8a). The Bible notes plainly that Abraham “gave up the ghost, and died”. It is a sobering reminder that even if God gives you a long life on earth, it will come to an end. Death is a 100% certainty unless the rapture comes before for the believer. Abraham died “in the Lord” (Rev. 14:13) as a justified believer (Gen. 15:6) so death held no fear for him. How about you? Death is a doorway into eternity either in heaven or hell. Where will you spend eternity? Are you ready to die?

B. The Quality of his Years (Vs. 8b)

More is meant in the phrase “in a good old age, an old man, and full of years” than just the fact Abraham lived to be an old man. The words also indicate that it was an abundant, blessed and satisfied life. Abraham’s journey of faith was not without failure but overall, it was blessed of God. He died satisfied in the Lord with the same assurance the Apostle Paul did over 2,000 years later when he testified “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:” (2. Tim. 4:7). As we cast our eyes back over the life of Abraham, we can see why he ended his years a blessed and satisfied man. Abraham knew a blessed life because of:

1. His faith in God
 - a. Abraham was saved by faith (Gen. 15:6). Abraham could not have been saved by keeping the law of Moses (the 10 commandments) as the law had not yet been given.
 - b. Abraham lived by faith (Heb. 11:8-10).
2. His focus upon God – Abraham lived a separated, consecrated life. He was separate from the world unto God.
3. His faithfulness to God – Abraham was faithful in the place God called him to for 100 years, waiting patiently decade after decade

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for God to fulfill His promises. How many blessings are forfeited by believers because they are unfaithful. James uses Abraham to illustrate the importance of proving our faith by our works (James 2:14-16). He was not saved by works, but he proved his faith by his works.

4. His friendship with God – undoubtedly this was the greatest secret to Abraham’s life. Abraham’s close relationship with God is emphasized by the presence of the altar in his life. Abraham knew God, fellowshiped with God (i.e., in prayer) and walked with God. He was called “the Friend of God” (James 2:23).
5. Note: Maybe you have wasted years in your history. Don’t stay defeated for the rest of your life! Ask God to forgive you for those wayward years (if you haven’t already), walk with him for the rest of what remains of your life and finish well for God’s glory.
6. What a contrast Abraham’s experience at the end of his life was to what is experienced amongst the unsaved in their sunset years. Maclaren writes, Maclaren said, “We have all seen godless old men cynical and sour, pleased with nothing, grumbling, or feebly complaining about everything, dissatisfied with all which life has thus far yielded them, and yet clinging desperately to it, and afraid to go.”
7. Wiersbe said, “How few people really experience joy and satisfaction when they reach old age! When they look back, it is with regret; when they look ahead, it is with fear; and when they look around it is with complaint.”

III. THE DESTINY AFTER ABRAHAM’S LIFE (VS. 8B-10)

These verses not only record the fact of Abraham’s burial but also reveal that Abraham did not cease to exist, his real person passing in to the afterlife. Let’s note what happened to both Abraham’s soul and body.

A. The Immortality of his Soul (Vs. 8b)

We now encounter another “first mention” in the Book of Genesis, the phrase “and was gathered to his people”. This expression is only applied to several others in the Old Testament: Isaac (Gen. 35:29), Gideon (Jdg. 8:32), David (1 Chr. 29:28) and Job (42:17).

1. What this phrase does NOT mean – it is not a reference to the burial of the body. That is described in the next two verses. Further, Sarah was the only other one buried at that time in the cave of Machpelah so Abraham’s burial there could not be described as being gathered to his people (plural).
2. What the phrase does mean – the phrase clearly refers to life after death. Henry Morris notes, “The phrase “gathered to his people” must refer to life after death, with those who before him had died in faith since none of his ancestors were buried in the cave of Machpelah, where he was buried. The location of such departed spirits was, nineteen hundred years later, actually is called “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22).” We learn a number of truths about the immortality of the soul after death.
 - a. The reality of life after death. Abraham did not cease to exist after he died nor did he enter a state of soul slip as erroneously

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taught by certain groups such as the SDA's. When the body dies, the soul does not. It continues to exist, to live for all eternity. Death is not the end. Death is the doorway into eternity. Let's establish some Bible facts about life after death:

- i. It is true that the Bible in places speaks of death in terms of sleep for the believer but we must not that the sleep is in reference to the body, not the soul in relation to death. The body will be brought to life again at the resurrection but until then the spirit is alive and conscious in the presence of God.
 1. 1 Thess. 4:14 "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so **them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.**"
 2. Rev. 6:9-11 "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled."
- ii. For the believer, death is the doorway into heaven, the presence of God and the company of departed saints.
 1. 2 Cor. 5:6-8 "Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (7) (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) (8) We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather **to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.**"
 2. Php. 1:23 "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and **to be with Christ**; which is far better:"
- iii. For the unbeliever, death is a doorway into hell. As soon as the rich man in Luke 16:19-31 died the Bible says, "And **in hell** he lift up his eyes, being in torments..."
- iv. Remember, Hebrews 11 confirms this view of Abraham's destiny as it notes that Abraham was seeking a heavenly city – "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). The word for "looked" means that he "expected eagerly". Abraham's faith helped him see beyond the land of Canaan which is why he maintained the pilgrim mindset throughout his earthy walk. His faith enabled him to see that there was life beyond the grave and something much grander and glorious to live for than anything this world could offer.

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- b. The representation of life after death. The phrased “gathered to his people” gives a touching, simple picture of the afterlife for the believer.
 - i. After death, we are gathered with the people of God in glory. Our people are the saints, our spiritual family. The glories of heaven are unveiled in greater detail in the New Testament but on a simple level, heaven is where we gather with Christ and His people.
 - ii. Wiersbe writes, “One day you will be “gathered to your people”. If God’s people were your people in life, then you will be with them after death in the home that Jesus is now preparing (John 14:1-6). If the Christian family is not your “people”, then you will be with the crowd that is going to hell; and it is described in Revelation 20:10-15; 21:8. You had better make the right choice, because eternity is forever!”

B. The Internment of his Body (Vs. 9-10)

1. The place of Abraham’s burial – Abraham was buried in the cave of Machpelah with his precious Sarah who had died some 38 years prior. Abraham was not buried back in Mesopotamia with his natural family but in the land of promise. This represented an act of faith on Abraham’s part. He believed God’s promise that the land would be given to his seed and was buried in faith, in the only little piece of that land he owned, trusting that God would fulfill the rest of His promises for his seed in the future.
2. The principle of Christian burial. We have already discussed the issue of cremation vs burial in a previous message (Sarah’s death and burial) but it is worth noting again that the saints of old buried their loved ones in anticipation of the coming resurrection rather than following the pagan practice of cremation.

Conclusion: What are you living for? What are you building with your life? “Scaffoldings are for buildings, and the moments and days and years of our earthly lives are scaffolding. What are we building inside the scaffolding? What kind of structure will be disclosed when the scaffolding is knocked away?” (Maclaren)

Divided from the Womb (Jacob & Esau)

Two boys, two paths and two destinies

Text: Gen. 25:12-34

Introduction:

1. Verse 12-18 record the “generations of Ishmael”. It is interesting that this historical record comes after Abraham’s funeral. It is possible that funerals in ancient times were used as opportunities to collate family records. The Bible notes that Ishmael had 12 sons referred to as ‘princes’ who were the progenitors of 12 people groups called ‘nations’. It is of interest to note that Ishmael had 12 sons and that Jacob, the rightful heir of Abraham also had 12 sons who would become the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel.
2. After a brief summary of the “generations of Ishmael”, the narrative moves on to “generations of Isaac” (Vs. 19). This forms the heading until we get to the “generations of Jacob” in Genesis 37:2.
3. The account of the birth and growth of Isaac’s sons Jacob and Esau is now given in the inspired record (Vs. 20-34). This forms an important foundation to understanding events that will transpire later, especially in relation to the life of Jacob who will soon be the focus of the narrative.
4. We will divide the account into three parts for our study of this early period in the lives of Jacob and Esau and the spiritual lessons we can learn.

I. THE PRAYER FOR JACOB AND ESAU (VS. 20-23)

Both Isaac and Rebekah were people of prayer. Praise God for praying parents.

A. A Father’s Prayer – Isaac (Vs. 20-21)

1. The infertility that motivated Isaac to pray.
 - a. Isaac married Rebekah when he was 40 years old (Vs. 20) and 20 years passed before Rebekah gave birth to the two boys (Vs. 26).
 - b. Divine delays are a reoccurring theme in Genesis. There is a perception of a delay on our part but in reality, God is not bound by time and brings things to pass according to His Divine schedule. From our end we need to learn to trust and wait. When we try and help God fulfill His promises in the wisdom and strength of the flesh, disaster is the result.
 - c. Matthew Henry writes, “Though the accomplishment of God’s promise is always sure, yet it is often slow, and seems to be crossed and contradicted by Providence.”
 - d. Griffith Thomas writes, “God’s delays are not necessarily God’s denials. God often delays in the bestowal of His grace in order that we may the more thoroughly rely upon Him and the more definitely realize that our expectation is from Him, and not merely from secondary causes or natural laws.”
2. The intercession that moved God to perform.

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- a. Thankfully, prayer was Isaac's response to the trial of infertility, not polygamy like Abraham (Hagar). Prayer is the most important treatment for infertility!
- b. God's answer to Isaac's prayer is a timely reminder of God's sovereignty over the womb and that He is the one who ultimately gives conception.
- c. Isaac had the revealed will of God as a firm foundation for his prayers. God had promised that the seed line would continue through Isaac (Gen. 21:12). 1 John 5:14 "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:"

B. A Mother's Prayer – Isaac (Vs. 22-23)

1. The prenatal conflict between the twins (Vs. 22)
 - a. A struggle took place between the two boys in Rebekah's womb that was more than the normal fetal movements. The words "struggled together" in verse 22 come from one Hebrew word which according to Thomas Whitelaw in *The Pulpit Commentary* "is expressive of a violent internal commotion, as if the unborn children had been dashing against one another in her womb." Wilson defines the word as "to break; to oppress; to dash one another"; and Brown says, "The children crush one another within her."
 - b. Rebekah wisely takes the matter to the Lord in prayer and seeks His wisdom and insight. God delights to answer the prayer for wisdom (James 1:5). Prayer for our children starts when they are still in the womb.
 - c. Note: This passage highlights that unborn children are real human beings, capable of even expressing something of their character in the womb.
2. The prophecy concerning the twins (Vs. 23)

In response to Rebekah's prayer, God revealed that she was pregnant with twins and that there would be some very important differences between the two.

 - a. Two nations were in her womb. From Isaac would come the nation of Israel and from Esau the nation of Edom.
 - b. Two manner of people would be separated from her bowels. The future separation between the two boys is highlighted. "The twins in the womb were of two utterly different and antagonistic temperaments. The nations which they would establish would inherit these tendencies. The struggle which had begun in her womb would continue throughout their lives and throughout the histories of their respective nations." (Henry Morris)
 - c. One people group from one son would be stronger than the people group from the other son. The descendants of Jacob and Esau were not equal in political strength. The domination of the nation of Israel (Jacob's descendants) over the Edomites (Esau's descendants) was especially evident in David's time (2 Sam. 8:14) and was also evident in the time of King Uzziah (2 Chro. 25:11-12).

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- d. The elder would serve the younger. A very important detail that will help us better appreciate the drama that unfolds in Isaac's family. Normally, the superior honour went to the firstborn but not here. It reminds us that God does not always honour in the way man does (See 1. Sam. 16:7).

II. THE PERSONALITIES OF JACOB AND ESAU (VS. 24-28)

The differences prophesied before their birth became apparent from the time of their birth. Consider...

A. The Profile of the Pair (Vs. 24-27)

1. A profile of Esau (Vs. 25, 27a)
 - a. As revealed in his babyhood (Vs. 25). Esau came out of the womb first with a reddish appearance and hairy all over.
 - i. The colour red would forever be associated with Esau. He would later be called 'Edom' meaning "red" (Vs. 30).
 - ii. His hairiness was something that would be noted later when Jacob and Rebekah concoct a plan to deceive Isaac into giving the patriarchal blessing to Jacob instead of Esau (Gen. 27:11). Esau's hairiness also seemed to be symbolic of the rugged, outdoor man he would become.
 - b. As revealed in his manhood (Vs. 27a). As Esau grew into manhood, he became a "cunning (meaning skilled) hunter". While being a skilled hunter may not have been sinful in itself, it revealed something of Esau's character.
 - i. Esau's was not hunting for food because the family needed it. Isaac had inherited his father Abraham's vast resources which included flocks and herds well able to sustain their needs. Esau's pursuit of hunting reveals something of his character as a wild and restless fellow who was primarily concerned with the pursuit of his own heart desires. "Esau represents those who are talented in their head and hands but not in their heart." (Butler) Leupold says this phrase describes "a man roving about everywhere" which is typical of the worldling.
 - ii. Further, there is only one other man specifically called a hunter in the Bible and it is found in Genesis 10:9 in reference to Nimrod who was "a mighty hunter before the LORD." "One Biblical hunter (Nimrod) was a rebel against God, the other was a sportsman unconcerned with God (Esau)." (Morris)
2. A profile of Jacob (Vs. 26, 27b)
 - a. As revealed in his babyhood (Vs. 26)
 - i. The prominent feature of Jacob's birth was his rapid birth following Esau (dear Rebekah!) and the fact his little hand was hanging on to his brother's heel. It appears from the reference in Hosea 12:3 that this action began in the womb shortly before birth – "He took his brother by the heel in the womb" (Hos. 12:3).
 - ii. As a consequence, he is named 'Jacob' which means "heel gripper". "The picture is that of one grabbing the

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heel of another to trip him up. The word supplanter describes the action. And the word “supplanted” is what Esau used of Jacob when Esau missed out on the blessing from Isaac.” See Gen. 27:36. The word ‘supplant’ means “to trip up the heels; to remove or displace by stratagem; or to displace and take the place of” (Webster’s 1828).

- iii. This action of Jacob as he came out of the womb was indicative of his inner nature in Adam. He would be a calculating, deceiving individual who was skilled in getting the best out of a situation. God is His love and grace would work on Jacob to transform him from Jacob, a supplanter, to Israel, a prince with God.
- b. As revealed in his manhood (Vs. 27b)
Two things are said about Jacob as a man.
 - i. He was a plain man. This does not mean ‘plain’ in the way we tend to use the word in our day (e.g., she’s a plain Jane). The word ‘plain’ in old English has the sense of ‘pure’. The same Hebrew word is translated ‘perfect’ nine times in the O.T. (Job. 1:1, 8; 2:3; 8:20; 9:20, 21, 22; Ps. 37:37; 64:4), ‘upright’ once (Prov. 29:10), ‘undefiled’ twice (Song 5:2, 6:9). For example, Job is described in Job 1:1 as “**perfect** and upright...one that feared God, and eschewed evil.”
 - ii. He dwelt in tents. This does not mean he was a lazy man who sat around the tent all day with mummy. There was more of a stability and constancy with Jacob. He was not wild and restless like his brother. He was happy to be in the company of his parents and serve in the day to day domestic duties with the flocks and herds. Evidently, he also learned how to cook (Vs. 29).
 - iii. Unlike his brother Esau who was a ‘fornicator’ (Heb. 12:16), married Canaanite women (Gen. 26:34-35) and a man primarily concerned with the things of this life (a hunter), Jacob was a clean-living man who did have a desire for the Lord despite his character flaws. There was a spark of spirituality in Jacob’s heart with which the Lord could work.

B. The Partiality of the Parents (Vs. 28)

Sadly, the differences in personality between the two boys became the catalyst for divided affection in the home with one parent loving one of the boys more than the other.

1. Isaac’s favouritism towards Esau – a fleshly desire was met (Vs. 28a). Sadly, Isaac’s preferential treatment of Esau was on account of the fact he could indulge his appetite for venison. Favouritism in a parent stems from selfishness. There is something wrong when as a parent we are content in our children’s secular accomplishments and care little for how much they have grown in spiritual stature.

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2. Rebekah's favouritism towards Jacob – an emotional desire was met (Vs. 28b). No specific reason for Rebekah's partiality towards Jacob is stated but evidently, he was his mother's son, likely keeping her company around the home and absorbing some of the tension of her highly strung personality. She also had been given special insight concerning Jacob's future so may have been inclined to give him more attention than Esau.
3. Griffith Thomas makes an interesting suggestion that a parent tends to be drawn to a child who is similar in character to the spouse. He states, "Esau was his father's favourite, Jacob his mother's. Isaac, the quiet, passive man, saw in Esau, the bold hunter, the energetic nature of the woman whom he had loved as a wife all those years. Rebekah, the strong, self-assertive woman, saw in the quiet, gentle Jacob the quiet, passive husband whom she had loved so long. It is often found that the father loves the boy or girl who resembles the mother, while the mother is frequently found to favour the boy or girl whose nature is most akin to the father; but when, as in this case, partiality is carried to great extremes, nothing but trouble can be the result." This is not a hard and fast rule and parents can also be partial because a son or daughter is like them and excuse their behaviour!
4. Sadly, Isaac and Rebekah were sowing the seeds of division and bitterness in their home through their actions. Parents be warned, the same thing happens in Christian homes today! Beware of the subtleties of your own flesh nature as a parent and be sure your parenting is done with God's help and grace or you may find yourself engaged in the sin of partiality in the home.
5. Note: There is a sense where you can only get as close to a child as they will let you. If you have a prodigal, you will not be able to have as close fellowship with them as you do with a child who is walking with God but a Spirit filled parent will love all their children with Christ's love and not engage in a carnal favouritism that breeds bitterness in the home.
6. All of this demonstrates how the Bible deals plainly with the dangers that lurk within man's fallen nature that our eyes might be opened to our own potential and by the grace of God, avoid similar mistakes.

III. THE PRIORITIES OF JACOB AND ESAU (VS. 29-34)

The differences between Jacob and Esau, not only in personality but more importantly in their spiritual heart condition come into even sharper focus with this incident involving the birthright. Let's seek to understand what the birthright was and then the incident that took place between Jacob and Esau.

A. The Details of the Birthright (Vs. 31, 32b, 33b, 34b)

The 'birthright' is mentioned four times in these verses and this is the first time it is mentioned in the Bible. What is the birthright?

1. The material privileges of the birthright. The birthright according to Deuteronomy 21:17 involved a double portion of the inheritance and it was usually bestowed upon the firstborn but it was at the father's discretion to bestow it upon another child if the eldest was not

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worthy. From the case of Jacob and Esau we learn it also involved a patriarchal blessing. In Reuben's case, as the eldest son of Jacob, he was first in line for the birthright but forfeited it due to his immoral relationship with one of his father's concubines. The birthright was then given to Joseph. 1 Chronicles 5:1-2 "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, **his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph** the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him *came* the chief ruler; but **the birthright was Joseph's:**")

2. The spiritual privileges of the birthright. This was by far the most important aspect of the birthright. It meant the high privilege of being the one to carry on the Seed Line. It meant spiritual leadership in the family. In the case above with Reuben, it appears the material part of the birthright was given to Joseph while the spiritual part was bestowed upon Judah through whom Christ would come.

B. The Desire for the Birthright – Jacob (Vs. 29-31)

1. The scene (Vs. 29-30). An unplanned incident occurred that formed the catalyst for what happened in relation to the birthright. How our character flaws can come to the surface in a situation that presents itself in day-to-day life. The Bible paints the picture. Jacob was cooking a pot of lentils when Esau came in hungry from the field. Esau appeals to his brother to share some of the pottage with him. Jacob, quick thinking and calculating, detected an opportunity to get the birthright from his twin brother.
2. Jacob's actions were deceitful and despicable and yet beneath it all, what was commendable was the fact that Jacob so highly prized the birthright with its spiritual privileges and responsibilities. It again highlights that in spite of the fact Jacob was operating in the energies of the self-life at this time, there was underneath it all a desire for the things of God. His desire was honourable, his method for obtaining his desire was dishonourable and wrong.
3. Principle: Don't try to secure spiritual blessings through carnal means.
4. At this stage of Jacob's life, we could say that he was a real mix of spiritual and carnal.

C. The Despising of the Birthright – Esau (Vs. 32-34)

1. Esau devalued his birthright (Vs. 32)
This involved:
 - a. The magnification of the temporal – "Behold, I am at the point to die". People who are dominated by fleshly appetites are inclined to exaggerate their "felt needs" to others. No doubt Esau was very hungry but it is very doubtful he was anywhere starvation. How the world exaggerates the passions of the flesh and elevates them to a "must have" status! Butler writes, "The words "Feed me" in the Hebrew mean "let me swallow", almost, "let me gulp" (Leupold). This is the language of those given to the appetites of the flesh. They are too impatient to fill their fleshly

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appetite the proper way. Esau was in such a hurry to satisfy his physical appetite that he was willing to give up the eternally significant birthright." Griffith Thomas notes, "There is no likelihood that Esau was going to die for lack of food. He was a man who wanted **instant gratification for his bodily appetites** and couldn't care less about trading the birthright which was primarily spiritual in nature for the temporal satisfying of those appetites."

- b. The minimization of the eternal – "and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" Esau got his priorities around the wrong way! The spiritual was of far more value than the temporary satisfying of a physical appetite. Dr. Bob Jones Senior famously said, "**Don't sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate.**" Esau sacrificed the eternal for the material.
 - c. Woe to the man who expects to get rich trading with Jacob. **Remember!** If you do a trade in with the world and the devil, you will always be the big loser in the deal! A bowl of red lentils was hardly equivalent in value to the birthright. Yet how often Christians trade the eternal for a bowl of the devil's stew!
 - d. John Butler writes, "Junk in exchange for Jesus' could be the epitaph written on the tombstone of Esau and Judas."
2. Esau despised his birthright (Vs. 34)
- a. This takes Esau's error beyond just a devaluing of the birthright. He 'despised' it in his heart and that led to him despising it in action with the choice he made to sell it for so little. Clearly, he had not arrived at this attitude overnight but over time came to be of the settled opinion that his birthright was useless, even distasteful. To 'despise' means "to contemn; to scorn; to have the lowest opinion of" (Webster 1828).
 - b. This is why the Book of Hebrews calls Esau a 'profane' man. Heb 12:15-16 "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there *be* any fornicator, or **profane person, as Esau**, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright."
 - i. The word in the New Testament means "irreverence towards the things of God. Only showing regard to earthly things. Secular. It comes from the root word 'threshold' and thus denotes that which may be trodden under foot, that which is unhallowed."
 - ii. Webster defines the word as meaning "Irreverent to anything sacred...A man is profane when he takes the name of God in vain, or treats sacred things with abuse and irreverence."
 - iii. You may not be profane with your lips as a Christian but you can be profane with your life by placing little value on the eternal and spiritual and much value on the temporal.

Conclusion: Are you trying to obtain God's blessings through carnal means? Are the things of God a priority in your life or is it primarily about material/carnal things?

Isaac Faces Testing

Staying faithful in the Famine

Text: Gen. 26:1-14

Introduction:

1. This chapter of Genesis is the main chapter that deals with the life of Isaac. From chapter 27, the focus turns primarily to Jacob until chapter 37. Compared to Abraham and Jacob, little is recorded about the life of Isaac but he forms a very important link in the Messianic chain and did exhibit some godly qualities.
2. If there is one prominent thing associated with Isaac's life, it is the well. With Abraham it was the altar, with Isaac it was the well. This certainly fits the typological picture. Isaac's being offered on the altar of sacrifice is followed by Isaac digging wells and discovering "springing water" (Vs. 19). We know that "living water" is a picture of the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37) and the Holy Spirit was poured out following the cross.
3. In this section (Vs. 1-17) Isaac is tested by a famine that comes over the land. By studying how Isaac responded, the good and the bad, we can learn valuable lessons for ourselves for when we face times of testing.
4. We will follow this episode in Isaac's walk of faith under five headings.

I. THE DANGER OF THIS TIME OF TESTING (VS. 1-3a)

"Trials are permitted to come into the life of the best and holiest of men, and it is by this means that God sometimes teaches His most precious lessons." (Thomas) There was a...

A. Physical Danger for Isaac (Vs. 1a)

1. The famine presented a real and difficult test for Isaac and his family. We cannot minimise the magnitude of what he was facing.
2. The Bible notes that this is a separate famine to the one experienced earlier by Abraham (approx. 100 years earlier). Isaac faced the same test his father Abraham had faced many years earlier in the land of promise (Gen. 12:10).
3. It is important to remember that trials and tests in the Christian life are not a unique experience. Whatever you are facing, be certain other saints past and present have faced or are facing the same or similar. You are not alone in your trial! "Lightening may not strike in the same place twice, but trials do."
4. 1 Cor. 10:13 "There hath no temptation taken you **but such as is common to man**: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*."
5. Wiersbe writes, "True faith is always tested, either by temptations within us or trials around us (James 1:1-18) ...God tests us to bring out the best in us, but Satan tempts us to bring out the worst in us. In one form or another, each new generation must experience the

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same tests as previous generations, if only to discover that the enemy doesn't change and that human nature doesn't improve."

B. The Spiritual Danger for Isaac (Vs. 1b-2)

The inclination to try and run from a problem is not new. It is the natural, automatic response of human nature! Unbelief asks, "How can I get out of this," while faith asks, "What can I get out of this?" (Wiersbe) We have to be so careful during times of testing that we do not run right out of the will of God! There were two temptations that had the potential to take Isaac out of the will of God in this situation:

1. The logic of Philistia – Gerar seemed like a good option on account of its resources and while Isaac is not directly censured for dwelling amongst the Philistines the account that follows demonstrates that it ended in division. Once Isaac separated from the Philistines, there was peace and greater blessing. He was still within the land of Canaan but it was unwise to dwell amongst the Philistines. Remember that what appears logical may not be automatically be God's will for you. In fact, the walk of faith often defies human logic.
2. The lure of Egypt. From God's instruction to "God not down into Egypt", it seems probable that Isaac was headed in that direction. At the very least, God was pre-empting a potential danger for Isaac. It would not be hard for history to be repeated here. Abraham, when faced with a similar trial, resorted to Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20) Egypt was 'down' geographically but more importantly it was 'down' spiritually. It is easier to go down than up during times of test unless we choose faith over fear and closeness to God rather than the comforts offered by the world. Turn to the Lord in your trial for comfort, not the world. The world may appear to offer a place of rest and comfort for you in a dry and difficult time but in reality, it is a mirage that will only yield damage and disappointment in the long term. Allow your trial, with the Lord's help, to take you 'up' rather than 'down' spiritually during your trial.

II. THE DIRECTIVE IN THIS TIME OF TESTING (VS. 2B-5)

A. The Command – "Sojourn in this land" (Vs. 2b-3a)

1. The Prohibition – "Go not down into Egypt". Egypt (the world) is always off limits for the Christian. Zero compromise with the world is God's standard no matter what we are facing in life.
2. The Principle – "dwell in the land which I shall tell thee off". Isaac was to be directed by God to the place of God's choosing. This is such an important principle to live by. Let God's perfect will be the governing, guiding principle for your life.
3. The Precept – "Sojourn in this land". God's specific will is revealed. Isaac was to stay in Canaan! Canaan represents the victorious Christian life, the walk of faith, the land of fruit and fight. Sometimes God can use a trial to move us somewhere in His perfect will but so often it is God's way to tell us to stay and be faithful right where we are and face the famine!

B. The Covenant – "I will bless thee" (Vs. 3b-5)

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If Isaac obeyed the Lord he would be strengthened, comforted, undergirded and blessed by:

1. The Presence of God – “I will be with thee” (Vs. 3b) Better to have the blessing of God’s presence in your life in a difficult place than to be in an easy place (Egypt) without His power, presence and promises.
2. The Promises of God (Vs. 3c-5)
God reiterates the Abrahamic covenant to Isaac. There are two main promises in the Abrahamic covenant that are repeated here along with a reference to Abraham’s faithfulness as being key to its fulfilment in Isaac’s life.
 - a. The Soil Promise (Vs. 3c)
 - i. The promise of the land is repeated to Isaac. The land of Canaan belongs to Abraham and his descendants through Isaac. If the world would submit to God’s Word, the constant disputes over who owns Palestine would be resolved!
 - ii. God assures Isaac that He would fulfill the “oath” He “swore unto Abraham thy father”. God is a covenant keeping God. What God promises He will always perform.
 - b. The Seed Promise (Vs. 4)
 - i. The promise of the seed is also reiterated to Isaac. God would continue to fulfill His promise of the seed through Isaac. As previously noted, this involved the natural seed, spiritual seed and Messianic Seed of Abraham.
 - ii. The whole earth would be blessed through Abraham’s seed. Indeed, Israel has been an incalculable blessing to the whole world.
 1. Spiritually – through the instrumentality of Israel came the Written Word (Rom. 3:2, 9:4) and the Living Word (Rom. 9:5).
 2. Physically – Israel has blessed the world through her technological advancements in multiple areas. There are many technological blessings we enjoy in our day that we probably don’t realise we owe to Israel.
 - iii. Some examples from modern history where Israel has been a source of blessing to the world:¹
 - **Colour photographic film (Leopold Godowsky, Jr.), 1917.**
 - **Ballpoint pen (László Biró), 1931.**
 - **Magnetic disk data storage (Jacob Rabinow), 1949.** This is the basis for the hard drive storage system.
 - **Wireless remote control (Robert Adler), 1956.**
 - **The laser (Theodore Maiman), 1960.**
 - **Geostationary communication satellite (Harold Rosen), 1963.** This facilitated international phone, television, and internet communication.
 - **Drip irrigation (Simcha Blass, Netafim), 1966.**

¹ List drawn from David Cloud’s excellent book entitled “Jews in Fighter Jets”.

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- **Personal computer CPU (central processing unit), 1979, designed at Intel's Haifa laboratory.**
- **Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) (Alon Cohen), 1989, used to make phone calls over the Internet.**
- **USB flash drive (Dov Moran), 1998.**
- **Google (Larry Page and Sergey Brin), 1998.**
- **MODERN MEDICINE**

Jews have won:²

- 27% of the Nobel Prizes for Physiology or Medicine.
- 32% of the Lasker Awards in Medical Research.
- 41% of the Wolf Prizes in Medicine.
- 43% of the Louisa Gross Horwitz Prizes.
- 38% of the Cancer Research Sloan Prizes.
- Jews are only 0.2% of the world population. There are only 14 million Jews in the world and they have won 56 Nobel Prizes in Medicine. Contrast that with China and India with populations over a billion and yet they have only won one prize each. The Middle East with a population of 218 million has also only won 1 Nobel Prize in Medicine.
- An estimated 2.8 billion lives have been saved by Jewish medical inventions (jinfo.org/life_savers.html).
- Discoveries leading to blood storage and blood transfusion: Blood transfusion is estimated to have saved more than one billion lives since 1950s, "making it the single greatest lifesaving medical advance in history."
- Penicillin (Ernst Chain), 1928; Chain was co-recipient of the Nobel Prize for Medicine for his work on penicillin.
- Chemotherapy (Louis Goodman, Alfred Gilman, Sidney Farber), 1940s.
- Cardiac defibrillator (Paul Zoll), 1952.
- Radiation cancer therapy (Henry Kaplan), 1950s; cure rates of 70%-80% in Hodgkin's disease which was previously uniformly fatal.
- Optical fiber flexible endoscope (Basil Hirschowitz), 1960.
- LASIK eye surgery (Samuel Blum), 1981.
- Pill Cam or capsule endoscopy (Gavriel Iddan), 2001; tiny camera size of a pill to record images of the digestive tract.

c. The Secret of the Promise (Vs. 5)

- i. God's blessing flowed on to Isaac because of Abraham's obedience. Never underestimate how much blessing comes as the result of obedience to the Lord not only in your own life but in the lives of those who come behind you. Personal illustration: The blessings of a godly heritage (e.g., grandparents and parents who earnestly sought to walk in obedience to God and His Word) that continue to this day.
- ii. Obedience was one of the most prominent features of Abraham's walk. His obedience is emphasized 5 times in this verse!
 1. "because that Abraham obeyed my voice"

² Ibid

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2. "and kept my charge"
3. "my commandments"
4. "my statutes"
5. "my laws"

III. THE DECEIT DURING THIS TIME OF TESTING (VS. 6-11)

Tests in the Christian life have a way of bringing our blind spots and character flaws into plain sight. The illustration of the tea bag is useful. The hot water does not create the contents of the tea bag, it simply reveals them. The similarity between Isaac's and Abraham's deception cannot be ignored. Abraham lied twice about his wife Sarah and Isaac inherited the same fleshly instinct. What a sobering reminder of the Adamic nature that is passed on from parent to child and the need for God's grace to know victory over the carnal impulses of the old nature.

A. The Reasoning for Isaac's Lie (Vs. 6-7)

There were several influences that converged and motivated Isaac's deception. They were:

1. A compromised position (Vs. 6-7a)
 - a. Verse 6 states plainly that "Isaac dwelt in Gerar:". Notice the colon at the end of that statement. What follows is connected to Isaac's dwelling amongst the Philistines. While the Bible does not explicitly censure Isaac for dwelling amongst the Philistines, what follows indicates strongly that it was not God's best. In fact, the testimony of Scripture is consistent on this point. Whenever one of God's men in Scripture dwelt among the Philistines, it always produced problems. David is a prime example of this.
 - b. Gerar was not as far away as Egypt but having reached Gerar, it would be easy to then go on to Egypt, hence God's warning in verse 2. Beware of what can easily become halfway points between the consecrated, separated life and the world. Gerar was still within the land of Canaan so still generally fell within the sphere of God's will but that did not mean Isaac needed to dwell with the Philistines. Be careful of halfway points between the perfect will of God and second best. Don't let good get in the way of the best!
 - c. Living with the Philistines put Isaac's marriage in a vulnerable place. It wasn't long before the heathen men of the place inquired about Rebecca on account of her natural beauty. There was a very real danger that Rebekah would be carried off by one of the Philistine men. Many marriages are being lost today because of too much unhealthy contact with the Philistines. This is especially true in the area of the working woman. Instead of a Christian wife being a helpmeet to her husband and a homemaker, she all too often spends the majority of her time with other men in the workplace, often with devastating results! Keep your marriage clear of the Philistines and their ways and build a biblical home. It will be a lot safer for your marriage (Titus 2:5; 1 Tim. 5:14)! Christian husbands must also conduct themselves in an upright and wise manner in the workplace with the opposite sex.

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2. A fleshly fear (Vs. 7b). Living by fear rather than faith will lead you to make foolish decisions. Isaac's fear led him to misjudge the character of the people he was living amongst. Even though the Philistines were heathen people, it appears they held some respect for the sanctity of marriage (See Vs. 10-11). Some fears are well founded, others lead the individual to make inaccurate assumptions about the character of others.
3. A self-centred perspective (Vs. 7c). Isaac, like his father Abraham, was not thinking about what was best for Rebekah in this situation. He was thinking about himself. Saying she was his sister actually made her even more vulnerable to being taken by another man as they would assume she was available for marriage. This point is highlighted by Abimelech in verse 10. When live according to the self-life as a husband or wife, you will hurt your spouse. The natural drive of self-preservation is God-given but it must be under the control of the Holy Spirit.

B. The Revealing of Isaac's Lie (Vs. 8)

1. The period before the exposing of the lie (Vs. 8a)
 - a. The Bible notes that the lie was successful for a lengthy period of time – “when he had been there **a long time**”. We are reminded of the truth that sin cannot be concealed forever. “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23). Lies may go on for years without being revealed but God has a way of making sure the truth comes out eventually, especially when his children practice deceit. Deceit never pays. Tell the truth and trust God!
 - b. You may have gotten away with a lie for a long time but that is no excuse to keep perpetuating the same lie. You should confess it and come clean before the consequences become more dire.
 - c. The American preacher Phillips Brooks said, “Truth is always strong, no matter how weak it looks; and falsehood is always weak, no matter how strong it looks.”
2. The Providential exposing of the lie (Vs. 8b). The lie became obvious when one day Abimelech looked out his window and saw Isaac and Rebekah engaged in romantic activity as husband and wife. The word ‘sporting’ means ‘playing’. The Hebrew word is often translated ‘laugh’ in the Old Testament.

C. The Reproving of Isaac's Lie (Vs. 9-11)

Abimelech reproves Isaac for:

1. The untruthfulness of his actions (Vs. 9)
 - a. Abimelech plainly rebukes Isaac for his lie. It's a sad day for the believer when he/she requires a rebuke from an unsaved individual.
 - b. Griffith Thomas writes, “Is there anything sadder in this world than that a child of God should be rebuked by a man of the world? The corruption of the best is indeed the worst, and when a believer sins and his sin has to be pointed out to him by men who make no profession whatever of religion, this is indeed to sound the depths of sorrow and disappointment.”
 - c. The simple lesson is this. Christians need to tell the truth!

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- i. Col. 3:9-10 “**Lie not one to another**, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:”
- ii. Eph. 4:25 “Wherefore **putting away lying**, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.”
- d. Shun lying in all its form. For example:
 - i. Total lies. Yes, some Christians tell total untruths!
 - ii. Subtle lies. E.g., exaggerating the truth or partial truth telling.
 - iii. Cultural lies. Some justify dishonesty in the name of ‘culture’. There is nothing wrong with culture unless in conflicts with the Word of God. When culture collides with God’s Word, we dispense with the culture, not the Word of God! As believers, we have a Christian culture that is higher than national culture.
 - iv. Compassion lying. E.g., “I couldn’t tell them the truth as it would have hurt them.” Sometimes there is a place to keep something private and decline a question or answer a matter carefully and wisely so as to not cause unnecessary offense.
2. The unjustness of his actions (Vs. 10-11)
 - a. Lies hurt those who are deceived by them, especially when the truth is made known. Abimelech felt unjustly treated by Isaac – “What is this that thou hast **done unto us**...though shouldst have brought **guiltiness** upon us”.
 - b. Note: Abimelech’s view of adultery is commendable, especially considering the fact he was a heathen ruler. He even made enacted a stiff law with a death penalty attached to ensure sin would not take place. What a contrast to many of our rulers today in our nation who tend to pass laws that make it easier to sin or worse still, that out and out promote sinful behaviour. Butler writes, “**The problem with our laws today is that they have been to the dentist and had all their teeth pulled.**”

IV. THE DUTY IN A TIME OF TESTING (VS. 12-14)

A. He Sowed in a time of Famine (Vs. 12a)

1. Isaac took God’s promise of blessing by faith and sowed in the land, even though there was a drought in the land at that time. It is likely that the drought conditions were not as severe in Gerar due to the fact it was closer to the coast and therefore would have a higher rainfall. But ultimately, Isaac’s success was due to God’s blessing. Evidently his crops did much better than the Philistines otherwise they would not have envied him so much (Vs. 14b).
2. This is the first reference in the Bible to seed sowing. Significantly, the first reference to sowing the seed in the New Testament is found in Christ’s parable of the seed and the sower (Matt. 13, Mk. 4, Lk. 8). The seed represents the Word of God and the soil the heart.

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The good ground in Christ's parable also yielded "an hundredfold" (Vs. 8)

3. There is a clear lesson and encouragement for us today that we are to continue to sow the seed of the Gospel even in a time of spiritual dryness and famine. The sower in the parable did not discriminate as to where he cast the seed. He spread the seed out on the field, including on the hard, stony and thorny ground. The lesson is that the seed of God's Word has great power and with God's hand of blessing upon it, can bear fruit even in dry and difficult conditions. Let's be faithful to sow the seed in hearts throughout 2023.

B. He Reaped in a time of Famine (Vs. 12b)

1. The cause of the harvest's success is found in the words, "and the LORD blessed him". God's hand of blessing was on the seed that had been sown and it brought forth a bountiful harvest.
2. The success of the crops was no doubt due to the water from Isaac's wells. Isaac was a well digger and therefore had access to life giving water. In like manner, we can flourish in desert conditions if we draw on the wellsprings of the Spirit (John 7:37-39).
3. Psalm 126:5-6 "They that **sow** in tears **shall reap** in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, **bearing precious seed**, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*."
4. Isaiah 55:10-11 "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: **it shall not return unto me void**, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it."
1. 1 Cor. 3:6 "I have planted, Apollos watered; but **God gave the increase**."
2. Gal. 6:9 "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season **we shall reap, if we faint not**."

C. He Increased in a time of Famine (Vs. 13-14)

1. God caused Isaac to prosper during this period of His life. God is not limited by the circumstances!
2. Several descriptions are given of Isaac's progress:
 - a. "waxed great"
 - b. "went forward"
 - c. "grew"
 - d. "possession of flocks...herds"
 - e. Beyond the fact we are reminded that God can provide our physical needs, may God so work in our lives that we would wax strong in spirit, move forward, grow and enjoy all we possess in Christ through salvation.

Conclusion: Are you going through a time of testing? Stay close to the Lord and take care not to run from the place He has put you. Be aware that the ugliness of your sin nature will rear its head during a trial. Trust the Lord during your trial and do not resort to fleshly wisdom. Remember to sow in difficult conditions and trust God for a harvest. Draw on the wellsprings of the Spirit!

Sowing in a Time of Drought

Text: Gen. 26:12-14; Mark 4:1-20

Introduction:

1. If there is one prominent object associated with Isaac's life, it is the well. With Abraham it was the altar, with Isaac it was the well. This certainly fits the typological picture. Isaac's being offered on the altar of sacrifice is followed by Isaac digging wells and discovering "springing water" (Vs. 19). We know that "living water" is a picture of the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37) and the Holy Spirit was poured out following the cross.
2. In our last message we studied the theme of testing in the life of Isaac. Our outline was:
 - The Danger in the Time of Testing (Vs. 1-3a)
 - The Directive in the Time of Testing (Vs. 2b-5)
 - The Deceit in the Time of Testing (Vs. 6-11)
 - The Duty in the Time of Testing (Vs. 12-14)
3. In this message we will focus on Isaac's sowing and reaping during this time of famine and the lessons it has for sowing and reaping in the spiritual realm. We will consider this theme of sowing under three headings.

I. THE PRACTICE OF SOWING (VS. 12A)

A. The Conditions in which Isaac Sowed (Vs. 1)

1. The conditions were by no means favourable to sowing and reaping at this time. The situation was **dry** and **difficult**. To sow during a time of abundant rain with favourable soil conditions is one thing. To sow in a time of **drought** is quite another! The dire conditions could easily have discouraged Isaac from attempting to sow.
2. In the spiritual realm, we are living in dry and difficult times for the sowing of the Gospel seed in our nation. Spiritual drought is everywhere and from a human perspective the outlook is bleak for a harvest of souls. There are other sections of the harvest field that are more receptive to the Gospel seed at this time. **It is easy to get discouraged in the work of sowing by the difficulty of the conditions that confront us.** However, we should follow Isaac's example and sow irrespective of the conditions.

B. The Confidence with which Isaac Sowed (Vs. 2-5)

1. What was it that gave Isaac his confidence to sow? Undoubtedly his actions were undergirded by **the promises of God**. God had promised to bless him if he would stay in the land God had called him to and in the strength of that promise, Isaac sowed the seed.
2. Wherever God had called us to serve, we need to sow in faith, trusting the promises of God that in due season we "shall reap if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9). God instructed Isaac to **STAY** where He had put him and that he would know God's blessing there.
3. Christ is the Lord of the harvest and He determines which field we are to labour in for Him. God's will is for the Gospel to be preached

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to “every creature” so God places His sowers in difficult as well as more favourable areas.

4. It is likely that the drought conditions were not as severe in Gerar due to the fact it was closer to the coast and therefore would have a higher rainfall. But ultimately, Isaac’s success was due to God’s blessing. Evidently his crops did much better than the Philistines otherwise they would not have envied him so much (Vs. 14b).
5. This is the first reference in the Bible to seed sowing. Significantly, the first reference to sowing the seed in the New Testament is found in Christ’s parable of the seed, the sower and the soils (Matt. 13, Mk. 4, Lk. 8). The good ground in Christ’s parable also yielded “an hundredfold” (Vs. 8) We will do an overview of this parable under the next heading.

II. THE PARABLE CONCERNING SOWING (MK. 4:1-20)

The word ‘parable’ means “something thrown alongside of” so it has the basic meaning of a comparison or analogy. Christ told simple stories based on the experiences of his listeners to illustrate Divine truth.

Someone stated that a parable was like a doorway. “Jesus’ listeners stood at the doorway and heard Him. If they were not interested, they stayed on the outside. But if they were interested, they could walk through the doorway, and think more about the truth behind the parable and what it meant to their life.” A parable was intended on the one hand to reveal truth to the receptive and at the same time conceal truth from the rebellious (Vs. 11-12).

A. The Pictures of the Parable (Vs. 13-14)

1. The sower – represents Christ at that time when he was proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom and all believers that seek to sow the message of the Gospel (e.g., soul-winning).
2. The seed – represents the Word of God.
3. The soil – represents the hearts of the hearers.
4. Note: There is nothing wrong with the seed in any of these cases. The problem is in the condition of the soil. The seed does not need to be adjusted or tampered with to try and make it fit different soils!

B. The Particulars of the Parable (Vs. 14-20)

1. The Wayside Hearer – the Stubborn Heart (Vs. 4, 15)

- a. The ‘wayside’ refers to the narrow paths that crisscross the Galilean landscape, separating the fields and providing both farmers and travellers access through the countryside.” (JM) This would be like the path used by Christ and his disciples to go through the corn fields (Mark 2:23)
- b. The seed doesn’t even penetrate the surface of the soil and is quickly devoured by birds. Whatever the birds missed would be “trampled under foot” (Luke 8:5). Matthew notes that the wayside hearer “understandeth it not” (Matt. 13:19).
- c. This heart is hard and calloused to the Word of God to the point where the seed doesn’t even penetrate. This heart is hardened in unbelief.
- d. Satan moves quickly to remove the seed from their hearts. He uses many means to do this. Highlights how that whenever the

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Gospel sower is working, Satan is active too! (See 2 Cor. 4:4)
He snatches away the seed of the word “**lest they should believe and be saved**” (Luke 8:12)

2. The Stony ground Hearer – the Superficial Heart (Vs. 5-6, 16-17)

- a. ‘likewise’ = they are similar to the wayside hearer. The only difference is that their hard-heartedness is not so easily apparent being buried beneath the surface.
- b. These areas had a thin layer of topsoil covering a limestone layer below. “**A hard-rocky surface, covered with a thin layer of soil.**” (Robertson) The seed germinates quickly in the warm, shallow soil but soon withers in the heat of the sun.
- c. “receive it with gladness” = This hearer has a seemingly positive response to the Word. They get stirred and excited on an emotional level but deep down, the heart remains hard and unrepentant. “Shallow growth is the result of a spiritual experience that is emotionally exhilarating, but intellectually rootless.” (McKenna)
- d. “affliction or persecution...for the word’s sake” = they quickly wither when they start to bear the cost that comes with being a disciple of Christ. This plant dies as rapidly as it grows.
- e. **Remember**, this does not represent someone who is saved then loses their salvation. Rather, it pictures the false professor who on the surface appears to have come to saving faith but in reality, has only a shallow interest in the things of God.
- f. J.C. Ryle: “It is quite possible to feel great pleasure, or deep alarm, under the preaching of the Gospel, and yet to be utterly destitute of the grace of God. The tears of some hearers of sermons, and the extravagant delight of others, are no certain marks of conversion...Their impressions are like Jonah’s gourd, which came up in a night and perished in a night. They fade as rapidly as they grow.”

3. The Thorny ground Hearer – the Suffocated Heart (Vs. 7, 18-19)

These ‘thorns’ are a thorny bramble common to the land of Israel. The word is used in Matt. 27:29 in reference to the crown of thorns. You will notice that both the seed and the thorns spring up together but the thorns quickly outgrow the grain stalk and choke it to death. It is interesting how Matthew notes that “**he** (the hearer) becometh unfruitful”. The seed is strangled by three thorny branches. John Phillips labels them as follows:

- a. Worries – “the cares of this life”. These are the pressures, necessities and distractions of life. Their minds are pulled in different directions. People get so wrapped up in the concerns of here and now that they do not take time to pause and consider their eternal destiny. They rush busily down the broad way tragically unaware of the terrible fate that awaits them at the end.
- b. Wealth – “the deceitfulness of riches”. Riches promise so much joy, satisfaction and fulfilment that millions pursue them full of hopes and expectations, only to find at the end, they have been

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lured into a trap and deceived. 1. Tim. 6:9-10 *“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare...”* Wealth is dangerous because it “insulates people from the realities of life so they do not feel the need for the Gospel” (Phillips). Heed the challenge of Mark 8:36 *“For what shall it profit a man...”*

- c. **Wants** – “the lusts of other things”. Luke’s Gospel says “pleasures of this life” (Luke 8:14) One of the characteristics of the last days is that men will be “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2. Tim. 3:4) We live in a society given over to hedonism which means “a devotion to pleasure as a way of life.” How many people reject eternal life in heaven in favour of the temporary pleasures of this life.
- d. **Challenge:** While the primary interpretation refers to an unsaved soul, we can see how there is an application and warning for us as believers. The same things that keep the sinner from getting saved, keep the believer from growth and fruitfulness for the Lord. The ministry of the Word is strangled in their lives because of the **worries, wealth** and **wants** of this life. The Word of God may have an impact on them on a Sunday but it is quickly strangled during the week because of how they live. How thorn infested are the lives of some of God’s people!

4. The Good ground Hearer – the Sincere Heart (Vs. 8, 20)

The central mark of the good ground is that it produces fruit whereas the others do not.

There are two marks that identify the good ground hearer:

- a. Whole hearted reception of the Word – He “heareth the word, and understandeth it” (Matt. 13:23) and “in an honest and good heard, having heard the word, keep it” (Luke 8:15). Romans 10:10 reminds us “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness...” The Word penetrates deep into this heart, transforming and changing it.
- b. Patient fruit bearing – “and bring forth fruit”. The volume of fruit produced is a startling point in the parable - “some thirty...sixty...an hundred”.
 - i. Farmers in ancient Israel usually expected a six to eightfold yield at harvesttime. Christ’s words represent yields of 3,000, 6,000 and 10,000 percent! (JM)
 - ii. Luke adds the words “with patience” (Luke 8:15). This is in the present tense. They go on bearing fruit as a pattern of life. Jesus said, “...If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;” (John 8:31) We do not ‘continue’ in order to be saved or keep ourselves saved but we ‘continue’ because we are saved.

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6. Summary: There is a clear lesson and encouragement for us today that we are to continue to sow the seed of the Gospel even in a time of spiritual dryness and famine. The sower in the parable did not discriminate as to where he cast the seed. He spread the seed out on the field, including on the hard, stony and thorny ground. The lesson is that the seed of God's Word has great power and with God's hand of blessing upon it, can bear fruit even in dry and difficult conditions. Let's be faithful to sow the seed in hearts throughout 2023.

III. THE PROFIT FROM THE SOWING (Vs. 12b-14)

God was faithful to His promise to Isaac and blessed him with a bountiful harvest.

A. Isaac Reaped in a time of Famine (Vs. 12b)

1. The cause of the harvest's success is found in the words, "**and the LORD blessed him**". God's hand of blessing was on the seed that had been sown and it brought forth a bountiful harvest. All that matters is that God's hand of blessing is upon us. If God's hand is upon us, we will reap in due season.
2. The success of the crops was no doubt due in part to the water from Isaac's wells. Isaac was a well digger and therefore had access to life giving water. In like manner, we can flourish in desert conditions and flow out in blessing to others if we draw on the wellsprings of the Spirit. John 7:37-39 "In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, **out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)**"
3. The wells also remind us of the ministry of watering. 1 Cor. 3:6 "I have **planted**, Apollos **watered**; but **God gave the increase**." The sinner often needs multiple contacts with more than one believer before they come through to salvation. You seek to be a link in God's chain!
4. A harvest is promised to those who faithfully reap. Psalm 126:5-6 "They that **sow** in tears **shall reap** in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, **bearing precious seed**, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*." Gal. 6:9 "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season **we shall reap, if we faint not**."
5. God's Word will not return to void! Isaiah 55:10-11 "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: **it shall not return unto me void**, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it."

B. He Increased in a time of Famine (Vs. 13-14)

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1. God caused Isaac to prosper during this period of His life. **God is not limited by the circumstances!**
2. Several descriptions are given of Isaac's progress:
 - a. "waxed great"
 - b. "went forward"
 - c. "grew"
 - d. "possession of flocks...herds"
 - e. Beyond the fact we are reminded that God can provide our physical needs, may God so work in our lives that we would wax strong in spirit, move forward, grow and enjoy all we possess in Christ through salvation.

Conclusion: Are you a sower for the Lord? Imagine the impact just our church could have if every believer became a regular sower of the seed! Remember to sow in difficult conditions and trust God for a harvest. Draw on the wellsprings of the Spirit so that you can effectively water the seed sown.

1. The Challenge from the Sower – we need to be faithful in spreading the seed plentifully, irrespective of the condition of the soil. As we proclaim the Gospel, we can expect to see these four kinds of responses.
2. The Challenge from the Seed – there is power in the Word of God to accomplish salvation. We do not need to try and alter the seed but simply be faithful to sow it. In time, we will have the joy of seeing the seed fall on good ground and bring forth fruit.
3. The Challenge from the Soil – which soil best represents you? Are you a good ground hearer, allowing your heart to be ploughed and prepared by the Holy Spirit's conviction, receiving the Word in sincerity? Or are you one of the other three? Respond with a true heart to the Gospel.

Wellsprings of Revival

Part 1 – Hindrances to Revival

Text: Gen. 26:15-22

Introduction:

1. If there is one prominent object associated with Isaac's life, it is the well. With Abraham it was the altar, with Isaac it was the well. This certainly fits the typological picture. Isaac's being offered on the altar of sacrifice is followed by Isaac coming from the well Lahairoi (Gen. 24:62). Then we find him digging wells and discovering "springing water" (Vs. 19). We know that "living water" is a picture of the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37) and the Holy Spirit was poured out following the cross.
2. The name of Isaac is associated with 'wells' seven times in this chapter. "A well differs from a cistern, in that it is the place of running water. What a marvellous hint of the typical meaning of Isaac's well that is found in Genesis 26:19 – "springing water". Water is imperative for the maintenance of the natural life; so, too, is it with the spiritual. The first need of the believer is the "living water", that is, the Spirit acting through the Word." (Pink)
3. The well of springing water typifies the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. John 7:37-39 "In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, **If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.** (But this spake he of **the Spirit**, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)"
4. We will follow the theme of wells as they relate to this period of Isaac's life and the spiritual lessons and applications we can learn along the way. Our outline for this section will be as follows:
 - The Re-Digging of the Wells (Vs. 15-22)
 - The Revelation by the Well (Vs. 23-25)
 - The Reconciliation after the Wells (Vs. 26-35)

I. THE RE-DIGGING OF THE WELLS (VS. 15-22)

A. The Coming back to the Wells (Vs. 15-18)

1. Isaac was not so concerned with digging new wells as he was with getting back to the tried and tested wells of his father Abraham. He knew the life-giving water was there in those wells that would be more than sufficient to sustain and enrich their lives.
2. In this section we see Isaac going back – back to the wells of Abraham his father, back to Beersheba, the place of blessing, back to the tent and the altar and back to fellowship with God. In order to go forwards you have to go back to the basics and back to the place you should never have left in the first place. Some Christians

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stray from the Lord and seem to never fully recover. Both Abraham and Isaac recovered from their spiritual detours!

3. There was wisdom in Isaac's actions. He did not try to innovate and come up with a new method for living in a land with environmental challenges. His method was to **return** to the tried and tested wells of his father Abraham. He knew there was water there. It is a good reminder in our day when there is so much talk about "new methods" in order to know blessing in the modern era. However, in reality, we just need to return back to where the tried and tested sources of biblical blessing have always been – **living, vital contact with the Spirit of the living God in the Word and prayer**. God has not changed! Let us return to:
 - a. The Ancient Landmarks – The Standards of the Word of God. Proverbs 22:28 "Remove not **the ancient landmark**, which thy fathers have set." We are not talking about holding on to empty traditions but to the truths of God's Word. Churches should have no problem diverging from matters of subjective opinion from the past history of the church but should be extremely careful about throwing away the biblically based, tried and tested standards that have served the church well. We sometimes get accused of moving in a particular "direction" in relation to godly standards when in reality we are usually just trying to stick by the ancient landmarks that were established in the beginning.
 - b. The Ancient Paths – The Methods of the Word of God. Jeremiah 6:16 "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for **the old paths**, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*." Both the message and the methods of the Word of God go hand in hand and have not changed. Prayer, preaching and holy living have been mightily blessed of God in the past and still work in the present if we will embrace them with faith.
 - c. The Ancient Wells – The Workings of the Spirit of God. Genesis 26:18 "And Isaac digged **again the wells of water**, which they had **digged in the days of Abraham his father**; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and **he called their names after the names by which his father had called them**." The wellsprings of water symbolize the "living water" of God's Holy Spirit. Total reliance on the Holy Spirit for the Christian life and ministry, total reliance on the Holy Spirit for service, total reliance on the Holy Spirit for the proclamation of the Word of God are just as essential in our time as they were in the great revivals of yesteryear.
4. Warren Wiersbe writes, "The church keeps looking for something new, when all we need is to dig again the old wells of spiritual life that God's people have depended on from the beginning – the Word of God, prayer, worship, faith, the power of the Spirit, sacrifice, and service – wells that we've allowed the enemy to fill up. Whenever there's been a revival of spiritual power in the history of

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the church, it's been because somebody has dug again the old wells so that God's life-giving Spirit can be free to work."

B. The Clogging up of the Wells (Vs. 15)

The problem was not that the water had gone. The supply of water was still there in those ancient wells. The obstacle that stood between Isaac and the life giving, refreshing springs of water was the dirt of the Philistines. In revival there must not only be a return back to the truth but also a removal of the **hindrances** and **blockages** to revival. Like Isaac of old, we need to seek to remove the dirt of the Philistines from our lives so that we can know a greater measure of the Spirit's reviving work in our lives. The hindrances to revival must be removed! Let's consider what this dirt of the Philistines might represent in our lives.

There is:

1. The dirt of a Philistine world – we need to remove the devil's dirt from our lives. The world is the devil's shovel with which he seeks to fill our lives with rubbish so that we will no longer access the living giving workings of the Spirit through the Word. The world is not passive in its promotion of its sinful ways. It is constantly exerting pressure on the believer. Once you are full of the devil's dirt, you will become a dry and discouraged Christian and the devil knows the next step will be for you to give up on the ancient well of blessing and turn to your own broken cistern. Jeremiah 2:13 "For my people have committed two evils; they have **forsaken me the fountain of living waters**, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." If we are going to experience personal revival, it will involve purging our lives of the world's rubbish. For example:

a. **The world's media.**

For example:

- i. Ungodly movies – sin, sensuality and swearing through streaming services such as Netflix and Binge. Dangers on online video giants such as YouTube (approx.. 800 million videos). Temptation through the Television that gets more vile and more wicked with each passing year. The best place to store your T.V. set is at the rubbish dump! Or keep the screen and cut the cable!
- ii. The world's music. You aren't going to know revival in your life if you are filling your ears with the world's music with its sensual sound, rebellious beat and unholy lyrics.
- iii. Ungodly, violent video games – e.g., call of duty, Grand theft auto, Minecraft and Pokémon.
- iv. Social media - Facebook filth, Instagram iniquity, Twitter trash, Pinterest perversity, and Snapchat scum.
- v. The world's news and gossip – magazines, newspapers and online articles that exercise the mind on unwholesome and unholy themes. Not all news is newsworthy!
- vi. The world's literature – slushy romance novels, mysteries and thrillers that encourage lust, wicked imaginations and fascination with the unholy. Watch out for the ones that

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- may have a Christian cover but inside the content is hardly different from the world. Just a book has a Christian label on the outside doesn't mean it has Christian content on the inside!
- vii. Sinning on the Smartphone, lusting on the laptop and corrupting before the computer (e.g., pornography, emotional affairs).
 - b. **The world's mantras (philosophies).** If we don't carefully maintain a biblical worldview on every area of life, we can easily begin to have our thinking shaped according to the world's warped wisdom. Sadly, for many Christians today, their views on many things today have been influenced by the world. You may be surprised at times to find that even professing believers are thinking very unbiblically about the issues of the day (e.g., abortion, euthanasia, marriage, gender & sexuality).
 - c. **The world's materialism.** We need to watch that our lives do not get filled with the world's lust and passion for material things. While it's not wrong to have possessions, just make sure your possessions don't have you! Too much stuff can actually start to affect your spiritual walk!
2. The dirt of Philistine living – we need to remove the dirt of unconfessed sin in our lives as it is a major blockage and hindrance to true revival. A sensitivity towards sin in the life and a readiness to confess and forsake it is a prominent feature of any genuine revival. This is the testimony of the great revivals of history. This requires humility. “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray...” (2 Chr. 7:14) Isaiah 57:15 “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a **contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.**”
 3. The dirt of a Philistine nature – perhaps this is the most dangerous of all because it is so subtle and often the activity goes on undetected from the outward appearance of things. The Philistine, Adamic nature can dump a lot of dirt in our lives if we do not keep it at the place of death with the help of the Holy Spirit. subtil sins of the self-life grieve the Holy Spirit and limit His working in us. The kind of sins as those listed in Ephesians 4:30-32.
 - a. **Corrupt communication.** The word ‘corrupt’ means that which is putrid, rotting and worthless. So, the word covers speech which is: **Unholy** - Inuendoes, blue jokes, dirty jokes, deliberate double meanings, swear words, blasphemy, rough talk, toilet talk and idle gossip should never be heard coming from the lips of God's children. **Unprofitable** - The word not only covers speech which is defiling but speech which is ‘worthless’. A lot of time can be wasted on discussions around things which simply do not profit.
 - b. **Bitterness.** The word ‘bitterness’ is derived from the adjective ‘pikros’ that is used of a pointed or sharp arrow; hence it means to pierce, cut & prick. Bitter experiences often lead to a bitter

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spirit if the believer does not carefully guard his heart. It is like a gash or wound which if left untreated will become infected and spread septicemia through the body. Bitter people also cut, hurt, poison and wound others around them. Hebrews 12:15 warns, "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

- c. **Wrath & anger.** The two words are basically synonyms with a possible slight shade of difference between the two. The word 'wrath' has been defined as the outward expression of anger, the quick boiling up of anger whereas 'anger' has been defined as a deep flowing anger, the attitude of anger. "The word 'thumos' was more passionate and temporary, that is, anger that boils up, whereas 'orge' was more settled and abiding, a state of anger." (Hoehner) These two words cover both types of anger.
 1. The anger that smoulders away in the heart unseen.
 2. The anger that boils up quickly and is expressed in violent words and actions.
 - d. **Clamour.** The word means "outcry, shouting; the cry of strife; expression of dissatisfaction; noise. It refers to repeated and urgent complaining." "The violent assertion of rights & wrongs, real or supposed." (Moule) Wuest defines it as "the outcry of passion, the outward manifestation of anger in vociferation or brawling."
 - e. **Evil speaking** (blasphemy, slander). Comes from the Greek word βλασφημία. The word is translated elsewhere as Translated elsewhere as 'reviled', 'railed', "evil spoken of" & "to speak evil of". Satan is the master slanderer. Interestingly the word 'slanderer' in the N.T. (1 Tim. 3:11) comes from the same root word translated 'devil'. The word refers to slanderous and injurious speech against both God and man.
 - f. **Malice.** Comes from a broad Greek word meaning 'badness'. Webster defines 'malice as "Extreme enmity of heart, or malevolence; a disposition to injure others without cause, from mere personal gratification or from a spirit of revenge;" Malice in many ways is the fruit of a bitter, angry heart. Malice is where the attitude of bitterness and anger translates into a desire to injure and get revenge.
4. The dirt of Philistine doctrine – how often the wellsprings of truth and blessing get buried beneath layers of false doctrine. When believers get caught up in the seduction of false doctrine, they often get a false sense of revival. They have discovered a new truth! They've never known such zeal for God in their lives before! But in reality, it is more Philistine dirt that will yield dryness and destruction in the long term. Wrong teaching on the Holy Spirit is also another thing that clogs up the wells of blessing. There tend to be two extremes when it comes to the ministry of the Holy Spirit:
- a. The false fire fanaticism. For example, the emotionalism and excesses expressed in the Pentecostal/Charismatic movement. People are deceived into thinking they are experiencing the Holy

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Spirit when in reality they are experiencing an excitement and emotionalism that has been worked up in the flesh. The false fires of the charismatic movement prevent millions from experiencing the genuine power of God in their lives.

- b. The no fire of formalism. Some have gone to the opposite end of the spectrum due to an overreaction to the kind of unbiblical extremes described above. They may be doctrinally sound but they are dead and dry because they have practically confined the Holy Spirit's work to a theological textbook. There is no emphasis on prayer for the endowment of power. In fact, they actively oppose it in their misguided, misinformed zeal! They say things like "We don't need more of the Holy Spirit; He just needs more of us." While this statement expresses a partial truth, it also contains a false understanding of the Spirit's ministry. We do receive all of the Spirit's Person at salvation (we are not partially indwelt by the Spirit) but we do not receive all of His power and workings!
 - i. The Apostle Paul believed that the "supply" of the Spirit could be secured through prayer. Php. 1:19 "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the **supply** of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," The word means "to furnish or provide for." "The grammar assumes the closest kind of relationship between their prayer and the supply of the Spirit" (Fee). Regarding the historical background to the word Wiersbe writes, "Whenever a Greek city was going to put on a special festival, somebody had to pay for the singers and dancers. The donation called for had to be a lavish one, and so this word came to mean 'to provide generously and lavishly.' Paul was not depending on his own resources but on the generous resources of God, ministered by the Holy Spirit." The supply spoken of here is not so much the Person of the Spirit as it is the power and operations of the Spirit. We receive the Person of the Spirit at the moment of salvation but we do not automatically receive all of His workings. The gracious workings of the Spirit of God are secured through prayer.
 - ii. This is how we should understand Christ's words in Luke 11:13 "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"
 - iii. How are you going to know the power of God in your life if because of wrong theology you won't even ask God to fill and empower you with His Holy Spirit?
 - iv. Some well-meaning believers are actually guilty of quenching the Spirit in this area. 1 Thess. 5:19 "**Quench** not the Spirit." E.g., preacher who told his audience "There is no overflowing cup".
- c. "There are always people in society who go about stopping good things. Modern day Philistines in religion stop the Gospel with

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the dirt of modernism which denies the Word of God, the virgin birth of Christ, and the vicarious death of Christ – all wells of water for the thirsty soul. Modern day Philistines in society go about stopping streams of wholesome thought by dirty literature and magazines and books. Then there are Philistines in church today who throw the dirt of opposition at every church effort to reach people with the water of life.” (John Butler)

C. The Clearing out of the Wells (Vs. 18-19)

What is the solution to the dirt and rubbish of the Philistines? Very simple. It has to be cleared out by the believer. The Philistines would not remove it for Isaac nor would the dirt go away on its own. Isaac and his servants had to put time and effort into re-digging the wells. The water was still there and available but the hindrances had to be removed before they could know blessing. **True recovery from backslidden living takes time and effort as you deal with the layers of Philistine dirt that have been packed down in your life (personal testimony).** How can we clear out the dirt in our lives so that we can know revival blessings again?

1. Confession – 1 John 1:9 “If we **confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Humbling ourselves before God in brokenness over our sin is where the process starts. Psalm 51:16-17 “For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: **a broken and a contrite heart**, O God, thou wilt not despise.”
2. Cleansing – 2 Cor. 7:1 “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us **cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit**, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” What a striking command! God has made the provision for our cleansing but we must actively avail ourselves of it. We can avail ourselves of:
 - a. The cleansing of the Blood – 1 John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.**”
 - b. The cleansing of the Word – Psalm 119:9 “BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man **cleanse his way?** by taking heed *thereto according to thy word.*” John 15:3 “Now ye are **clean through the word** which I have spoken unto you.” Eph. 5:26 “That he might **sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,**”
3. Change – 2 Chr. 7:14 “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and **turn from their wicked ways**; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” Prov. 28:13 “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso **confesseth and forsaketh them** shall have mercy.” True repentance results in a change of life by the power of God. Don’t just confess your sins, forsake them by God’s grace!

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4. The Cross – Gal. 2:20 “**I am crucified with Christ**: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Only the cross is powerful enough to hold the corrupt self-life at the place of death. Romans 6:6 “**Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him***, that the body of sin might be destroyed, **that henceforth we should not serve sin.**” The Holy Spirit is the One who makes this a practical reality in our lives – Romans 8:13 “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye **through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body**, ye shall live.”

D. The Conflict over the Wells (Vs. 20-22)

1. If you get serious about re-digging spiritual wells, be prepared for a fight with the world, the flesh and the devil who will bitterly oppose you!
2. The devil hates the victorious Christian life and will do all in his power to oppose you drawing on the wellsprings of the Spirit in your life. If dumping the dirt of the world on you doesn't work, he will fight you for it!
3. “The devil attacks those who are being enriched spiritually. When a church is successful in doing the work of God, the devil will soon attack. Do not be discouraged if after you have done well spiritually, all sorts of trials and struggles come your way.” (John Butler)

To be continued...

Conclusion: Will you remove the Philistine dirt from your life with God's help and experience a fresh working of the Spirit in your life?

Prayer: “Lord make my life a well of springing water, not only for my own spiritual life and blessing, but that I might be a source of blessing and refreshment to others. Dear God, may the pulpit at NBC be a well of springing water where God's people can come and be refreshed and blessed. Lord, please make our church a well of springing water in a dry and thirsty land. Lord may each one of your children know something of the inner, life refreshing, empowering activity of your Holy Spirit in this place.”

Wellsprings of Revival

Part 2 – Helps to Revival

Text: Gen. 26:23-35

Introduction:

1. The name of Isaac is associated with ‘wells’ seven times in this chapter. “A well differs from a cistern, in that it is the place of running water. What a marvellous hint of the typical meaning of Isaac’s well that is found in Genesis 26:19 – “springing water”. Water is imperative for the maintenance of the natural life; so, too, is it with the spiritual. The first need of the believer is the “living water”, that is, the Spirit acting through the Word.” (Pink)
2. The well of springing water typifies the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. John 7:37-39 “In the last day, that great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, **If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.** (But this spake he of **the Spirit**, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)”
3. We are following the theme of wells as they relate to this period of Isaac’s life and the spiritual lessons and applications we can learn along the way. In our last lesson we covered the first point of the outline which we will review before studying the final two.
 - The Re-Digging of the Wells (Vs. 15-22)
 - The Revelation by the Well (Vs. 23-25)
 - The Reconciliation at the Well (Vs. 26-35)

I. THE RE-DIGGING OF THE WELLS (VS. 15-22)

A. The Coming back to the Wells (Vs. 15-18)

In this section we see Isaac going back – back to the wells of Abraham his father, back to Beersheba, the place of blessing, back to the tent and the altar and back to fellowship with God. In order to go forwards you have to go back to the basics and back to the place you should never have left in the first place. Some Christians stray from the Lord and seem to never fully recover. Both Abraham and Isaac recovered from their spiritual detours!

B. The Clogging up of the Wells (Vs. 15)

The problem was not that the water had gone. The supply of water was still there in those ancient wells. The obstacle that stood between Isaac and the life giving, refreshing springs of water was the dirt of the Philistines. In revival there must not only be a return back to the truth but also a removal of the **hindrances** and **blockages** to revival. Like Isaac of old, we need to seek to remove the dirt of the Philistines from our lives so that we can know a greater measure of the Spirit’s reviving work in our lives. The hindrances to revival must be removed! Let’s

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consider what this dirt of the Philistines might represent in our lives. There is:

1. The dirt of a Philistine world – we need to remove the devil's dirt from our lives.
2. The dirt of Philistine living – we need to remove the dirt of unconfessed sin in our lives as it is a major blockage and hindrance to true revival.
3. The dirt of a Philistine nature – The Philistine, Adamic nature can dump a lot of dirt in our lives if we do not keep it at the place of death with the help of the Holy Spirit.
4. The dirt of Philistine doctrine – how often the wellsprings of truth and blessing get buried beneath layers of false doctrine.

C. The Clearing out of the Wells (Vs. 18-19)

What is the solution to the dirt and rubbish of the Philistines? Very simple. It has to be cleared out by the believer. The Philistines would not remove it for Isaac nor would the dirt go away on its own. Isaac and his servants had to put time and effort into re-digging the wells. The water was still there and available but the hindrances had to be removed before they could know blessing. **True recovery from backslidden living takes time and effort as you deal with the layers of Philistine dirt that have been packed down in your life (personal testimony).** How can we clear out the dirt in our lives so that we can know revival blessings again?

1. Confession – 1 John 1:9 “If we **confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Humbling ourselves before God in brokenness over our sin is where the process starts. Psalm 51:16-17 “For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: **a broken and a contrite heart**, O God, thou wilt not despise.”
2. Cleansing – 2 Cor. 7:1 “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us **cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit**, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” What a striking command! God has made the provision for our cleansing but we must actively avail ourselves of it. We can avail ourselves of:
 - a. The cleansing of the Blood – 1 John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and **the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.**”
 - b. The cleansing of the Word – Psalm 119:9 “BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man **cleanse his way?** by taking heed *thereto* **according to thy word.**” John 15:3 “Now ye are **clean through the word** which I have spoken unto you.” Eph. 5:26 “That he might **sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,**”
3. Change – 2 Chr. 7:14 “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and **turn from their wicked ways**; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” Prov. 28:13 “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso **confesseth and**

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forsaketh *them* shall have mercy.” True repentance results in a change of life by the power of God. Don’t just confess your sins, forsake them by God’s grace!

4. The Cross – Gal. 2:20 “**I am crucified with Christ**: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Only the cross is powerful enough to hold the corrupt self-life at the place of death. Romans 6:6 “**Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him**, that the body of sin might be destroyed, **that henceforth we should not serve sin.**” The Holy Spirit is the One who makes this a practical reality in our lives – Romans 8:13 “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye **through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body**, ye shall live.”

D. The Conflict over the Wells (Vs. 20-22)

1. Isaac renames the wells the same names that his father Abraham had called them. The names of the wells give some insights into the conflict that raged over them.
 - a. Esek = means the Quarrel Well or “contention”.
 - b. Sitnah = means the Hatred Well.
 - c. Rehoboth = means the Well of Ample Room or “enlargement”.
2. There are some principles we can learn from these struggles over the wells.
 - a. **Firstly**, each generation must face and fight the same battles of the godly saints that have gone on before in order to maintain spiritual life and vitality. Abraham had faced conflict over these same wells with the Philistines (See Gen. 21:25). The time must come when the next generation speaks with the enemies in the gate (Psalm 127:5). Sadly, all too often the next generation surrenders their spiritual inheritance to the Philistines and is not willing to stand for the old wells of blessing.
 - b. **Secondly**, we are reminded that if we get serious about re-digging spiritual wells in our lives, we need to be prepared for a fight with the world, the flesh and the devil who will bitterly oppose you! The devil hates the victorious Christian life and will do all in his power to oppose you drawing on the wellsprings of the Spirit in your life.

II. THE REVELATION BY THE WELL (VS. 23-25)

Isaac now returns to Beersheba, presumably the place he left originally when he went into Philistia. As mentioned previously, in this section we see Isaac going back – back to the wells of Abraham his father, back to Beersheba, the place of blessing, back to the tent and the altar and back to fellowship with God.

A. The Place of Beersheba (Vs. 23)

1. Beersheba was an important place to the Patriarchs and was approximately 30 kilometres inland (southwest direction) from Gerar.

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2. The expression “from Dan to Beersheba” was used to describe the extent of the nation Israel north to south (Jug. 20:1; 1 Sa. 3:20; 2 Sa. 3:10; 24:2).
3. Summary of Beersheba by D. Cloud
 - a. Biblical History: It was named “well of the seven oath” by Abraham at his covenant with Abimelech (Ge. 21:28-31) Abraham and Isaac spent much time here (Ge. 21:33 - 22:1, 19; 26:31; 28:10). Abraham sent Hagar away from here (Ge. 21:14). Abraham planted a grove there and called on the name of the Lord (Ge. 21:33). Abraham travelled from there to Moriah to offer Isaac (Ge. 22:19). God appeared to Isaac here (Ge. 26:23-25). Jacob left here on his journey to Haran (Ge. 28:10). Jacob stopped here on his way to Egypt and offered sacrifices to God (Ge. 46:1). - It was allotted to the tribe of Simeon (Jos. 19:2). Simeon’s allotment was in the midst of Judah’s. - Elijah left his servant here when he went a day’s journey into the wilderness (1 Ki. 19:1-4).
 - b. Modern History: The Battle of Beersheba, October 31, 1917, was a major battle in the British war with the Turks in Palestine. A force of 800 Australian light horse made a frontal assault against roughly 4,000 Ottoman forces who were well dug in and led by German officers. The 4th Light Horse Brigade had already ridden 60 miles across the desert that day, but in the late afternoon they attacked, riding more than two miles across desert in the face of artillery, rifle, and machine gun fire. They rode their horses at a walk the first mile, cantered a short distance, then charged at a full gallop, supported by British artillery. The defenders hesitated in mounting an aggressive response, wrongly expecting them to dismount and attack with rifles, since that was the normal tactic of light horsemen. The city was captured before nightfall. The victory at Beersheba opened the road to Jerusalem and Damascus and led to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the loss of Palestine to Muslim rule.

B. The Position of Beersheba – ‘up’ (Vs. 23)

1. Isaac is moving ‘up’ again in his walk of faith. He is going back to the tried and tested place of blessing and fellowship with God. Perhaps the Lord was allowing the conflict to move Isaac back to Beersheba, the place of blessing.
2. Don’t miss this vital principle of spiritual recovery. Before you can go upwards and forwards, you must first go backwards – not going backwards in the sense of backsliding but in the sense of returning to the place of consecrated fellowship with God. Back to the Lord and His Word!
3. Sadly, for so many, they drift aimlessly in Philistine territory for the rest of their Christian lives rather than going back to the place of wholehearted consecration to the Lord.

C. The Promise at Beersheba (Vs. 24)

Significantly, as soon as Isaac returns to Beersheba, the Lord appears unto him.

1. The moment of the appearance (Vs. 24a)

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- a. The LORD appeared to Isaac “the same night” of his arrival in Beersheba. This is a wonderful encouragement! No sooner had Isaac returned to Beersheba, the presence of the Lord was made manifest in His life in a fresh way, a confirmation that He was back where God wanted him to be.
 - b. While we should not expect a visible appearance of the Lord in our lives in this dispensation, we can expect to know God’s presence by the Spirit when we take steps to return to close fellowship with Him.
2. The message in the appearance (Vs. 24b)
There are several beautiful strands of truth in God’s words to Isaac.
- a. The Person of God – “I am the God of Abraham thy father”. God declares the truth of His Person to Isaac. He is the same God who Abraham had served, the One True God and Creator of all. What an amazing truth that God is a Personal God – One we can know and One with Whom we can have a relationship. We serve the same God today. He is the same God as He was all those years ago to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
 - b. The Presence of God – “fear not, for I am with thee”. God’s presence never leaves the genuine child of God but we lose the comfort and the experience of God’s presence when we grieve Him. When we take steps to clear out the spiritual blockages from our lives and return to close fellowship with God, we experience the Lord’s presence afresh in our lives.
 - c. The Promise of God – “and will bless thee and multiply thy seed”. God promises that His blessing would be upon Isaac and that a specific part of that would be the multiplication of his seed. It is interesting to note that this blessing upon Isaac is connected to the life of godly Abraham – “for my servant Abraham’s sake”. Abraham’s godly walk was still bearing fruit in his son’s life well after he had gone.

D. The Prayer at Beersheba (Vs. 25)

We now have reference to the altar and the tent, two objects that were prominent in Abraham’s walk of faith. If we are going to know spiritual revival in our lives, we need to get back to the truths these two objects represent.

1. The prayer filled life – the altar.
 - a. The altar in both Abraham and Isaac’s life represented prayer. Isaac followed Abraham’s godly example – “And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, *having* Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he **builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.**” (Gen. 12:8) The altar is mentioned in connection with Abraham at least 5 times (Gen. 12:7, 8; 13:4, 18).
 - b. Altars in the Old Testament are also associated with blood sacrifices. We are reminded that prayer is made possible through the work of the cross and the mediation of Christ our Saviour.
2. The pilgrim life – the tent.

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- a. The tent was a portable dwelling place that pictures the pilgrim life. The tent dweller does not have a permanent home and often moves from place to place.
- b. As believers, we are to maintain a pilgrim mindset in our approach to this world and the things of this life. Like Abraham, we are anticipating and traveling to “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).
- c. Wiersbe writes, “**A fugitive is fleeing from home; a vagabond has no home; a stranger is away from home; but a pilgrim is heading home.**” The body we live in is our “tent”; one day it will be taken down and we’ll go to the heavenly city (2 Cor. 5:1-8)

III. THE RECONCILIATION AT THE WELL (VS. 26-35)

A. The Request for a Treaty (Vs. 26-29)

1. The Testimony that inspired the Treaty (Vs. 26-28)
 - a. Now that Isaac is back in a place of spiritual victory and blessing, his godly testimony begins to have an impact. A good testimony that has an impact on the world around us does not, as some claim, mean compromising with the Philistines. On the contrary, it is the separated, Spirit-filled believer who will by God’s grace have an impact for God on his/her generation.
 - b. W.H. Griffith Thomas writes, “The importance of separation from the world is here seen – As long as Isaac was in or near Gerar he did not experience much happiness. He was envied, thwarted, and opposed by the jealous Philistines. He was wanting not only in happiness but also in power, for it was not until he returned to Beersheba that Abimelech came to him bearing testimony to his conviction that God was with Isaac and blessing him. Thus, for happiness, comfort and power with others, separation from the world is an absolute necessity. There is no greater mistake possible than to imagine that we can be one with the world and yet influence them for Christ...Separation from the world, paradoxical though it may seem, is the only true way of influencing the world for Christ.”
 - c. King Abimelech, Phicol, the chief captain of his army, and Abimelech’s friend Ahuzzath come seeking a peace treaty with Isaac. The reason stated by Abimelech is truly remarkable – “**We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee**”. In verse 29 he also acknowledges “**thou art now the blessed of the LORD**”.
 - d. It is a truly wonderful thing when we so walk with God that the unsaved around us recognize a difference in our lives. Can your unsaved family, friends and work contacts see that God is with you in all you do? Do you have the kind of testimony that would even prompt them to approach you to ask “you a reason of the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). We need to be a witness both by our **life** and with our **lips**.
2. The Terms of the Treaty (Vs. 29)

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- a. The request was for a non-aggression pact – “That thou wilt do us no hurt”.
- b. Isaac, unlike Abraham, did not rebuke Abimelech for the misconduct of his men regarding the wells (Compare Gen. 21:22-34). Abimelech’s claim was incredulous in light of what had actually transpired! (Vs. 29) While Isaac’s desire to be a peacemaker is commendable, he had a tendency to be too passive at times, putting personal peace ahead of principle.

B. The Ratifying of the Treaty (Vs. 30-33)

The treaty was ratified with:

1. The ceremonial meal (Vs. 30)
2. The covenant (Vs. 31)
 - a. Abimelech and his men depart from Isaac **“in peace”**. This event in Isaac’s life reminds us of the truth of Proverbs 16:7 “When a man’s ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.”
 - b. Note: This says something of Isaac’s character. After all the bitter contention the Philistines had caused him over the wells of water, he was still prepared to make peace. Challenge – think of a scenario where the person who has caused the most hurt in your life showed up with a desire to make peace and reconcile. How would you respond? Would it be a feast or a fist?!
 - c. Romans 12:18 exhorts us, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”
 - d. “There was a real meekness and gentleness in Isaac’s life. Meekness means the self-sacrifice of our own desires and interests, and in this spirit of gentleness is the secret of truest character and finest victory over self and others. Egoism is always a cause of weakness, for constant consideration of ourselves is so absorbing that it tends to rob us of the very finest powers of our character. On the other hand, as we cease to regard self and concentrate attention upon others, we find our own character becoming stronger as it becomes more unselfish, and with that is quickly added influence over others, a beautiful recommendation of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (W.H. Griffith Thomas)
3. The contrast (Vs. 34-35)
 - a. Isaac was at peace with his neighbours, but he had war at home.
 - b. These concluding verses of the chapter give us an insight into Esau’s character and make us wonder how Isaac would consider giving him the blessing in the next chapter.

Conclusion: Will we seek with God’s help to clear out the blockages in our lives so we can know God’s blessing in a new and fresh way? Will you take steps to go back to the place of biblical blessing in your walk?

The Portrait of a Dysfunctional Home (Part 1)

When the self-life reigns in the home

Text: Gen. 27:1-17

Introduction:

1. This is a sad chapter in Isaac's home. Wiersbe titles this section "A Masterpiece in Pieces". We tend to think about this account in terms of Jacob deceiving his father of the blessing. That is certainly part of the story but it is only one dimension of a home where each member of the family was out of step with God's will in some way. In this message we need to take a good look at each member of the family in order to properly diagnose the problem and thereby also identify the Biblical solutions.
2. God's Word plainly records both the mistakes and the triumphs of the heroes of the faith for our admonition and instruction. But this account is not only a testament to the mistakes of Isaac's family. It is also a testament to the grace, mercy and patience of God in working with very imperfect, even broken individuals.
3. If we were to pick a one-word summary for this chapter, it would be the word 'deception'. And it wasn't just Jacob! Isaac and Esau hatched their clandestine plan first then Rebekah and Jacob came up with their counter plan to outsmart the other two.
4. There are important lessons and challenges to learn for the Christian home in this passage. We need strong, biblical homes in our day where each member of the family is submitted to God's will. We will study this account in four segments.

I. THE CATALYST FOR THE DECEPTION (VS. 1-4)

The account starts with Isaac which is a fitting place to start since in God's order for the home the husband is the head and therefore bears the greatest amount of responsibility before God (1 Cor. 11:3). So often, disorder in the home can be traced back to husband's headship. These verses give us a window into Isaac's physical, mental and spiritual state at this time in his life.

A. Isaac's Physical State (Vs. 1)

1. His body was aging (Vs. 1a)
 - a. Each phase of life has its special dangers. There are "youthful lusts" which are of a particular danger during that period of life. There are also spiritual dangers that come with old age when the body is deteriorating and weakening. This is why a close walk with the Lord and the constant strengthening of the inner man are so vital for every stage of the Christian life.
 - b. The fact you are declining physically does not mean you have to decline spiritually! 2 Cor. 4:16 "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, **yet the inward man is renewed day by day.**"

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2. His sight was abating (Vs. 1b)
 - a. This would be a major factor in the account that follows. Without the loss of his eyesight, it is hard to see how Rebekah and Jacob would have pulled off what they did. It is a sad state of affairs when a family member's physical limitation is used against them for personal gain but it happens in families. The vulnerability of old age is a very real thing.
 - b. Not only was Isaac's natural vision not good at this time, neither was his spiritual vision. "We may not be able to stop the decay in our physical body, but we certainly can prevent decay in our spiritual life as we grow older. Poor eyesight physically does not have to be accompanied by poor eyesight spiritually." (Butler)

B. Isaac's Mental State (Vs. 2; 4b)

1. The limitations of age and poor eyesight meant Isaac had a lot of time with his own thoughts. Isaac was a deep thinker ("And Isaac went out to mediate..." 24:63) and it is clear that "the day of his death" was very much on his thoughts at this time. He seems to have reached the conclusion that he would die soon – "that my soul may bless thee before I die" (Vs. 4).
2. It is only natural that Isaac give some thought to the day of his death. The Bible says plainly that "Isaac was old" and that "he could not see" (Vs. 1). It is even right and appropriate that one make preparations for death in the sunset years of life.
3. However, the danger is that worrying and fretting about when one is going to die can lead to foolish decision making as the case was here with Isaac.
4. In reality, Isaac actually erred in his thinking that he was about to die. We know that Isaac was at least 100 years old by this time as he was 60 years of age when the twins were born and Esau was 40 years old when he married his two Canaanite wives (Gen. 26:34-35). Isaac would live to 180 (Gen. 25:38).
5. **Remember!** While we should all be thinkers, we should not trust our minds as if they were the ultimate source of truth. Our thinking can be totally wrong! "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool..." (Prov. 28:26)

C. Isaac's Spiritual State (Vs. 3-4)

During the 23 years he was president of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Dr. William Culbertson frequently asked at the close of his public prayers, "Lord, help us to end well." A good beginning doesn't guarantee a good ending. It is tragically confirmed in the lives of people like Lot, Gideon, Samson, King Saul, King Solomon, Demas and a host of others. Sadly, we have to add Isaac to that list. Here we get to the heart of the problem. Isaac was being dominated by the self-life. This is made manifest in:

1. His Deceitfulness – Rebekah and Jacob were not the only ones acting deceitfully in this account. Isaac attempted to orchestrate a key decision in the family in a clandestine and deceitful manner without the involvement of his helpmeet Rebekah. This is not a recipe for a happy marriage where husband and wife deliberately

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- try to deceive one another and leave one another out of big decisions they should be making together as one unit!
2. His Disobedience – Isaac was going directly against the revealed will of God for the family. God had revealed to Rebekah that “the elder shall serve the younger” (Gen. 25:23). There can be no doubt Isaac was aware of this.
 - a. There was nothing spiritual motivating Isaac in all of this. Esau was a profane man who had despised his birthright (Gen. 25:34) and married heathen wives who were a grief to Isaac and Rebekah (Gen. 26:34-35). And yet, Isaac was still mesmerised by Esau’s achievements as a hunter and the food he produced from it. **There is something wrong when a parent values secular over spiritual achievements in their children’s lives. Despite Jacob’s problems, he did have an interest in spiritual things.**
 - b. Contrast Isaac’s priorities with Abraham’s priorities when he got close to death. His concern was to get a bride for his son and maintain the covenant promise (See Gen. 24). When King David came to the end of his life, he made arrangements for the building of the temple; and Paul’s burden before his martyrdom was that Timothy be faithful to preach the Word and guard the faith. Someone has well said, **“The end of life reveals the ends of life.”**
 - c. When Dad is living in disobedience to God’s Word, it damages the home! Conversely, when Dad is obedient and submitted to God’s will, it brings great blessing to his wife and children.
 - d. Prov. 20:7 “The just *man* walketh in his integrity: **his children are blessed after him.**”
 - e. Genesis 18:19 “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.” (God’s testimony of Abraham)
 3. His Desires – At the heart of it all, Isaac was being lead by a carnal appetite rather than by spiritual principles. The account makes it very clear that the great love of Isaac’s life at this time was venison! It is not a sin to have a favourite food or to enjoy a hearty meal (1 Tim. 4:1-5) but you are in a bad state spiritually if you make it the main passion of your life or the basis of significant, life changing decisions!
 - a. Isaac made it clear this was the love of his life – “And make me savoury meat, **such as I love**” (Vs. 4).
 - b. Rebekah knew it was the love of his life – “I will make them savoury meat for thy father, **such as he loveth**” (Vs. 9) “...and his mother made savoury meat, **such as his father loved**” (Vs. 14).
 - c. Jacob and Esau knew it was the love of his life (Vs. 19, 31)
 - d. We know from Genesis 25:28 that this was the basis of Isaac’s favouritism toward Esau – **“And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison:** but Rebekah loved Jacob.” What a

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shallow, selfish reason to play favourites! “It is a sad thing for a believer to be so ruled by his appetite that he actually “loves” his food and bases important decisions on its availability. But Isaac is not the last one of whom this is true.” (Henry Morris)

- e. What a reminder that the flesh does not get better with age! You can be a carnal, fleshly believer in old age as well as in youth. Old age does not mean you are exempt from the appetites of the flesh.

II. THE CONSPIRACY OF THE DECEPTION (VS. 5-17)

These verses primarily focus on Rebekah’s response to her overhearing her husband’s plan. Jacob was a willing accomplice to the crime! Isaac’s plan to do something contrary to God’s will was wrong but Rebekah’s response to Isaac was also wrong. Our responses to wrongs reveal just about as much about our spiritual state as our own sinful decisions.

A. Rebekah’s Wily Plan (Vs. 5-10; 14-17)

In response to Isaac and Esau’s plot, Rebekah hatched a plot of her own in consultation with Jacob.

1. The Source of Rebekah’s Plan (Vs. 5-7)
 - a. The reason for her response (on the surface) – Rebekah was responding to the conversation she overheard between Isaac and Esau. Evidently, she was eavesdropping without their knowledge.
 - b. The root of her response (below the surface) – what is on display in Rebekah is the quick rising up of the self-life in response to a provocation. This is Rebekah’s Adamic nature in full bloom. It is a sobering reminder that if we are walking in the flesh, we can so quickly do something that dishonours the Lord. Deceit was in Rebekah and Jacob’s DNA. It came to her so naturally. Look at the ease and speed with which she came up with this clever plan! Isaac was not nearly as good at deceit as his wife Rebekah. She came from a family where she had Laban for a brother and deceit was in their blood. We all have our own brand of flesh and manifest it in different ways but it all comes from the same root stock – indwelling sin (Rom. 7:17, 20). The cross is the only instrument powerful enough to deal with indwelling sin (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 8:13).
2. The Specifics of Rebekah’s Plan (Vs. 8-10; 14-17)

There were two main parts to Rebekah’s plan – cooking and clothing.

 - a. Cooking (Vs. 8-10) – she would make savoury meat that would taste just like what Esau made. This indicates that Isaac’s love of his son’s venison went beyond the taste to an admiration of his hunting skills. If Rebekah knew how to make Isaac’s favourite dish, why not just ask her to make it for him if he simply wanted to enjoy a nice meal? It was because he wanted to bestow the patriarchal blessing on his favourite son.
 - b. Clothing (Vs. 14-17) – Rebekah would cloth Jacob in Esau’s raiment and then use the skin from the goats upon his hands

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and neck, thus to deceive her husband's sense of smell and touch in the absence of his sense of sight.

3. The Sinfulness of Rebekah's Plan

As we consider Rebekah's actions in light of the Word of God, we can see that her plan involved serious violations of Biblical principles. Her plan meant:

1. Dishonouring her God

a. Rebekah had received a special, direct revelation from God concerning the future of her twin boys before they were born (See Gen. 25:21-23). Her desire to see God's will accomplished in her sons lives as revealed by God was right. Her carnal method for trying to achieve God's will in her family was totally wrong!

b. This account provides yet another warning against **trying to achieve God's will your way**. Instead of seeking God and trusting Him with the situation that was unfolding, Rebekah resorted to her own fleshly wisdom with disastrous results. The spiritual perspective would have been to recognize that if it was God's will and purpose for Jacob to be the spiritual head of the family, God would ensure it would take place without any help from her. But from the human standpoint it appeared that God's will was about to be thwarted. Abraham and Sarah made the same mistake with Hagar. It is so much more in line with the natural man to act in haste rather than waiting upon and resting in God.

c. **We need to be reminded that God will fulfill His will His Way, in His timing and according to His Divine wisdom.** On our end, we are to submit to and cooperate with God, in faith trusting Him to do what we cannot do. God blesses faith!

d. We need to remember that we cannot achieve spiritual outcomes through fleshly scheming and energy. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom. 8:8) "...for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5)

e. "As another has suggested "they both acted on that God dishonouring proverb that "The Lord helps those who help themselves," whereas the truth is, the Lord helps those who have come to the end of themselves." (Pink)

2. Usurping her Husband

a. We understand that the greater responsibility was with Isaac in this situation. In a vacuum of spiritual leadership in the home, a wife will be more tempted to rise up and try and take control. Imagine if Isaac had handled this situation in a spiritual manner, cooperating with God's plan for his two boys. How different it would have been for Rebekah and how different it would have been for the two boys!

b. However, this did not excuse Rebekah's response. Isaac's selfish plan was wrong. But Rebekah's carnal response was also wrong!

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- c. Sadly, the husband-and-wife profile in this passage is replicated all too often in Christian homes and it looks something like this:
 - i. Dad is spiritually weak, passive in his leadership and focused on the fulfilment of his selfish pursuits. You may have a laid-back personality but that does not mean you have to be laid back spiritually as a husband and father! Passive, spiritually weak men are one of the greatest problems in Christian homes today.
 - ii. Mum is manipulative, controlling and dominant in the home. A woman determined to get her way even if it means resorting to ungodly means to do so!
 - d. In relation to her husband, Rebekah had at least two godly options available to her:
 - i. Pray for her husband.
 - ii. Appeal to her husband.
 - iii. Live before her husband.
3. Manipulating her Son
- a. Rebekah's love for Jacob was tainted with the self-life in this account. Godly love "doth not behave itself unseemly...thinketh no evil...rejoiceth not in iniquity" (1 Cor. 13:5-6)
 - b. Twice Rebekah says to Jacob "obey my voice" (Vs. 8, 13). There is an assertiveness with Rebekah as she applies motherly pressure on Jacob to make sure she gets her way.
 - c. Remember that by this time, Jacob is at least 40 years old (See Gen. 26:34). What a pathetic scene! That Jacob was respectful and loving towards his mother is commendable but his was well and truly old enough to refuse to obey such a plan if he had been spiritually mature. In fact, it seems that God had to remove Jacob from his mother in order to really begin making him into the man he needed to be.
 - d. Adult children should not cooperate with carnal manipulation in a parent, especially if it is going to take them in a direction contrary to God's will for their lives!
 - e. Mothers, by virtue of the special place they occupy in their children's lives, have to be careful that they don't use that position and influence in the home to achieve their own selfish, uncrucified desires. A wife and mother who is spiritual, Spirit controlled and sweet can be such a powerful influence for good and godliness in her family. On the other hand, a wife and mother who is carnal and controlling can do so much damage. Imagine Rebekah as a pastor's wife in this state (yikes!!!).
 - f. Overly dominant mothers do their adult sons a terrible disservice as it can stunt the development of their leadership skills and set them up or problems in marriage. Jacob would later unwisely yield to his two wives demand that he marry their servant girls.

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B. Jacob's Willing Participation (Vs. 11-14)

1. Jacob's Concern (Vs. 11-12)

- a. The concern that Jacob raised with his mother in response to her plan reveals a lot of where he was at spiritually at this time. Notice that Jacob does not object to the plan being sinful. He does not counsel his mother that to deceive his own father and brother would be ungodly. His only concern was that he might get caught. We see that Jacob, as with the other members of the family, is being self-centred. "Sadly, Jacob's concern wasn't "Is it right?" but "Is it safe?" He was worried about the eleventh commandment: "Thou shalt not get caught". Isaac's wrong philosophy was "If it feels good, it is good". Rebekah's wrong philosophy was "The end justifies the means!" (Warren Wiersbe)
- a. Jacob is typical of so many who are not concerned about the seriousness of sin but who care only about the potential consequences for their sin.

b. Jacob's Cooperation (Vs. 13-14)

Jacob was all too willing to go along with his mother's deceptive plan. This was because her plan was in line with:

- a. Jacob's natural deceitfulness – like mother like son! Jacob was wired in a similar way to his mother. Deception was in his DNA also. After all, his name Jacob meant "heel gripper".
 - i. "The picture is that of one grabbing the heel of another to trip him up. The word supplanter describes the action. And the word "supplanted" is what Esau used of Jacob when Esau missed out on the blessing from Isaac." See Gen. 27:36. The word 'supplant' means "to trip up the heels; to remove or displace by stratagem; or to displace and take the place of" (Webster's 1828).
 - ii. This action of Jacob as he came out of the womb was indicative of his inner nature in Adam. He would be a calculating, deceiving individual who was skilled in getting the best out of a situation. God is His love and grace would work on Jacob to transform him from Jacob, a supplanter, to Israel, a prince with God.
- b. Jacob's natural desires – to get an advantage over his older brother and take the primary position of authority and influence in the family clan appealed to Jacob. He had already outsmarted Esau of the birthright for the low cost of a bowl of lentil soup. Now he would partner with mummy and pull the wool over dad's eyes by putting some wool on himself. We are always more susceptible to sinful suggestions that appeal to the bent of our sin nature. We should note that despite Jacob's fleshliness at this time of his life, underneath it all he did value spiritual things as highlighted in his desire for the birthright vs Esau's despising of it.

Conclusion: What's the solution for such a home? Personal revival for each member of the family, dying to self with all its selfish desires and ambitions and allowing Christ's love to reign in the heart and life.

The Portrait of a Dysfunctional Home (Part 2)

When the self-life reigns in the home

Text: Gen. 27:18-46

Introduction:

1. This is a sad chapter in Isaac's home. Wiersbe titles this section "A Masterpiece in Pieces". We tend to think about this account in terms of Jacob deceiving his father of the blessing. That is certainly part of the story but it is only one dimension of a home where each member of the family was out of step with God's will in some way.
2. There are important lessons and challenges to learn for the Christian home in this passage. We need strong, biblical homes in our day where each member of the family is submitted to God's will. We are studying this account under four headings.

I. THE CATALYST FOR THE DECEPTION (VS. 1-4)

A. Isaac's Physical State (Vs. 1)

1. His body was aging (Vs. 1a)
2. His sight was abating (Vs. 1b)

B. Isaac's Mental State (Vs. 2; 4b)

C. Isaac's Spiritual State (Vs. 3-4)

II. THE CONSPIRACY OF THE DECEPTION (VS. 5-17)

These verses primarily focus on Rebekah's response to her overhearing her husband's plan. Jacob was a willing accomplice to the crime! Isaac's plan to do something contrary to God's will was wrong but Rebekah's response to Isaac was also wrong. Our responses to wrongs reveal just about as much about our spiritual state as our own sinful decisions.

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III. THE CARRYING OUT OF THE DECEPTION (VS. 18-29)

Jacob now puts his mother's deception plan into action, deceives Isaac and secures the patriarchal blessing for himself.

A. The Beguiling (Vs. 18-26)

Jacob weaves a **tapestry of lies** to deceive his father. When you resort to lying, you rarely stop at one lie. One lie leads to another and soon you find yourself trapped in your own web of deception.

Consider...

1. Jacob's Deceitful Claims (Vs. 18-20, 24)

Take a look at Jacob's litany of lies:

- a. Lie # 1 – I am Esau, thy Firstborn (Vs. 18-19a, 24)
 - i. Jacob approaches his father Isaac and blatantly lies about his identity, claiming to be his firstborn son Esau.
 - ii. Isaac, somewhat in doubt, asks “Art thou my very son Esau?” to which Jacob replies, “I am” (Vs. 24).
 - iii. God's Word exhorts the believer, “**Lie not one to another**, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;” (Col. 3:9)
- b. Lie # 2 – I have done as you asked (Vs. 19b)

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- i. In reality, Jacob didn't go hunting, nor did he make the venison. Liars have no problem claiming something about themselves which in reality is the total opposite to who they are as an individual.
 - ii. That Jacob was no hunter, we know from Genesis 25:27 "And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents."
 - iii. Note: We should remember that Jacob was lying to his own father at his mother's behest. She had actually encouraged her son to blatantly lie to his own father! It is a sad day in a marriage when you have a spouse making an unholy alliance with a child in the home to actively work against the other spouse.
 - c. Lie # 3 – I was helped by the Lord (Vs. 20)
 - i. This lie is the worst of all. Isaac rightly asks how it was possible that he had found the game so quickly and Jacob responds with the claim, "Because the LORD thy God brought it to me".
 - ii. Telling a lie is wicked enough but using the Name of the God as a cover to your deception is the lowest kind of lie that can be told.
 - iii. And yet how often Christians try and wrap their deception and compromise in a spiritual cloak. The Name of our blessed Saviour gets attached to things He has nothing to do with!
 - d. Lie # 4 – I really am Esau! (Vs. 24)
 - i. Isaac's question gave Jacob an opportunity to come clean and admit he was lying. Instead, he doubles down and affirms that he is in fact Esau.
 - ii. Sir Walter Scott wrote in his poem "Marmion", "O what a tangled web we weave/ When first we practice to deceive".
 - iii. If you start traveling down the highway of deception, take the nearest exit as the longer you travel down that road, the worse things will get. Jacob was sowing some things in his life at this time and his time of reaping would come.
2. Jacob's Deceitful Costume (Vs. 21-27a)
- a. Jacob covered his identity with a deceptive cloak. He wore Esau's cloths and put the skins of the goats upon his arms and neck to make himself seem hairy like his brother. In this way, Isaac's sense of touch and smell would be deceived. Jacob provides a vivid picture of a hypocrite. A hypocrite is someone who is a play actor and puts on a false appearance. In the words of Webster's dictionary (1828) a hypocrite is, "One who feigns to be what he is not; one who has the form of godliness without the power, or who assumes an appearance of piety and virtue, when he is destitute of true religion."
 - b. Jacob crowned the act with a deceptive kiss. A kiss is meant to convey genuine affection and sincerity in this cultural and family

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context and yet it was really a kiss of betrayal. Isaac's deceitful kiss reminds us of some other deceitful kisses in the Bible. Joab kissed Amasa before he stabbed him to death (2. Sam. 20:9). The harlot kissed the unwise young man before she destroyed his morals (Prov. 7:13) and Judas Iscariot kissed the Saviour in betraying him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:48-49).

- c. Note: Here we come face to face with Jacob as he is in Adam. He is the supplanter, the heel catcher, the deceiver. But God was going to deal with this deceiver and turn him into Israel, a prince with God.

B. The Blessing (Vs. 27-29)

Jacob's deception succeeds and Isaac proceeds with bestowing the patriarchal blessing upon Jacob. We note three aspects to the patriarchal blessing:

1. The Temporal Blessings (Vs. 27-28)
 - a. The first part of Isaac's blessing is focused upon material blessings related to the productivity and fruitfulness of the land.
 - b. Notice the blessing of fruitfulness is described in three ways:
 - i. The dew of heaven.
 - ii. The fatness of the earth.
 - iii. Plenty of corn and wine.
 - c. While the temporal blessings were a legitimate part of the covenant, it is interesting to note that temporal things are at the forefront of Isaac's mind at this time. Contrast this with the second blessing he pronounces on Jacob after this incident in Genesis 28:1-4.
2. The Governmental Blessings (Vs. 29a)
 - a. Rulership over Nations – "Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee". The closest Israel came to this part of the blessing in her history was during the golden era of Solomon's reign. Due to Israel's disobedience to God, she has been oppressed and dominated by the Gentiles for much of her history. Only in the Millennium will Israel enjoy this aspect of the covenant in its fulness. The converted Jews will be held in great honour by the nations in the Millennium.
 - i. Zech. 8:23 "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even **shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.**" "Taking hold of the skirt" refers to taking hold of the edges of the Jew's garments. The Hebrew word for "skirt" ("kanaph") is elsewhere translated "borders" (Num. 15:38) and "corners" (Is. 11:12). It referred to the border of Saul's robe (1 Sam. 24:4). The Gentiles will bow down and take hold of the skirt as a sign of respect and submission."¹
 - ii. Isaiah 49:23 "And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to

¹ D Cloud, *Way of Life Commentary Series; Minor Prophets*, p. 372.

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- thee with *their* face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I *am* the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”
- b. Headship in the family – “be lord over they brethren”.
 - i. Remember that this meant being the one to carry on the Seed Line. What a privilege to be a link in the Messianic family tree!
 - ii. It is a reminder of just how much Isaac was out of step with God’s will in seeking to bestow this upon Esau when God had made it clear by direct revelation that “the elder” was to “serve the younger”.
3. The Spiritual Blessings (Vs. 29b)
- a. Isaac now pronounces God’s promise that was made to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 “And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”
 - b. This is a key part of the blessing and shows that the blessing God pronounced on Abraham in Genesis 12:3 was intended not just for Abraham as an individual but for Abraham’s descendants who would become the nation of Israel.
 - c. This Divine pronouncement of blessing and cursing has never been rescinded and nations that bless Israel today will be blessed of God and nations that curse Israel will be cursed of God. Those who engage in Antisemitism are in serious trouble with God Almighty!
 - d. Illustration: England and her mistreatment of Jewish refugees after World War 2.

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DECEPTION (VS. 30-46)

The account goes on to demonstrate the sad consequences to this whole situation. When the cover was blown, each person responded differently. How did each member of the family respond in the aftermath of this event?

A. Isaac – A Sober Response (Vs. 30-33; 37-40)

Isaac, despite his failures in the first part of the story, appears to begin thinking and acting in a wiser, more spiritual fashion from this point.

This is noted in:

1. His Conviction about the Situation (Vs. 30-33)
 - a. Esau’s Coming (Vs. 30-32). Esau arrives on the scene just moments after Jacob had left his father’s presence. How often monumental moments in history come down to a few minutes!
 - b. Isaac’s Trembling (Vs. 33). All of a sudden, the situation dawns on Isaac and he “trembles very exceedingly”. This was not a little trembling; the old man shook violently as the reality of what had just happened crashed in upon him.
 - i. Isaac trembled with emotion. The trembling of the body indicates the welling up of very strong emotions in Isaac. Think of what this must have been like for Isaac as he realized that his own wife and son had conspired together to deceive him.

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- ii. Isaac trembled with conviction. It is also likely that at this moment Isaac's conscience was awakened from slumber as he realized that His plan to bless Esau in place of Jacob had been overruled by the Providence of God. We would do well to tremble at times in the remembrance of the fact that "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).
 - iii. John Gill writes, "He (Isaac) was amazed, and astonished, and seized with a trembling all over his body, and with terror and confusion of mind; at the craft of Jacob in getting the blessing; at the disappointment of Esau in losing it; at his own act in blessing Jacob instead of Esau, contrary to his inclination and intention; and at the overruling providence of God in bringing this about in so strange a manner, agreeably to the oracle he had given Rebekah; which now perhaps came fresh into the mind of Isaac, if he had heard it before; and all together threw him into this amazement:"
2. His Submission to the Situation (Vs. 37-40)
- a. Isaac's submission is seen in his refusal to reverse the blessing he had just pronounced upon Esau. Comparing Hebrews 12:17 it seems clear that Esau hoped to secure a change of mind in Isaac through his tearful pleadings but to no avail.
 - b. Isaac's submission is seen in the second blessing he bestowed in Jacob in chapter 28:3-4.

B. Esau – A Sour Response (Vs. 34-38, 41)

There is no question that Esau had suffered wrong at the hands of his Rebekah and Jacob. Isaac also bears responsibility as he was wrong to raise an expectation in Esau that he would receive the blessing contrary to God's revealed will for the family. In the Christian life, we WILL experience injustices, wrongs and hurts at the hands of others, and sadly including at the hands of fellow believers. There is a right and a wrong way to respond to such things. Esau's response serves as a warning on how **NOT** to respond to such things. Esau responded with:

1. Bitterness (Vs. 34-36)
- a. The Bible says that Esau cried with "a great and exceeding **bitter** cry". This is the first time the word is used in the Bible and gives us helpful insights into the problem of bitterness.
 - b. We know from the immediate context the word speaks a certain kind of crying. These were bitter tears over a bitter experience for Esau. However, we know from the key New Testament passage on bitterness that Esau's problem was not just bitter tears but bitterness of heart.
 - c. Hebrews 12:15-17 "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled; **Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau**, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he

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found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”

- d. We would do well at this point to segue into a summary of the key truths concerning the subject of bitterness presented in these verses. There are five important lessons regarding bitterness we need remember:
- i. The **candidate** for bitterness – “lest **any man**”. No one, no matter how spiritual is exempt from the danger of bitterness. It can infect **anyone!**
 - ii. The **cause** of bitterness – “fail of the grace of God”. The word ‘fail’ means “to lack or be in want”. The lack of grace is not on God’s part. His supply of grace is infinite and available to every believer (2 Cor. 9:8). The failure is on the part of God’s people to appropriate the grace of God in their lives when trials and hurts come. The word ‘bitter’ means “to cut or prick”. Bitter experiences create wounds in the heart and precipitate the onset of the disease of bitterness unless we apply the ointment of God’s healing grace to those wounds.
 - iii. The **character** of bitterness – “lest any root of bitterness springing up”. The development of bitterness is from root to fruit. Bitterness lies beneath the surface unseen and undetected at first but eventually “springs up” and manifests its ugly fruit. A good illustration of this is the waters of Marah (Marah is the Hebrew word for bitter). Exodus 15:23 “And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they *were bitter*: therefore the name of it was called Marah.” On the surface the water appeared drinkable but upon tasting it, the children of Israel realized they were bitter. We see in Esau the marks of a bitter person.
 1. They reinterpret the past (Vs. 36). Esau fails to mention that he despised his birthright and blames Jacob for everything.
 2. They focus on the temporal rather than the spiritual. As a profane man, Esau was only interested in the material and temporal aspects of the blessing.
 3. They are often immoral. Esau was a ‘fornicator’.
 4. They are revengeful towards those they are bitter against.
 - iv. The **contamination** of bitterness – “trouble you and thereby many be defiled”
 1. It damages you – “trouble you”. The word literally means “to trouble in a crowd”. It means to vex, irritate, torture and annoy. The same root word is translated ‘vexed’ twice in Luke 6:18 & Acts 5:16 in relation to the work of “unclean spirits”. Bitterness will torture your soul. You are the one who suffers when you are bitter, not the person you are bitter against. Bitterness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person

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drops dead. Bitterness often leads to immorality and profane living (valuing and prioritising the temporal above the eternal).

2. It defiles others – “and thereby many be defiled”. Bitterness is like a fast moving, infectious plague. It’s a spiritual super spreader virus which if left undealt with, can do widespread damage and harm. Absalom’s poisoning of the people against David is a prime example of how just how far and how much damage one man’s bitterness can do (See 2. Samuel 15).

v. The cure for bitterness – “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God”. There are two cures for bitterness:

1. Guarding the Heart – “looking diligently”. The word means “to look carefully, to beware.” The same word is translated in I. Peter 5:2, “taking the **oversight** (thereof)” and “the office of a **bishop**” in I. Timothy 3:1. Also ‘**overseers**’ (Acts 20:28) and ‘**bishop(s)**’ (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:7, 1 Peter 2:25). Christ is described as the “Shepherd and **Bishop** of your souls” (I. Peter 2:25) Each believer needs to be a bishop of their own heart! Proverbs 4:23 says, “**Keep thy heart** with all diligence; for out of it *are* the issues of life.”
2. Grace in the Heart – “the grace of God”. If failing of God’s grace is the cause of bitterness, then availing oneself of God’s grace is the preventative and the cure for bitterness. What a wonderful example we have in Joseph who was enabled by God’s grace to respond right to the hurts in his life. “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; **but God meant it unto good**, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.” (Gen. 50:20) What a wonderful example we have in our Lord Jesus Christ who despite all the bitterness of the cross (bitter accusations, bitter thorns, bitter whips and bitter nails) prayed “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” (Lk. 23:34) Going back to the illustration of the waters of Marah (Ex. 15:22-27), the cure for those bitter waters was a tree the LORD shewed Moses – “And he cried unto the LORD; and **the LORD shewed him a tree**, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet...” (Vs. 25). If you will come to God and cry out to him about the bitter state of your heart, He will point you to the rugged tree of Calvary as it is only at the foot of the cross that bitter hearts can be made sweet.

2. Maliciousness (Vs. 41)

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- a. Bitterness, if allowed to fester and grow in the heart, can turn to icy, murderous hatred as seen in the example of Esau.
 - i. He hated Jacob because of the blessing.
 - ii. He resolved to murder Jacob upon his father's death.
- b. The error of the saying "time heals all wounds" is illustrated in the fact that **over 20 years later** when Esau heard that Jacob was returning went out with 400 armed men to meet Jacob and would no doubt have killed him had it not been for the intervention of God (Refer Genesis 32-33). In reality, apart from the grace of God working in the heart, bitterness only gets worse with time. **Time and the grace of God** are needed to heal from hurts.
- c. Illustration: Absalom is another prime example of one who nursed bitterness towards David for years over his inaction in relation to the scandal involving Amnon and Tamar which eventually resulted in Absalom leading a revolt with the intent to kill his own father and steal the kingdom.

C. Rebekah – A Scheming Response (Vs. 42-46)

1. Rebekah's Manipulation (Vs. 42-46)

Rebekah continues with her calculating ways in order to try and rectify the damage she has done.

 - a. Rebekah's plan for Jacob (Vs. 42-45). Rebekah – "obey my voice"! She's at it again! There is something wrong with this picture as Rebekah is still very much in the driver's seat of the home rather than Isaac.
 - b. Rebekah's presentation to Isaac (Vs. 46). No doubt Rebekah was concerned about who Jacob was going to marry but this was not the primary thing motivating her to send him away. Sadly, she is still operating in a calculating and deceptive way with her husband.
2. Rebekah's Miscalculation (Vs. 44-45). Rebekah's "few days" turned out to be 20 years. Rebekah tried to "save" Jacob in the wisdom and energies of the self-life and "lost" Jacob. Luke 9:24 "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." Trying to achieve God's will your way never ends well.

D. Jacob – A Submissive Response (28:1-5)

1. We will continue with the account as it develops in chapter 28 next sermon but we briefly note at this point that Jacob submitted to his parent's council and embarked on the long journey to Padanaram to find a wife.
2. In some ways it looks like Jacob gets the best deal out of the situation. He gets to go and get married, leaving angry Esau and the whole mess behind him. But God was not asleep! The law of sowing and reaping would catch up with Jacob in the not-too-distant future and eventually Jacob would have to face Esau again.

Conclusion: Is the self-life reigning in your heart and home? How are you responding to difficult and hurtful experiences in your life? Are you embracing God's model for marriage and the Christian home?

God's Grace Gets a Hold of Jacob

Text: Gen. 28:1-22

Introduction:

1. In this chapter Jacob departs from Beersheba at his father's command and travels to Haran to find a wife. The events of chapter 27 form the backdrop to Jacob's leaving home. As sad as the fractures in Jacob's home were, the Lord would use it for Jacob's ultimate good by taking him out of that situation to where He could begin to work more directly in Jacob's life.
 - Whereas 'deception' was a fitting one-word summary for chapter 27, the word that could summarise this chapter (Chap. 28) would be 'grace'. We see the hand of God's grace at work in Jacob's life to get him started on his own personal walk of faith. "That which is most prominent in the Divine dealings with Jacob was the matchless grace of God, shown to one so unworthy, the marvellous patience exercised toward one so slow of heart to believe, the changeless love which unweariedly followed him through all his varied course, the faithfulness which no unfaithfulness on Jacob's part could change, and the power of God which effectively preserved and delivered him through numerous dangers and which, in the end, caused the spirit to triumph over the flesh, transforming the worm Jacob into Israel the prince of God." (Pink)
2. What is recorded in this chapter is by no means the end of God's gracious dealings with Jacob. There was much work to go to transform Jacob into Israel but in many ways, it marks the real starting point, the first real milestone of Jacob's personal relationship with Almighty God.
3. We will divide the chapter into three parts for this sermon.

I. THE INSTRUCTION OF GOD'S GRACE (VS. 1-9)

God's hand moves through Isaac to begin directing Jacob along the path of His will. Take note of:

A. The Injunction to Jacob (Vs. 1-2)

1. The context of Isaac's charge (Vs. 1a; 27:41-46)

The context to this instruction is at the end of the previous chapter. Rebecca, fearing for Jacob's life approaches Isaac and appeals to him to send Jacob away to find a wife.

 - a. The truth in Rebecca's approach – Esau's wives were a grief to both Isaac and Rebecca (Gen. 26:34-35) so Rebecca was genuinely concerned that Jacob marry the right kind of woman.
 - b. The tactic in Rebecca's approach – the surface reason presented by Rebecca for sending Jacob away was not the primary thing motivating her. Her primary concern was that Jacob was going to be murdered by Esau. Again, this highlights the sad reality that as a wife, Rebecca is still operating in a less than honourable way in relation to her husband's headship.
2. The content of Isaac's charge (Vs. 1b-2)
 - a. Where Jacob's wife was not to come from (Vs. 1b)

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- i. Isaac was concerned that Jacob not repeat his twin brother's mistake and marry a woman from Canaan. He uses almost the same words his father Abraham had used concerning his own marriage (Gen. 24:3).
 - ii. Marrying the wrong spouse is a "grief of mind" to a godly parent (Gen. 26:35).
 - iii. Barnhouse rightly said, "A man can never be truly judged until you meet the woman he loves. One glance at her will reveal much of his character."
- b. Where Jacob's wife was to come from (Vs. 2)
 - i. Isaac was concerned that Jacob's wife come from the right household, the household of Abraham's brethren. In like manner, we should be careful to only marry a genuine believer from within the household of faith.
 - ii. Note: In order for Jacob to fulfill God's plan, he would need the right kind of wife.

B. The Benediction of Isaac (Vs. 3-5)

Isaac now pronounces a further blessing upon Jacob. This blessing has a much more spiritual tone to the last one.

1. The blessing of a plentiful lineage (Vs. 3)
 - a. "God Almighty" = Isaac uses the Name God revealed to Abraham in Genesis 17:1 – "I am the Almighty God". These blessings would come from El Shaddai, the All Powerful, Omnipotent, Mighty God of Abraham.
 - b. The first blessing pronounced was in reference to the multiplication of Jacob's seed, the blessing of children. Look at the three expressions of this:
 - i. "make thee fruitful"
 - ii. "multiply thee"
 - iii. "thou mayest be a multitude of people"
 - iv. Note: How little our world values the blessing of children but they are high on our God's blessing list. "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." (Psalm 127:3-5). How the world and the devil have robbed so many of the blessing of children through abortion and indoctrination in family planning (banning?). In the Bible a fruitful marriage union was always a sign of God's blessing.
2. The blessing of the promised land (Vs. 4)
 - a. The blessing of the land is described as "the blessing of Abraham". Of course, this would also include the promised Messiah, the Seed of the Woman promised in Genesis 3:15.
 - b. The land of Israel belongs to Israel by Divine decree!

C. The Reaction from Esau (Vs. 6-9)

1. Why Esau Acted – this was Esau's response to these things (Vs. 6-8)

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2. How Esau Acted – Esau’s response was to go and take one of Ishmael’s daughters as a third wife (Vs. 9)
 - a. It appears that this was Esau’s attempt to court his parents favour and secure a blessing for himself. He provides a classic example of how a man of the world tries to come up with his own solutions to his problems.
 - b. “Esau is one of those who, as it has been truly and acutely said, tries to do what God’s people do in the vain hope that somehow or other it will be pleasing to God. 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.” (Griffith Thomas)

II. THE INTERVENTION OF GOD’S GRACE (VS. 10-15)

Jacob is probably about 3-4 days into his journey to Haran when he stops at a place originally called Luz but which would now be known as Bethel. We know that Bethel would have been 3-4 days journey as it took Abraham 3 days to go from Beersheba to Moriah which is the Jerusalem area (Gen. 22:4). Bethel is about 17 km north of Jerusalem. **God takes the initiative and reveals Himself to unworthy Jacob in grace.** We note the revelation of:

A. The Pathway of God (Vs. 10-12)

1. The lead up to the vision (Vs. 10-11)
 - a. Jacob was an undeserving candidate for God’s grace. We got a glimpse of Jacob’s Adamic nature in the previous chapter. He was a supplanter and a deceiver by nature. He had blasphemously used God’s Name to cover his sin of deception (27:20). He was on the run as a consequence of his sin. In like manner, we are all undeserving of God’s saving grace because we, like Jacob, inherited a sinful nature from Adam (Rom. 3:10, 23; 5:12). One author summarizes it well, “Here is Jacob a fugitive from his father’s house, fleeing from his brother’s wrath, with probably no thought of God in his mind. As we behold him there on the bare ground with nothing but the stones for his pillow, enshrouded by the darkness of night, asleep – symbol of death – we obtain a striking and true picture of man in his natural state.” (Pink)
 - b. Jacob was an unable candidate. Jacob was powerless and unable to change himself. Only the grace of God could lift him out of his state. Look at the hopeless picture of Jacob here. He lies asleep in darkness with only stones for a pillow. What a picture of the lost estate of the sinner without Christ.
2. The ladder in the vision (Vs. 12)

God speaks to Jacob through a dream. In those times before the canon of Scripture was completed, God sometimes revealed

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Himself through dreams. In this striking dream Jacob sees a ladder that reaches from earth to heaven, with angelic beings ascending and descending upon it. We know this ladder is a type and picture of Christ and salvation from Christ's words to Nathanael, "And he saith unto him, **Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.**" (John 1:51) The Lord Jesus was claiming that He himself was Jacob's Ladder, the one means by which one could go from earth to heaven. Let's look at some features of this staircase and how it speaks of Christ.

- a. The start of the staircase – "behold, a ladder set up on the earth". The ladder reached right down to where Jacob was.
 - i. We are reminded of the wonderful truth that Christ came all the way from heaven to earth and took on human flesh in order to save us.
 - ii. It also reminds us that no matter how low you may be in sin, God's salvation staircase reaches down to you to rescue you.
 - iii. "Right down to his deepest need the ladder came, right up to the presence of God the ladder reached, and the vision of the angels on the ladder was intended to symbolize the freedom of communication, telling of access to God, and of constant, free, easy communication between earth and heaven." (Thomas)
- b. The summit of the staircase – "and the top of it reached to heaven". Not only did Christ descend to earth but he also ascended back to heaven after His resurrection. Christ is the only way to heaven!
- c. The span of the staircase – "and the top of it reached to heaven". This amazing staircase spanned the huge distance between earth and heaven. Heaven seems too far away and unreachable to sinful man but salvation in Christ spans the distance. "Oh, the love that drew salvations plan! Oh, the grace that brought it down to man! Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary!" "The "ladder" pointed to Christ Himself, the One who spanned the infinite gulf which separated heaven from earth, and who had in His own person proved a way whereby we may draw near to God. That the "ladder" reached from earth to heaven, told of the complete provision which Divine grace has made for sinners. Right down to where the fugitive lay, the ladder came, and right up to God Himself the "ladder" reached." (Pink)
- d. The singularity of the staircase. There was only one staircase in Jacob's vision. Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven. There is NO OTHER WAY! (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). WARNING! Any man-made staircase to heaven (i.e., religion) will in reality take you down to the fires of hell rather than the glories of heaven.
- e. The seraphs upon the staircase – "and behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it". The angels on the ladder remind us of the service of angels in our Lord's life during His

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earthly ministry. While salvation does not come through angels, Hebrews reveals that they are “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation”. (Heb. 1:14)

- f. The Sovereign above the Staircase – “And, behold, the LORD stood above it and said” (vs. 13). God speaking from the top of the ladder demonstrates in type that God speaks to us through Christ. He is the Incarnate Word through Whom the Divine message is declared (Heb. 1:1, 3; John 1:1, 14). We are also reminded of Christ’s role as our Mediator. It is only through Christ that we have access to the Father in heaven (Jn. 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5).

B. The Person of God (Vs. 13a)

1. God reveals Himself to Jacob as the God of Abraham and Isaac. No doubt Jacob knew of Almighty God from his father and grandfather but now the same God was revealing Himself to Jacob. The same God his grandfather had known and the same God his father knew could be Jacob’s God too!
2. God would eventually call Himself the “God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex. 3:6).
3. The good news is that God hasn’t changed and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob can be your God too through God’s saving grace.

C. The Promises of God (Vs. 13a)

Through the Patriarchal blessing of Isaac, Jacob was acquainted with the Abrahamic covenant which had been passed down to him but how much more significant it was for Him to hear these promises from God directly. Remember, repetition equals importance in God’s Word and the repetition of these promises emphasises that it is something firmly established by God (See Gen. 41:32).

1. The promise of land (Vs. 13b). The land promised to Abraham and Isaac would be inherited by Jacob and his descendants.
2. The promise of Seed (Vs. 14).
 - a. The natural seed (Vs. 14a). God would multiply Jacob’s seed. Jacob’s seed was multiplied in his life with 12 sons. Those 12 sons would go on to multiply rapidly in Egypt prior to the Exodus.
 - b. The Messianic seed (Vs. 14b). Jacob would have the privileged position of being the next link in the Messianic Seed line. The whole world would be blessed because of Jacob’s seed and how wonderfully that has been fulfilled in Christ our Messiah. Note: Our prayer should be “Lord bless me in order that I might be a channel of blessing to others.”
3. The promise of preservation (Vs. 15)

What comfort these promises must have brought to Jacob and how rich was God’s grace to one so undeserving.

 - a. The Presence of God – “I am with thee...for I will not leave thee”. Jacob would know the abiding presence of God in his life from this point. God’s presence would be with him and would never forsake him. It reminds us of the words of our Lord in the

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Great Commission, “and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” (Matt. 28:20).

- b. The Protection of God – “and will keep thee in all places wither thou goest”. God’s keeping power would be at work in Jacob’s life wherever he was.
- c. The Purposes of God – “for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of”. The grand purpose of God’s presence and protection in Jacob’s life was in order to fulfill His Divine purposes through Jacob. God’s grace had chosen Jacob for a purpose.

III. THE IMPACT OF GOD’S GRACE (VS. 16-22)

That God’s Revelation to Jacob had a profound and powerful impact upon him is evident by his sober, godly response to God’s grace working in his life. There was a new consecration to God in Jacob’s life from this moment onwards. Jacob would not become a mature man of faith overnight but his first responses to the vision say much about how deeply his life had been changed. Note Jacob’s new heart and attitude towards:

A. The Fear of God (Vs. 16-17)

Jacob gained a sense of:

1. The Omnipresence of God (Vs. 16)
2. The Awesomeness of God (Vs. 17)
 - a. As Jacob awoke, the enormity of what had just transpired dawned upon him and he was filled with the reverential fear of God – “And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! The word ‘dreadful’ here does not mean ‘dreadful’ in the sense of ‘horrible’ as we tend to use the word today. It is ‘dreadful’ in the sense of ‘fearful’ and ‘awesome’. The flippant, careless attitude that prevails amongst large sections of Christendom today where God is treated on the level of a buddy at the beach is not only blasphemous, it reveals a very sad ignorance of the character of Almighty God.
 - b. This is a good and healthy response to Almighty God! Prov. 9:10 “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy *is* understanding.”
 - c. “Jacob awoke in awe after this visitation from God. The great God of creation, the God of heaven and earth, ruling an infinite multitude of angels, was also interested in him!” (Henry Morris)

B. The Witness of God (Vs. 18)

1. Jacob takes the stone he had used as a pillow and erects a pillar to commemorate this visitation of God in his life. This would be a visible and public testimony to what God had done there in Jacob’s life. Then Jacob pours oil on the top of this pillar. We know that oil in the Bible is often a picture of the Holy Spirit.
2. If the pillar represents a public testimony, and the oil the Holy Spirit then it speaks to us of the need to be a witness anointed with the power of God to declare to a lost world what God’s grace has done in our lives.

C. The House of God (Vs. 17b, 19, 22a)

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1. Jacob named the place “Bethel” meaning “house of God” because God had chosen to manifest Himself to him in a special way in that place.
2. As New Testament believers, the house of God for us is the local church. God is with us and meets with us in our private lives but God has chosen to manifest His presence in a special way in the “house of God” when the saints assemble together. We get several pictures of this in the New Testament:
 - a. The church is referred to as God’s house & household (Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15) The church is referred to as God’s temple (Eph. 2:20-21).
 - b. The church is referred to as God’s habitation through the Spirit (Eph. 2:22).
 - c. Christ is pictured as walking amongst his candlesticks (Rev. 2:1). Remember, Christ is not present in every place that claims to be a “church”. Christ is pictured outside the Laodicean church. Sadly, we are living in the Laodicean age where Christ is NOT present in the majority of churches.
 - d. Note: If you are going to grow as a Christian, you MUST spend time at Bethel (the house of God, the local church)! On a basic level we should be motivated by a sense of duty as a believer to attend church but on a higher level, we should be motivated out of a passion to meet with God!

D. The Worship of God (Vs. 20-22)

Jacob vows the first vow recorded in the Bible. He makes a godly resolve that:

1. God would be His God (Vs. 20-21)
 - a. Jacob’s “If” statement was not so much a bargain or a statement of doubt but coming from an assurance that God would fulfill His Word. Jacob’s response to the goodness of God would be to make a personal decision that God would be his God. Jacob went from knowing about God to knowing God personally.
 - b. Note: While Jacob’s commitment was honourable it represented his first baby steps in the walk of faith. We should not therefore be surprised that there is still a lot of “I” and “my” in Jacob at this time. He would have to learn the truth of “not I” and God’s faithful love would lead him to that point in the future to where He would cling to the Lord and say “I will not let thee go except thou bless me”.
2. Bethel would be God’s house (Vs. 22a)
3. He would give a tithe (Vs. 22b)
 - a. The forerunner of Jacob’s tithing – Jacob would follow the example of his godly grandfather Abraham, the first man recorded in the Bible as giving a tithe (Gen. 14:20).
 - b. The freeness of Jacob’s tithing – this was entirely voluntary on the part of Jacob. At this stage in Biblical history, there was no direct command concerning tithing. It was done as an expression of his thanksgiving to God. This should be the same

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spirit that motivates our tithing. We should give our tithes and offerings as an expression of love and thankfulness to God.

- c. The faith of Jacob's tithing – at this point in time, Jacob owned practically nothing but he resolved that as God provided, He would give back a tenth. The fact that Jacob dedicated himself to give a tithe shows the depth to which this encounter with Almighty God had affected him for good. Before Bethel, Jacob was a “getter” and not a “giver”. He was interested in getting all he could, not in giving. The grace of God changed that! The grace of God still transforms people from selfish to sacrificial; from getters to givers!
- d. The focus of Jacob's tithing – “I will surely give the tenth **unto thee**”. Jacob was giving to the Lord.

Conclusion: Will you respond to the intervention of God's grace in your life?

Boomerang – Its Reaping Time for Jacob

Text: Gen. 29:1-30

Introduction:

1. Over the next three chapters of Genesis, we have the record of Jacob's twenty long years away from the land of Canaan.
2. In this chapter we follow Jacob on his journey from Bethel where God met Him in grace to his arrival in Haran where he meets up with his family.
- If in New Testament terms Genesis 28 represented Jacob's justification, Genesis 29 brings out the truth of God's work in sanctification. We see God's hand working in the life of his son Jacob guiding him into God's perfect will and dealing with the self-life in Jacob. Wiersbe writes, "Jacob may have left his family problems behind but he had to take along his biggest problem – himself." After Bethel we see the hand of God working in Jacob's life to take Jacob from self-reliance to God-reliance.
3. We will divide the text under three headings for our study.

I. GOD'S PROVIDENCE IN JACOB'S LIFE (VS. 1-14)

The hand of God worked providentially in Jacob's journey to lead him in the direction of His will. The first part of this chapter really helps set the scene for what will follow. "The story before us is a very ordinary one. A journey, a meeting with shepherds near a well, a young woman coming up, an act of courtesy; and yet these small events led to great and far-reaching results. How very much depends upon very little! There is nothing really small in human life." (Thomas) God's Providential leading is seen in:

A. The Progress made in his Journey (Vs. 1)

1. Having experienced the Divine encounter at Bethel, Jacob continues in his journey. The phrase "went on his journey" has the idea of "lifted up his feet". There is a new enthusiasm and hope, a new spring in Jacob's step after Bethel. Jacob had started on his own journey of faith, his own relationship with God. Griffith Thomas writes, "Jacob is now in the greatest of all schools that of experience, and there are many lessons to learn."
2. Remember, the faith journey begins with salvation. You must come to God through Christ by faith and receive the gift of salvation. Salvation is not an end but a beginning! The beginning of a new walk with God which ultimately reaches the final destination of heaven itself.
3. The presence and the promises of God spurred Jacob forward in his walk with God. Bethel, as precious as it was, was intended to move Jacob forward in the will of God. "Bethel was intended to fit Jacob for the journey and all that lay before him." (Thomas)

B. The Place at the end of his Journey (Vs. 2-4)

1. We need to learn to see God's hand in the small details of life. Out of all the places at which Jacob could have arrived after his journey, God led him to a well in a field where the local shepherds would

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water their flocks. History was about to repeat itself in a wonderful way. Many years earlier, Abraham's servant had found Rebekah, Jacob's father's wife, at a well in Haran (Genesis 24). Wiersbe notes, "In the trusting Christian's life, there are no accidents, only appointments." John Butler adds, "There are not chance-happenings, no chance-meetings, no chance-delays, no chance-losses, no chance-anythings in our lives. All is of Divine appointment."

2. When we are walking with God in the centre of His will for our lives, there is no such thing as random chance or happenstance. God leads and God directs! Remember that God so often uses places and people in His Providential dealings with us in the journey of faith.

C. The People encountered in his Journey (Vs. 5-14)

1. Jacob's encounter with the shepherds (Vs. 5-8)

- a. Importantly, these men knew Laban and were able to point Jacob in the right direction.
- b. The shepherds were waiting for the stone to be rolled away from the well's mouth so that they could water the flocks. Perhaps they were too young to move the stone?

2. Jacob's encounter with Rachel (Vs. 9-12)

- a. God has a wonderful way of causing you to cross paths with key people at key times in your life. In this case, God led Jacob to his future spouse. Be encouraged that God can and does lead in this area!
- b. Jacob's encounter with Rachel was a clear case of "love at first sight". Notice how Jacob responded when he saw Rachel approaching:
 - i. He rolled the stone away from the well's mouth. Jacob was a strong man who could work. He was no wimp. No doubt the sight of Rachel spurred him to action!
 - ii. He watered the flocks for Rachel. Jacob had a good work ethic and this will be further demonstrated in his life as the account of his life develops further.
 - iii. He kissed Rachel. Please remove from your mind any sort of Hollywood image here. This was the kiss of greeting common in the East, not a passionate, romantic kiss.
 - iv. He cried loudly. We get a sense for the inner emotions of Jacob at this time. Think of the context. He had recently had to run for his life from his brother and had endured the long and dangerous journey to Haran. To meet one of his own kin would have been a great blessing and relief.
 - v. He informed Rachel as to who he was. No doubt Rachel had heard stories of her legendary Aunty Rebekah. It must have been an amazing experience for her to meet her son Jacob out of the blue.

- c. We also get a first glimpse at Rachel as a woman in these verses. She was a beautiful lady (See Vs. 16) but she was also industrious and diligent (Vs. 9 – 'kept' means to tend). To be a

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shepherdess of her father's flocks would have been hard work. She had both inner character and outer beauty. She also responded as a characterized young lady would and took the news of Jacob's arrival in her life straight to her father.

3. Jacob's encounter with Laban (Vs. 13-14)

- a. Laban also responded positively to Jacob's arrival and welcomed him into his home. From our first impressions of Laban in Genesis 24:29-31, it is highly likely that Laban was excited to see Jacob as he saw another opportunity for personal gain.
- b. Jacob's initial stay with Laban is noted as being "the space of a month". Little did Jacob know at this point that he would be there in God's school of faith for 20 years!

II. GOD'S PROVISION IN JACOB'S LIFE (VS. 15-20)

God would use Laban in a number of ways in Jacob's life but for now we note two areas of provision:

A. The Provision of Wages (Vs. 15)

1. In that first month's stay, Jacob's diligent work ethic was noted by Laban – "shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought?" Laban, as shifty as he would prove to be, had some sense of duty to his nephew and offers him a paid position as one of his workmen.
2. A good work ethic is an important quality that needs to be developed in a prospective husband. Whatever faults Jacob had, he was not a lazy man and could be counted upon to work hard. He was a contributor, not a freeloader! John Butler writes, "**Lazy people make lousy spouses.**" Marriage and family life has many joys and blessings but it requires hard work and the investment of time and energy.
3. Proverbs 12:24 "**The hand of the diligent shall bear rule:** but the slothful shall be under tribute."

B. The Provision of a Wife (Vs. 16-19)

Jacob had come to Haran to find a wife according to his father Isaac's instruction (Gen. 28:2) and there was no doubt in Jacob's mind that he had found the ideal wife in Laban's household.

1. The Description of Laban's Daughters (Vs. 16-17)

- a. Leah – the eldest of the two and described as "tender eyed". The word 'tender' has the idea of 'soft' or 'gentle'. The first time the word appears is back in Genesis 18:7 – "And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetcht a calf **tender** and good..." The same word is also translated 'tenderhearted' (2 Chr. 13:7) and 'soft' (Job. 41:3, Prov. 15:1, 25:15).
 - i. It appears to mean that Leah had beautiful eyes. They were soft and gentle, revealing something of a soft and gentle inner disposition.
 - ii. Adam Clarke defines the words as meaning "soft, delicate, lovely". He states, "I believe the word means just the reverse of the signification generally given to it. The design of the inspired writer is to compare both the sisters together, that the balance may appear to be greatly in

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favour of Rachel. The chief recommendation of Leah was her soft and beautiful eyes; but Rachel was (יפת תאר yephath toar) beautiful in her shape, person, mien, and gait, and (יפת מראה yephath mareh) beautiful in her countenance. The words plainly signify a fine shape and fine features, all that can be considered as essential to personal beauty.”

- b. Rachel – the younger of the two and described as “beautiful and well favoured”. The word ‘beautiful’ is a translation of two Hebrew words. One means “beautiful” and the other means “outline”. The words together mean “beautiful in form” (Whitelaw). The words “well favoured” are translated from a Hebrew word meaning “beautiful in appearance” (Whitelaw) which speaks here especially of her face. We could say that Rachel had both a beautiful face and figure.
 - i. There is nothing sinful about natural beauty but it should NOT be the sole criteria in choosing a spouse. Rachel was beautiful outwardly but she also had some inner character as noted previously.
 - ii. The Bible extols spiritual beauty over natural beauty. Natural beauty is not nothing. God’s creation is filled with natural beauty and God made women to possess feminine charm and beauty. But inner beauty is of the highest value and is extolled in the New Testament. 1 Peter 3:3-4 “Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; **But let it be the hidden man of the heart**, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”

2. The Decision regarding Laban’s Daughters (Vs. 18-20)

Jacob’s heart was set on marrying Rachel, not Leah and so requests that she be given to him in marriage in exchange for 7 years work. In the culture of the East, a dowry was expected. Jacob did not have the means to pay a dowry so he offered his labour instead. We get a sense for just how much Jacob loved Rachel in these verses.

- a. The depth of Jacob’s love (Vs. 18). Jacob highly valued Rachel as a prospective spouse and was willing to work hard in order to marry her. True love highly values the object of its love. Jacob deeply and sincerely loved Rachel.
- b. The patience of Jacob’s love (Vs. 19-20). Jacob was willing to work and wait for seven years in order to marry Rachel. Most will not have to wait that long once they meet their future spouse in the will of God (Isaac and Rebekah a good example of a much quicker courtship) but whatever the time frame you face in the will of God, true love is willing to wait.
- c. The purity of Jacob’s love (Vs. 21). It is clear from Jacob’s request to Laban that he and Rachel had kept their virginity throughout their lengthy courtship. This is still God’s way despite

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the fact it is now rare even amongst professing believers.
“**Society is filled with barnyard morals.**” (Butler)

III. GOD’S PURGING IN JACOB’S LIFE (VS. 21-30)

Jacob now enters a period of reaping in his life. The loving Hand of God is going to chasten Jacob using Laban as His instrument.

A. The Deceitfulness of Laban (Vs. 21-24)

“Laban was just as deceitful as his nephew Jacob. Laban’s heart was full of greed and guile. His outward charitableness towards Jacob were simply cosmetics that concealed great corruption of character.” (Butler)
Jacob is about to meet his match in uncle Laban! Witty Jacob is about to be outwitted! Laban’s dishonourable character is highlighted in:

1. **His delay in giving Rachel to Jacob (Vs. 21).** Jacob worked willingly and diligently for seven years, upholding his end of the deal. Laban should have taken the initiative to uphold his end of the deal at the completion of the seven years but Jacob had to go to him and demand he follow through with his end of the commitment. Laban was a man of the world; a man focused on selfish gain even if it meant attaining it at the expense of others. Laban was a greedy miser and a clever Scrooge.

2. **His dishonesty in giving Leah to Jacob (Vs. 22-24).** In those days a special wedding feast was held that would last up to seven days. At the climax and conclusion of the feast, the bride to be would be presented to the groom. He would then take her into his own tent or chamber and consummate the marriage. In the custom of the times, Leah would have been veiled. Being Rachel’s sister, she was probably similar in size and stature and without seeing her face, Jacob didn’t discern the difference. “Laban is seen to be the equal of his clever sister Rebekah, and **Jacob is being paid back with the family coin.**” (Thomas)

B. The Discipline of Jacob (Vs. 25-30)

We should not conclude that God was behind Laban’s deceitfulness. God is not the author of evil. However, God can and does providentially use such things to accomplish His purposes in the lives of His children. Through this experience, Jacob came into contact with two timeless principles:

1. The law of God in sowing and reaping (Vs. 25)

Key point: God loves us too much to let us get away with sinful behaviour.

a. Jacob wakes up in the morning and to his shock and indignation, discovers he has married Leah, not Rachel! Jacob goes to Laban and confronts him with what he had done. Jacob is so displeased that Laban would dare to “**beguile**” him! Laban responds with the “cultural argument” as an excuse for his behaviour. Many still love the “everyone does it” argument to excuse their sin!

b. Jacob had just discovered one of God’s established laws – you reap what you sow! Consider several Scriptures that establish this law of sowing and reaping:

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- i. Galatians 6:7-8 “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: **for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.** For he that **soweth** to his flesh shall of the flesh **reap** corruption; but he that **soweth** to the Spirit shall of the Spirit **reap** life everlasting.”
 - ii. Hosea 8:7 “For they have **sown** the wind, and they shall **reap** the whirlwind:”
 - iii. Hosea 10:13 “Ye have **plowed** wickedness, ye have **reaped** iniquity; ye have eaten the **fruit** of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.”
- c. Think about Jacob’s sowing and reaping - the deceiver got deceived, the trickster got tricked, the liar got lied to, the supplanter got supplanted. Look at a number of specific parallels¹:
- i. Jacob took advantage of his older brother’s hunger and swindled him out of the birthright; Laban took advantage of Jacob’s love for Rachel for his own personal gain.
 - ii. Jacob deceived his father and was in turn deceived by a father – his father-in-law.
 - iii. Jacob’s deception involved the eldest son and now the eldest daughter is involved in Jacob being deceived.
 - iv. Jacob kissed Isaac deceptively (Gen. 27:27) and then got kissed deceptively by Leah.
 - v. Jacob was influenced by and collaborated with one of his parents to deceive Isaac and now Leah is influenced to deceive Jacob by one of her parents.
 - vi. Jacob deceived Isaac into thinking he was blessing Esau when he blessed Jacob and now Laban deceives Jacob into thinking he was marrying Rachel when he was actually marrying Leah.
 - vii. Jacob used a special meal to deceive his father and now Laban uses a special feast as a part of his deception of Jacob.
 - viii. Jacob dressed up in his brother’s clothes so he would look and smell like Esau and now Leah comes to Jacob dressed in such a way that he thinks it is Rachel. Note: It is very possible/likely Laban even dressed Leah up in Rachel’s clothes and scented her with Rachel’s perfume so that she looked and smelt like Rachel.
 - ix. Jacob pretended to be Esau and stole the blessing; Leah pretended to be Rachel and stole the wedding!
 - x. Henry Morris writes, “Jacob must have been quickly struck with the similarity of this situation to the deception he himself had played on Isaac and Esau. Isaac had thought Jacob was Esau, and so gave him the blessing. Now Jacob had thought Leah was Rachel, and had taken her to wife. In both cases, the deception had been

¹ List adapted and expanded from John Butler’s commentary.

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commanded by a parent and in both cases the purpose of the deception was to acquire something desperately desired. Jacob had been sure the end justified the means in his case, but perhaps Leah and Laban also felt the same way in their case.”

- d. The Divine law of sowing and reaping should make us think soberly about what we are sowing into the field of our lives each day. Are you sowing that which is good and godly or that which is sinful? **If you sow a sinful crop, you will reap a sad harvest.**
2. **The love of God in chastening and transforming (Vs. 26-30).** Jacob would have to work an additional 7 years for Rachel (note from verse 30 that he married her before serving the 7 years) which meant more time in the “**labour for Laban**” team.
- Key point: God loves us too much to let us stay the way we are.** As one pastor put it, “God loves you just the way you are but he loves you too much to leave you the way you are.” Hebrews 12:6 “**For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.**”
- a. God is committed to the sanctification process in the lives of His children and this means dealing with the self-life in all of us. Romans 8:29 “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” **Jacob must come face to face with Jacob before he can become Israel. You will not become a prince with God (Israel) until you realize you are a pauper in Adam (Jacob).** All of us must come to the realization of Romans 7:18 “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” and the cry of Romans 7:24 “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”
 - b. God was using Laban as a mirror in Jacob’s life to help him to see his own faults. Remember that often God uses people in our lives to mirror us if we are humble enough to admit it! Sometimes the things that frustrate us the most in the lives of others are the very things that are blind spots in our own lives.
 - c. Jacob responds to the situation with acceptance and submission. It is likely that Jacob discerned the hand of God was dealing with him over what he did to Esau his brother. When God touches our lives in such a way, we can’t but know it is God (See Genesis 42:21). “For one who has been so grievously wronged, he submits rather tamely...One cannot help but feel that the memory of the treachery he practiced on his brother and his father was being refreshed strongly and sealed his lips from making further accusations. The justice of God’s retributions seems to have overwhelmed Jacob and made him very docile on this occasion.” (Leupold)

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- d. In like manner, we need to respond right when we are chastened by God. Hebrews 12:5-11 provides some helpful instruction on the Christian and chastening. We learn:
- i. The Reality of Chastening (Vs. 5-6). Chastening is something we should expect from our loving Heavenly Father and is one of the signs of our sonship. Sometimes a good licking from the Lord is just what we need!
 - ii. The Response to Chastening (Vs. 5, 7)
 1. The wrong response to God's chastening – "My son, **despise not** the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." The word 'despise' means "to have little regard for", "to regard lightly". Sadly, many Christians don't learn from God's chastening in their lives and just like a stubborn and foolish child, go and do the same thing all over again!
 2. The right response to God's chastening – "If ye **endure** chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons". The word 'endure' means "to stay under". We are to accept our chastening from the Heavenly Father with a submissive spirit. Chastening is not enjoyable but it is profitable (Vs. 11).
 - iii. The Results of Chastening (Vs. 9-11). The Heavenly Father's chastisement is so that we might:
 1. Become partakers of his holiness (Vs. 10)
 2. Bear the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Vs. 11)

Conclusion:

1. What are you sowing in the soil of your life?
2. How are you submitting to God's sanctifying work in your life? When chastening comes, do you despise it or learn from it?

Brides, Babies & Bickering: A Home in Chaos

Text: Gen. 29:30-30:24

Introduction:

1. Genesis 29-31 contains the record of Jacob's twenty long years away from the land of Canaan dwelling in Haran with his uncle Laban.
2. This section traces the development of Jacob's family, particularly the birth of his children. While there are some commendable things we can discern in Jacob's home at this time, on the whole, we are presented with a home that is filled with heartache, strife and division. These things are written for our "learning" (Rom. 15:4) so that we might be warned against making the same mistakes and also be encouraged with what God's grace can do with a very imperfect family.
3. We will study this account of Jacob's home and the lessons we can learn under two simple headings:
 - The Picture of Jacob's Home
 - The Practical Lessons from Jacob's Home

I. THE PICTURE OF JACOB'S HOME (29:30-30:24)

Let's survey the text and seek to set the scene of what was going on in Jacob's home at this time. It won't take us long to discern that something is very wrong with much of what we see going on in Jacob's home.

Jacob's home was beset with:

A. Favouritism (29:30-35)

1. The record of Jacob's favouritism (Vs. 30)
 - a. This is the sad reality in a polygamous marriage. Inevitably the husband ends up showing greater affection to one woman more than the other. Jacob loved Rachel "more than Leah". This helps us make sense of the word 'hated' in verse 31. In this context the word 'hated' simply means that he loved Leah less than he loved Rachel. It is a term of comparison. It does not refer to hatred in the sense of a murderous, malicious hatred.
 - b. The same was true in Elkanah's home where he loved Hannah more than Peninnah (See 1 Sam. 1:1-5).
2. The response to Jacob's favouritism (Vs. 31-35)

God took pity on Leah's plight and opened her womb so that the blessing of children would ease her pain as the least loved wife in the marriage. Leah had four sons in quick succession and named them according to her sentiments at the time of their birth. They reveal both Leah's faith in God as well as her heartache and suffering over her relationship to her husband Jacob.

 - a. Reuben ("see a son") (Vs. 32)
 - i. Her expression of faith (Godward) – "Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction". Leah recognized the goodness of God in giving her Reuben to give her joy in

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- the midst of affliction. Children can be a real comfort in the midst of pain and difficulty.
- ii. Her expression of hope (Jacobward) – “now therefore my husband will love me”. Like any wife, Leah’s heart craved the love of her husband and she was hopeful that the fact she had born him a son would give her favour in his eyes.
- b. Simeon (“hearing”) (Vs. 33)
- i. Her expression of faith (Godward) – “Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also”. Leah again recognizes the compassion of God in her difficult situation. She knows that God has taken note of her trial and blessed her. She also views her children as gifts from God.
 - ii. Her expression of hope (Jacobward) – none noted for Simeon.
- c. Levi (“joined”) (Vs. 34)
- i. Her expression of faith (Godward) – none noted for Levi.
 - ii. Her expression of hope (Jacobward) – she is hopeful that Jacob will be joined to her now that she has born him three sons.
- d. Judah (“praise”) (Vs. 35)
- i. Her expression of faith (Godward) – “Now will I praise the LORD”. Leah praises God for His goodness to her in giving her a fourth son.
 - ii. Her expression of hope (Jacobward) – none noted for Judah.
 - iii. Note: It is fitting that Judah be called “praise” as it would be through the line of Judah that the promised Messiah would come. Christ is called “the lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev. 5:5). Interestingly, the Messianic line was continued through one of Leah’s sons, not Rachel’s.
 - iv. It is noted that at this time there was a pause in Leah’s childbearing

B. Jealousy (30:1-2)

1. The stimulation of her envy (Vs. 1a). Leah’s fruitfulness in contrast to her own barrenness stirred up a spirit of envy in Rachel. Matthew Henry defines envy as, “grieving at the good of another”. While very human, this was not a spiritual response to the trial she was going through. Envy is a terrible heart attitude to entertain! Proverbs 27:4 “Wrath *is* cruel, and anger *is* outrageous; but who *is* able to stand before envy?”
2. The expression of her envy (Vs. 1b). Rachel unloads on Jacob in an emotional outburst – “Give me children, or else I die”. Sadly, Rachel would die giving birth to her second child Benjamin. It appears that at least initially, Rachel did not handle her infertility prayerfully but apparently that eventually changes as “God remembered Rachel, and God **hearkened** to her, and opened her womb” (Vs. 22).
3. The admonition of her envy (Vs. 2)

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- a. Jacob was provoked by Rachel's words and responded in anger. What Jacob said in response was right but his angry spirit was wrong.
- b. Jacob clearly recognised that it was God who had withheld children from Rachel at this time.

C. Rivalry (Vs. 3-13)

These verses record the carnal tug of war between Rachel and her sister Leah as they vied to be first place in Jacob's affections. Sadly, the two handmaids would get tangled as pawns in this nasty game of chess between the two sister wives.

1. Jacob marries Bilhah (Vs. 3-8). This was an accepted practice in the culture of that time that a woman who was barren could have a child by proxy through her servant girl. We have already studied how Sarah followed the same course of action with her servant girl Hagar and the disastrous results (See Genesis 16). Rachel's emotional angst over not being able to have a child clouded her judgment and drove her to pressurize Jacob to follow a similar course. Jacob yields to the demand and Bilhah joins an already overcrowded marriage as his third wife. Bilhah bore Jacob two sons:
 - a. Dan ("judgement") (Vs. 3-6). Rachel wrongly attributes the birth of Dan as vindication for her sinful behaviour in giving Bilhah to Jacob. From the outward appearance of things, Rachel had succeeded. She got a baby by proxy through her handmaid Bilhah! How often Christians can be guilty of the same mistake of interpreting the apparent "success" of a sinful endeavour from a pragmatic point of view as evidence of God's blessing. All too often we try and put God's name on things He has nothing to do with!
 - b. Naphtali ("wrestlings") (Vs. 7-8). This gives us a window into the bitter envy that was consuming Rachel in this whole affair. She saw herself in virtual wrestling match with her sister Leah over how many children she was able to produce for Jacob. What a sad picture!
2. Jacob marries Zilpah (Vs. 9-13). Leah notes the success of Rachel's scheme with Bilhah so decides she would do the same with her handmaid Zilpah. Zilpah bears two children to Jacob.
 - a. Gad ("troop").
 - b. Asher ("happy"). By this stage Leah is motivated on a more carnal plain – one of competitiveness with her sister and how more children will enhance her reputation in the eyes of others.

D. Scheming (Vs. 14-24)

1. The mandrake incident (Vs. 14-16)
 - a. Reuben, who was evidently a young lad by this time (probably 5-7 years old), finds mandrakes in the field during wheat harvest and brings them to his mother Leah.
 - b. The only other mention we have of this plant outside this chapter is in the Song of Solomon where reference is made to its pleasant odour – "The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates

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are all manner of pleasant *fruits*, new and old, *which* I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.” (Song 7:13)

- c. Henry Morris explains that “The mandrake is a small, orange-coloured, berrylike fruit, much esteemed in ancient times as an aphrodisiac and inducer of fertility. It has been called the “love-apple” and, in Western countries, the “May-apple”. It has also been used as a narcotic and emetic, especially its large roots. It was no doubt because of its supposed value in promoting fertility that both Leah and Rachel desired it.”
 - d. Rachel, believing that the mandrakes Reuben had found might help her fertility, requests them of Leah. Leah, superstitiously hoping to use them herself, responds negatively. Her response again highlights the tension that existed between her and Rachel.
 - e. Rachel offers her Jacob for the night in exchange for the mandrakes. Clearly this indicates that Jacob spent the majority of his nights in Rachel’s tent. Leah agrees and make sure Jacob is made aware of it when he gets home from the field in the evening.
2. Leah bears three more children (Vs. 17-21)
 - a. Issachar (“reward”) (Vs. 17-18)
 - i. Issachar was an answer to Leah’s prayer – “And God hearkened unto Leah”. Leah recognised this – “God hath given me my hire”. We are amazed at the kindness and graciousness of God working in this tragic scene.
 - ii. Like Rachel, Leah wrongly interprets this as God’s blessing on her for giving her maiden to her husband.
 - b. Zebulun (“dwelling”) (Vs. 19-20). Again, Leah acknowledges this son as a gift from God and expresses the hope that Jacob would now dwell with her because she had given him six sons.
 - c. Dina (“judgment”) (Vs. 21). Leah finally gives birth to a daughter and calls her Dina. She will feature in a significant way in the drama that unfolds in chapter 34.

E. Grace (Vs. 22-24)

We are amazed at how God could us a family like this but that’s the grace of God. While this account is a testament to human sin and error, it is also laced with the grace and goodness of God to undeserving people.

1. God takes pity on Rachel (Vs. 22)
 - a. God “remembered” her.
 - b. God “hearkened to her” (He answered her prayers).
 - c. God “opened her womb”.
 - d. In the end it was God’s might, not Reuben’s mandrakes that gave Rachel a son.
2. Rachel conceives and gives birth to Joseph (Vs. 23-24)
 - a. The name Joseph means “adding”. It appears that Rachel had faith that now that God had granted her request for one son, He would be faithful and give her a second.
 - b. Joseph was destined by God to be a very special and godly son. Thirteen chapters of Genesis are dedicated to the record of

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Joseph's life which is a similar number of chapters to the life of Abraham and exceeds the record of Isaac and Jacob.

II. THE PRACTICAL LESSONS FROM JACOB'S HOME (29:30-30:24)

These things are written for our "learning" (Rom. 15:4) and our "admonition" (1 Cor. 10:11). We can learn from both the positives and the problems (negatives) of Jacob's home at this time.

A. The Positives of Jacob's Home

1. There was faith in this home

The faith of the patriarchs and matriarchs is highlighted in this passage, especially as it related to their perspectives on conception and child bearing. The saints of old had a God-centred rather than a man-centred view of conception and childbearing.

a. They viewed children as a blessing from God. We do not get the slightest hint in this passage, or in the Word of God as a whole, of the prevailing attitude in our society today towards children. The saints of old believed a fruitful womb were amongst God's chiefest blessings one could receive. This is a biblical and godly perspective on children.

i. Psalm 127:3-5 "Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward. As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; so *are* children of the youth.

Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them:

they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate."

ii. 1 Chronicles 26:4-5 "Moreover the sons of **Obededom** were, Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, and Sacar the fourth, and Nethaneel the fifth, Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peulthai the eighth: **for God blessed him.**"

b. They believed conception and childbearing were gifts from God. This theme is laced throughout the whole account. It was this perspective that drove both Leah and Rachel to seek God in prayer for children (30:17, 22).

i. 29:32 "Surely **the LORD** hath looked upon my affliction"

ii. Vs. 33 "Because **the LORD** hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore **given** me this son also"

iii. Vs. 35 "Now will I praise **the LORD**"

iv. 30:6 "**God** hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath **given me a son**"

v. Vs. 18 "**God** hath **given** me my hire"

vi. Vs. 20 "**God** hath **endowed** me with a good dowry"

vii. Vs. 23 "**God** hath taken away my reproach"

viii. Vs. 24 "**The LORD shall** add to me another son"

c. They believed in the sovereignty of God over the womb. All through this account the opening of the womb and the giving of conception are attributed to the work of God. We need to remember this in an age when most have been brainwashed by a humanistic society to think they can just turn babies on and off

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as they please. Those who struggle with the pain of infertility in marriage know all too well that conception is not something that can be taken for granted.

- i. 29:31 “And when **the LORD** saw that Leah was hated, **he opened her womb**”
- ii. 30:2 “And Jacob’s anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, **Am I in God’s stead**, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?”
- iii. Vs. 17 “And **God hearkened unto Leah**, and **she conceived**”
- iv. Vs. 22 “And **God remembered Rachel**, and **God hearkened to her**, and **opened her womb.**”
- v. Note: The same God who opened and closed the womb back then can do the same in marriages today if couples will trust God with this area of their lives. Remember, God desires godly offspring – “And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? **That he might seek a godly seed.**” (Mal. 2:15) Before you blindly follow the wisdom and philosophy of the world in relation to childbearing, pause and seek the Lord and His will for your union!

2. There was grace at work in this home. Beautiful touches of God’s grace and mercy are seen throughout this account (29:31; 30:17, 22). In fact, we wonder at the mercy and grace of God that he would go on to refer to Himself as the God of “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” and use Jacob’s 12 sons as the founders of the 12 tribes of Israel. Those 12 names will one day be on the 12 gates in the New Jerusalem! (See Revelation 21:12) We are amazed that God’s grace could make something out of a family like this but we should also be amazed that God would save sinful, broken people like us and use us with our many faults and failings.

B. The Problems in Jacob’s Home

We can also learn much from the failures in Jacob’s home. They serve as a warning to us of the chaos that can come into a home that is not built and structured according to God’s wisdom. On the balance of things, I think we can say that there is more wrong than there is right with the picture this passage presents of Jacob’s home. This home was filled with strife, contention, disunity, envy, anger, tension and disorder. What were some of the root causes that produced these bitter fruits in Jacob’s home? We can identify several clear problems in this home. These work in order from the fruit to the root; from above the surface to below the surface.

1. The problem of carnal rather than spiritual responses to provocations. This is highlighted in:

- a. Rachel’s envy of Leah and emotional outburst at Jacob (30:1). We understand the humanness of Rachel’s response but she could have responded with trust in God and prayer instead of jealousy and emotional outbursts of discontent to her husband. Proverbs warns, 19:13 “A foolish son *is* the calamity of his father: and the contentions of a wife *are* a continual dropping.”

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(19:13) “A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.” (27:15)

- b. Jacob’s angry response to Rachel (Vs. 2). It wasn’t right for Rachel to explode at Jacob but neither was it right for him to react in anger. His council was right but his spirit was wrong!
- c. Rachel and Leah’s nasty striving (Vs. 3-13). Instead of loving each other as sisters and yielding their rights to the Lord in the situation, they descended into a nasty tit for tat power struggle between each other.

2. The problem of a marriage that deviated from God’s design.

Most of the problems we see in this passage are a direct fruit of a polygamous marriage. Polygamy may have been accepted in the culture of that day but it was a serious deviation from God’s original design and intent for marriage. Jacob knew better and yet he not only adds Rachel to his marriage with Leah but eventually the two handmaids as well making him the husband of four wives. There is something very wrong with that picture! Jacob had at least three solid reasons to reject polygamy. He had:

- a. The knowledge of the creation order. We are in no doubt that Jacob was familiar with the account of Creation where God established the home. The correct model for marriage was plainly evident in God’s created order – **one** man and **one** woman for life.
 - i. Genesis 2:23-24 “And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a **man** (singular!) leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his **wife** (singular!): and they shall be one flesh.”
 - ii. Matthew 19:5 Jesus said, “For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?” Note: ‘twain’ means ‘two’!
 - iii. **Key Biblical principle: Any deviation from God’s design for marriage and the home will bear bitter fruit.** Satan has been working overtime since the fall to corrupt, damage and destroy the marriage union. We see all sorts of perversions of marriage in our day. Our society does not condone polygamy but it endorses perversions that are equal to or even worse than the sin of polygamy. For example:
 - Widespread acceptance of the multiple partners. One modern form of polygamy in our society is the abominable concept of “open marriage” where the husband and the wife have an agreement that extra marital affairs are fine.
 - Widespread acceptance of de facto relationships.
 - Widespread acceptance of fornication and adultery.
 - Widespread acceptance of digital concubinage with the pornography industry.

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- Widespread acceptance and promotion of divorce and remarriage.
 - Widespread acceptance and promotion of the abomination of sodomy and its associated perversions.
 - We have gone so low as a society morally we ask “where do we go from here?!” Apart from the grace of God we will sink lower into the degraded, depraved pit and end up with things like legalized paedophilia and bestiality.
 - Like it was in Jacob’s home, the biggest losers are often the children who grow up in a confused and chaotic home environment and apart from God’s grace in salvation, often go on to live dysfunctional and dishonourable lives. We can’t but see that the chaos in Jacob’s home bore fruit later in some of his sons (e.g., Reuben, Judah, Simeon & Levi).
- b. The bad example of Abraham (Genesis 16). Jacob should have known from the story of his grandfather’s polygamy that it wasn’t a good idea!
- c. The good example of Isaac. Isaac, to his credit, was a monogamous man who was only ever married to Rebekah.
- d. Jacob sinned against all that light and knowledge when he chose to go down the path of polygamy.
- 3. The problem of a husband who was passive in his leadership.**
- While each member of this family was accountable to God, in God’s order of things Jacob as husband and head of the home (see 1 Cor. 11:3) was central to the problems in this home. The profile we get of Jacob’s leadership in this section is not good. Instead of exercising godly leadership, Jacob was inclined to be passive and make his decisions in the interests of short-term convenience rather than in the interests of what was right and would have God’s hand of blessing upon it. This passivity and carnality is highlighted in:
- a. Jacob’s decision to marry Rachel after marrying Leah (Genesis 29). Again, we can feel Jacob and Rachel’s emotions in the situation. They loved each other deeply and had such high hopes for marriage after a long, 7 year wait but a spiritual response on the part of Jacob would have been to recognise that he had reaped what he sowed and accept the Providential ruling of God in his marriage with Leah and surrender Rachel to the Lord.
 - b. Jacob’s decision to yield to Rachel’s emotional pressure and marry Bilhah (30:1-4). Jacob should have said “no” to this unrighteous plan but Rachel throws an emotional tantrum and Jacob caves in to the pressure.
 - c. Jacob’s decision to yield to Leah’s demand that he marry Zilpah (Vs. 9). Instead of providing spiritual direction for the home, Jacob was taking a back seat, letting things take their course.

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His mindset was to go with the flow, que sera, sera (what will be will be).

- d. That Leah and Rachel were willing to follow Jacob's lead is clear from Genesis 31:16 – "...**whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do...**"
- e. Men of God need to learn to make decisions in the home that are not based upon emotion but upon what is true and right in the sight of God. That does not mean that as husbands we ignore our wives' emotional needs. We are to dwell with our wives "according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered." (1 Peter 3:7). We should strive to make our wives' lives as happy as possible (1 Cor. 7:33) but not if it means short term happiness at the expense of what's right. There is a need to lead the family along spiritual, biblical lines and that means saying a firm "no" at times to a suggestion that is contrary to God's Word. It means sometimes forgoing your own personal peace and comfort in the present to guide the wife and family through a difficult time with an eye to come out of it the other side on the right side of things with God's hand of blessing upon the family.

Conclusion:

1. What is your perspective on children? Is it biblical or have you been brainwashed by a humanistic, hedonistic society?
2. Are you seeking to build a biblical home in line with God's established order?
3. How are you responding to the provocations and trials in your life? Do you respond prayerfully and spiritually or carnally?
4. Have you made mistakes in some of these areas? Be encouraged with what the grace of God can do to bring healing and repair to your life.

Abundant Blessings Amidst Afflictions

God blesses Jacob in spite of Jacob!

Text: Gen. 30:25-43

Introduction:

1. This next section concerns the details of Jacob's final 6 years working for Laban. Jacob worked 14 years for his two wives Leah and Rachel. Now he will work a further 6 years to build up his own livestock in order to be able to provide for his family independent of Laban.
2. We get further insight into the character of Laban and Jacob through this account. Ultimately however, it is the goodness and grace of God which is on display, working on Jacob's behalf to reverse Laban's dishonest and unjust machinations in relation to his wages.
3. We will consider the theme of God's blessings and provision in the life of Jacob under three headings.

I. THE MEANS OF GOD'S PROVISION FOR JACOB (VS. 25-36)

God would use Jacob's last 6 years working for Laban to abundantly and graciously provide for his future. Laban would do all in his power to outmanoeuvre Jacob and cheat him of any substantial material increase but God would sovereignly ensure Laban's wicked plans were thwarted. An agreement is made between Jacob and Laban that in theory would allow Jacob to earn a living.

A. The Circumstances of the Agreement (Vs. 25-28)

1. Jacob's Plea (Vs. 25-26)
 - a. The timing of his plea (Vs. 25a)
 - i. Jacob issues this plea to Laban upon the birth of Joseph. Jacob had to serve 7 years for Rachel and that time had now expired so evidently Joseph was born at the end of that 7-year period.
 - b. The longing of his plea (Vs. 25b)
 - i. There was a longing in Jacob's heart to return to Canaan country. Jacob knew that God's promises to him and his descendants were connected to the land of promise (Gen. 28:13-14) and therefore, Haran was a temporary sojourn for him.
 - ii. Note: We should view our earthly sojourn the same way Jacob viewed his sojourn in Haran – it is a temporary sojourn and we are living for that celestial land above and long to go there.
 - c. The reasoning of his plea (Vs. 26)
 - i. He had served honourably – he had fulfilled his end of the agreement and served 14 years for his wives (Vs. 26a).
 - ii. He had served diligently – his service had not been half hearted and haphazard. Jacob had served Laban's interests with distinction (Vs. 26b)

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2. Laban's Plea (Vs. 27-28)

Laban responds with a counter plea of his own to keep Jacob working for him.

- a. Laban is motivated with his request (Vs. 27)
 - i. Laban had learned that God had blessed him for Jacob's sake and this was why he was so desirous to have Jacob stay on and continue working for him.
 - ii. Laban himself was not a worshipper of the One True God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In fact, he was an idolater (See Gen. 31:19, 30). Laban was only interested in the material blessings he might gain from Jacob's God, not in submitting his life to God's rule.
 - iii. Note: There are many like this today who want the blessings of Christianity without submitting to the Lordship of Christ. They want relief from the consequences of their sin but not salvation from sin itself.
- b. Laban is manipulating with his request (Vs. 28)
 - i. Laban is cordial (Vs. 27). Laban uses respectful and endearing words to woo Jacob into an agreement. In reality, these just masked Laban's true desires.
 - "I pray thee".
 - "If I have found favour in thine eyes".
 - Proverbs 29:5 "A man that flattereth his neighbour spreadeth a net for his feet."
 - ii. Laban is calculating (Vs. 28). Laban had learned that Jacob had a tendency to err on the side of being generous and so he again asks him suggest his own wages. Laban was a man who did not hesitate to use someone's goodwill and generosity to his own selfish advantage.

B. The Conditions of the Agreement (Vs. 29-33)

1. The preamble to the agreement (Vs. 29-30)

Jacob sets the tone for the proposal that will follow.

- a. The reminder – Laban had been blessed through Jacob. Laban's flock, which was small, multiplied abundantly through Jacob's care and oversight with God's hand of blessing upon him. It would therefore be fitting and appropriate for Laban to allow Jacob some return on his labours.
- b. The request - Jacob expresses his concern that he now provide for his own family. Jacob may have had some character flaws but laziness was not one of them. Jacob was:
 - i. A hard worker. Jacob may have been a smooth man in comparison with his hairy, hunter brother Esau but he was no sissy. He was strong (Gen. 29:10), diligent (Gen. 29:15; 30:26, 29-30, 31:6), honest (Gen. 31:38-39) and tough (Gen. 31:40). Whatever your vocation may be as a man (office or outdoors), you should be a hard worker. Our generation is full of lazy, weak and effeminate men who have very little stickability, endurance and resilience. This is now how God intended you to be as a man! Lazy,

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weak men tend to approach spiritual service the same way they approach their secular job and are often unreliable. The slightest pressure in their pressure and they are on the bench! Ecc. 9:10 "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might;"

- ii. A responsible provider. Jacob clearly took his duty to provide for his family seriously. He did not look to his wives and children to provide the needs. He took responsibility and took steps to provide for the family. God blessed the labours of Jacob's hands abundantly and God will bless men of God who take their role seriously in this area, work hard and trust God. This is the husband's role! We need to constantly be reminded of the biblical roles for husbands and wives:

- The husband - Leader (Gen. 2:15, Eph. 5:23; 1 Cor. 11:3), Provider (Gen. 2:15; 1 Tim. 5:8), Lover (Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19) & Protector (Gen. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:7).
- The wife - Follower (1 Tim. 2:12-13; Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18), Helper (Gen. 2:18), Home-maker (1 Tim. 5:14; Titus 2:5; Prov. 31:10-31), Mother/Nurturer (1 Tim. 5:14) & Lover (Tit. 2:4).
- When husbands and wives embrace their God-given roles, they experience God's blessings and harmony in the home. Stay in your lane!

- c. Note: You would think that Laban would be in agreement with this. Jacob was his son in law after all, married to both his daughters and with eleven children born in 7 years. Sadly though, Laban was the ruthless kind who would not hesitate to use his own family for his own selfish advancement.

2. The proposal of the agreement (Vs. 31-33)

Jacob makes a simple request that his wages be as follows:

- a. The speckled, spotted and brown among the sheep.
- b. The speckled and spotted among the goats.
- c. The word 'ringstraked' means striped. So, Jacob's wages were the striped, speckled and spotted and the brown among the sheep. The solid colour animals would remain Laban's.
- d. Jacob is requesting the odd coloured livestock. These would be in the minority of Laban's herds. This simple plan would also keep Jacob's name clear of accusation as the visible markings would clearly identify which animals were Laban's and which were Jacob's.
- e. This represents, at least initially, a step of faith for Jacob at this point as under normal circumstances the sheep and goats would tend to reproduce in the dominant colours of the herd (solid colours). Jacob was consciously aware that God's hand of blessing was upon his life (Vs. 30) and was therefore confident that God would supply.

C. The Contravention of the Agreement (Vs. 34-36)

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1. Laban's verbal commitment to the contract (Vs. 34). Laban agrees verbally to Jacob's proposal but how dishonest and short lived this was. Words are cheap unless one follows through with honourable actions.
2. Laban's violation of the contract (Vs. 35-36)
 - a. When? – the very same day he made the deal with Jacob. Laban wasted no time in breaking his word to Jacob. You don't really know someone until you know something of their approach and attitude towards money and material things. Nothing reveals the heart more! (1 Tim. 6:10) This was an act of robbery on Laban's part. He basically stole the first part of Jacob's pay. This was also an act of mistrust on Laban's part. "Greedy and deceitful men like Laban are the kind who do not trust others. They know their own heart and think others are the same way. Therefore, in dealing with others, they want all deals others have to offer made very plain. But, of course, when these "Labans" make their offers, you can be sure it will not be that way. They will keep the details of their offers hidden in fine print in order to more easily deceive." (John Butler)
 - b. How? – by removing the very livestock he had promised to Jacob, giving them to his sons and putting three days distance between the stolen flock and the main flock. Undoubtedly this was to stop the spotted and speckled from interbreeding with the main herd and producing offspring for Jacob. He would go on to change Jacob's wages **10 times in 6 years** (that's almost twice a year!) in an attempt to thwart God's blessings upon Jacob (Refer Gen. 31:7; 41).
 - c. Laban provides a valuable lesson in how one should **not** conduct business. Laban's ways have no place in the child of God's life. As believers, we should be known for our generosity, honesty and integrity in money matters. There is nothing worse than a believer who has been on the receiving end of God's gift of salvation and a multitude of other blessings who is a miserly penny pincher and pack rat!
 - d. God's Word has a strong warning to those who unjustly withhold wages (James 5:1-6).
 - e. God blesses generosity, not selfishness and stinginess. "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor." (Prov. 22:9)

II. THE MISTAKES REGARDING GOD'S PROVISION BY JACOB (VS. 37-42)

How does Jacob respond to Laban's chicanery and trickery? He responded with scheming and self-reliance.

A. Scheming (Vs. 37-42)

1. Sadly, Jacob responds in kind, seeking to rectify the injustice through his own ingenuity. It appears Jacob commenced this endeavour in faith but quickly resorted to his Jacob ways when he was cheated by Laban.

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2. Jacob seeks to exert some kind of prenatal influence into the breeding process of the livestock. His primary method was to take rods of green polar, hazel and chestnut, peel strips off them so that the white would appear, and then lay them in the gutters and watering troughs of the livestock so that they would conceive among the rods.
3. There are two possible ways to interpret Jacob's actions:
 - a. Option 1: He was following a superstitious practice of the time where it was believed that livestock could be influenced to produce a certain type of offspring if they saw striped rods such as these.
 - b. Option 2: He had genuine knowledge from his wealth of experience with sheep and goats that we are not in possession of today. We should not be too quick to write off Jacob as practicing some kind of hocus pocus. Jacob was a very experienced herdsman who had spent years observing animal behaviours so it is possible that there was some rationality to what he was trying to do.
 - c. Creation Scientist Henry Morris writes, "It should not be overlooked that Jacob was over 90 years old at this time, that he was a very intelligent and careful observer, and that he had spent most of his long life raising and studying cattle, sheep and goats...There is a great deal, even today, that scientists have not been able to work out concerning the transmission of hereditary factors...It is possible that certain chemicals in the wood of these trees – peeled rods of which were actually in the water which the flocks came to drink – were capable somehow of affecting the animals. If nothing else, water treated thus may have served as an aphrodisiac and fertility promoter among the cattle. At least one such chemical substance found in these trees has been used for such a purpose in both ancient and modern times."¹
 - d. It does appear from what is described in verse 41-42 that somehow these rods stimulated the cattle to mate.
 - e. Whatever the case may be, Jacob would eventually learn that it was not his wisdom, ingenuity and efforts which had produced this result but the hand of Almighty God (See Gen. 31:9-13).
4. Jacob's actions may have been legal (they were not an official violation of the agreement with Laban) but they were questionable. As believers we need to remember to go the second mile to be above reproach. Illustrations: One worker made a comment in relation to the company he worked for, "They may not break the law but they sure give it a good bend". Personal experience with sales job and bonus.

B. Self-reliance

1. Jacob's actions again highlight his tendency to rely on self in such situations. No doubt at least initially Jacob thought that his schemes

¹ For Henry Morris' full discussion on this point, see "The Genesis Record" Pg. 474-477 (Commentary on Genesis 30:37-43)

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were the source of his success. He was learning in the school of faith to trust in God more but it was in the DNA of Jacob's Adamic nature to rely on his own plotting, planning and scheming. It is so easy for us to fall back into what is woven into the fabric of our Adamic nature.

2. How often we are tempted to rely on self in difficult situations, misplacing our trust in our own wisdom rather than God's!
3. How often our tendency is to attribute our blessings to ourselves rather than to the goodness and grace of God!
4. How desperately do we need to learn God-reliance rather than self-reliance! To learn the lesson "not I but Christ"!

III. THE MERCY OF GOD'S PROVISION FOR JACOB (VS. 43; 31:9-13)

Jacob would learn that God had blessed him in spite of himself and not because of himself!

A. The Largeness of God's Provision (Vs. 43)

1. God blessed Jacob abundantly and way above what he deserved. The phrase "increased exceedingly" has the idea of "to burst forth speedily". Jacob Enterprises expanded rapidly! God provided a rapidly expanding flock to provide for Jacob's rapidly expanding family. "Those that trust in God, in his providence and promise, though they have great families and small incomes, can cheerfully hope that he who sends mouths will send meat. He who feeds the brood of the ravens will not starve the seed of the righteous." (Matthew Henry)
2. In reality God blesses us way above what we deserve. Think of your salvation. You didn't deserve it otherwise it would be something earned by your own works. It was the free gift of God's grace. Think of all the spiritual blessings of the Christian life (Eph. 1:3) God has lavished upon us; none of them are deserved or because of who we are or what we have done. All are of God's goodness and grace. Think of all the material provisions of God in our lives as a part of his gracious and kind watch care of our lives.
3. Psalm 146:5-6 "**Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help**, whose hope *is* in the LORD his God: Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein *is*: which keepeth truth for ever:"

B. The Lessons from God's Provision (Vs. 9-13)

God revealed to Jacob through a dream that it was His power that had worked on his behalf with the livestock, not Jacob's skill and schemes. Jacob learned that God's blessings were on account of:

1. The power of God – this was something God had done, not Jacob.
 - a. Jacob was teaching Jacob that it would not be through his talents and abilities that he would succeed in life but through living by faith in a miracle working God.
 - c. When God blesses us, we need to remove any thought that it is somehow because of us. It is all because of God's grace, love, compassion and mercy towards us as His underserving children.

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Our response to the blessings of God in our lives should be humility and thankfulness, not pride and self-congratulation!

2. The faithfulness of God – God was being true to His promises to Jacob (Gen. 28:3-4, 13-15). God always keeps His promises! Jacob was also a tithing man (Gen. 28:22) and God provides for those who honour Him in the area of giving (See Mal. 3:10). Those who fail to follow God's model for the needs of the home (with the husband being the primary provider and the wife the homemaker) may find they miss out on proving the faithfulness of a God in a special way.
3. The justice of God – God had taken note of Laban's mistreatment of Jacob (Vs. 12) and thwarted his evil plans to deprive Jacob of the wages that were rightfully his. God had promised to bless those who would bless Jacob and curse those who cursed Jacob (See Gen. 12:3; 27:29). Laban's mistreatment of Jacob brought the hand of God's justice into his life. Laban found out that you will never succeed at thwarting God's plan no matter how clever and cunning you may be!

Conclusion:

1. What kind of testimony are you in relation to money matters? Is there any of Laban's ways in your walk?
2. How do you approach the work God has given you to do? Do you apply yourself diligently in service for God both in the workplace and the church?
3. How are you approaching the Christian life? Are you self-reliant or God-reliant? Are you living by faith or by your own fleshly wisdom?
4. Do you acknowledge God and give Him thanks for His many blessings in your life?

God's Leading to Leave Laban

The Back to Bethel Journey Begins!

Text: Gen. 31:1-55

Introduction:

1. Genesis 31-33 document Jacob's journey from Haran back to Canaan. His long season of 20 years under Laban has finally come to an end and the next phase of God's gracious work in Jacob's life opens.
2. God would do some powerful and significant things in Jacob's life on his return journey to Canaan. It was a journey filled with drama. First Jacob is confronted by Laban (Gen. 31), then he has to face Esau (Gen. 32-33). Through it all, God was working to bring Jacob to the end of himself and turn him into Israel.
3. We will consider the theme of God's leading the life of Jacob at this time under four headings.

I. THE OCCASION OF GOD'S LEADING (VS. 1-16)

A. The Catalyst for God's Will (Vs. 1-3)

We note several key influences at work in Jacob's life at this time that God used to move him in the direction of His will. There was:

1. A Desire from Within (Gen. 30:26; Vs. 30)

- a. Jacob had a longing in his heart to return to the land of his father. Jacob knew in his heart that his stay at Haran was only temporary. God had promised him at Bethel – "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." (Gen. 28:15)
- b. Sometimes the desires of our heart can be wrong but as we earnestly seek to remain yielded to the Lord, God can put a desire in our heart and use it as a part of his leadership in our lives. Psalm 37:4 "Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."
- c. Warning: When seeking God's will, we need to be careful about relying upon only one principle of guidance. Some desires are from the Lord and will be fulfilled. Sometimes it can be a challenge to discern if a desire is from the Lord or just from ourselves. That is why we need more than just a desire to determine God's leading in our lives.

2. A Difficulty from Without (Vs. 1-2)

The circumstances in Jacob's life at this time were also a part of the preparation of God to move him in the direction of His will. Like the previous point, circumstances alone should not be relied upon but they are a part of the picture when God is leading. In Jacob's case there was:

- a. The animosity of Laban's sons (Vs. 1). Jacob overhears Laban's sons and they were speaking slanderous things about him.

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- i. The hypocrisy of their accusations – these same sons had helped cheat Jacob out of what was rightfully his straight after his agreement with Laban their father (Gen. 30:35-36).
- ii. The inaccuracy of their accusations – Jacob had not taken away “all” of Laban’s goods. In fact, he hadn’t stolen anything. He had legitimately built up his flocks and herds based on the agreement he had made with Laban. There’s nothing like material possessions to bring out the worst in people!
- b. The attitude of Laban himself (Vs. 2)
 - i. Jacob discerned from Laban’s countenance that his attitude and spirit towards him had changed. Up till this point, Laban had wanted Jacob around because of the blessings he received for Jacob’s sake (Gen. 30:27). But now that had all changed. Laban bore “an unkindly demeanour toward his nephew”. The countenance reveals much about one’s inner attitudes.
 - ii. These difficulties would help prepare Jacob for the move God was about to command. God was stirring up Jacob’s nest (Deut. 32:11) and getting him ready for the next phase of His will.

3. A Directive from Above (Vs. 3)

This was the final and most important part of God making his will clear to Jacob at this time.

- a. The precept – “Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred”. God’s command was plain and clear. It was time for Jacob to go back to his own country and kindred.
- b. The promise – “and I will be with thee”. Again, the promise of God’s presence is given to sustain Jacob. Little did Jacob know the challenges that were just ahead of him as he embarked on that journey! How comforting this promise would be in those times of test to know that God was with him. Knowing God is with us as we follow his perfect will brings great comfort and assurance to the heart.
- c. Summary of the steps in discerning God’s will by 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. Firstly, the 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. 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.”

B. The Counselling over God’s Will (Vs. 4-16)

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This is another important step in discerning God's will. When we believe we have discerned God's will through biblical principles such as the ones we noted above, we would be wise to get counsel from those we trust before taking a step.

1. Jacob's speaking to his wives (Vs. 4-13)

Jacob calls Rachel and Leah out to the field where he is with the flock and seeks their support of God's leading in his life. Here we see Jacob beginning to exercise some godly leadership in his family in order to take them forward in God's perfect plan for them. Jacob outlines:

a. The reality of the situation (Vs. 4-9). Laban plainly outlines the facts that he was no longer in Laban's favour and then recounts the injustices of Laban in relation to his wages. He also recognizes that God had been with him (Vs. 5b) and that God had intervened in the situation and given him the cattle (Vs. 9).

b. The revelation in the situation (Vs. 10-13).

i. The revelation of God's power (Vs. 11-12). God revealed to Jacob in a dream that it was His power that had orchestrated the favourable outcome for Jacob with the flocks and herds. This would have been humbling for Jacob who may well have thought the success was due to his clever scheming with the rods in the water troughs!

ii. The revelation of God's Person (Vs. 13a). God declares to Jacob, "I am the God of Bethel". Jacob's mind would have immediately gone back to that life changing encounter with God recorded in Genesis 28. The declaration of His Person would add weight and authority to the command that would follow.

iii. The revelation of God's plan (Vs. 13b). Jacob was to leave Haran and return to the land of Canaan. God had spoken clearly and plainly.

2. Jacob's support from his wives (Vs. 14-16)

a. Rachel and Leah were ready and willing to support Jacob in his leadership. They readily agree with him concerning the despicable character of their father. What a sad commentary we get her concerning Laban from his own daughters!

b. Rachel and Leah's attitude was that if God had spoken to Jacob has their husband, that was enough for them. He should follow through. What a blessing when husbands and wives are united in their quest to follow God's leading for their lives! What a tragedy when a wife actively opposed God's leading in her husband's life!

II. THE OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S LEADING (VS. 17-21)

A. The Promptness of Jacob's Obedience (Vs. 17-18)

1. Now that God's will was clear in Jacob's life and he had gained the necessary support of his family, he immediately set about moving in the direction God had told him to. Jacob had waited 20 years for this moment and now that it had arrived, he moved promptly to obey God.

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2. Note: Remember that there are periods of waiting on the Lord in the Christian life but things can move quite quickly when it is God's timing to move us forward.

B. The Problem accompanying Jacob's Obedience (Vs. 19)

Little did Jacob realize that while he was busy seeking to accomplish God's will, his wife Rachel was stealing her father's gods to take along with her secretly.

1. The details about these gods.
 - a. The Hebrew word for 'images' is 'Teraphim'. These were small household gods. "These idols seem to have been used as charms, whose presence was thought to bring good to the possessor." (Thomas) How foolish to worship something that can be so easily stolen!
 - b. The Hebrew word is 'teraphim' and refers to "small idol figurines used in divination and as household deities supposed to bring good luck to the owner. Their use frequently cropped up in later Israelite history, but was definitely idolatrous and contrary to the true faith of Jehovah." (Henry Morris)
2. The danger of these gods.
 - a. These idols had no place in the home of one who knew the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. While they were not true gods, they represented the kingdom of Satan and had the potential to bring an evil influence into the home. "Her (Rachel's) attitude was little different from that of many a new Christian today, happy to know the Lord but not yet willing to enter a life of separation from the world." (Henry Morris)
 - b. We could ask the question, "Rachel, as a believer in the One True God, what on earth are these images doing in your home and in your life?"
 - c. As we think about our own homes and lives, perhaps the Holy Spirit might ask us, "What are those secret idols/images doing in your life? You are a blood-washed, born-again child of God!"
 - i. What's that book doing on your shelf as a Christian? It glamorizes sin and dishonours the Lord.
 - ii. What's that T.V. show doing in your life? It's full of dark and depraved themes. In fact, should you have that T.V. set at all in your home, constantly spewing forth evil images into your home and life.
 - iii. What is that DVD doing in your cabinet as a believer? There are scenes in there that no child of God should watch.
 - iv. What place does that music of the world have in your CD collection or digital download collection? You come to church on Sunday and sing the hymns but then go home and allow the world's beat to pulsate through your heart, carrying with it messages that are empty and vain at best or outright lewd and ungodly at worst.
 - v. What are those secret social media images doing on your phone? Why are you subscribed to that TikTok influencer? In fact, why are you even on a platform like

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TikTok, Facebook or Twitter? Secret, destructive images in one's life wasn't just a problem in Rachel's day. The problem is alive and well in our day. In fact, with modern technology, secret images are a bigger problem today than ever. So many Christians are going down the social media sinkhole in our day.

- vi. What's that secret habit of accessing pornographic images doing in your life? You're a part of the bride of Christ and those strange women have no place in your life as a believer.
- vii. What's that garment doing in your wardrobe as a child of God? It is contrary to biblical principles of modesty and decency and follows the godless, fashions of a world obsessed with nakedness and sensuality.
- viii. What's that bottle of wine doing in your cupboard? Why would you turn to the wine of the world when you have the joy of the Spirit in your life?
- ix. What place do those secret idols of the heart have in your life?¹ Are those thought patterns, imaginations and inner affections of God? Should those philosophies of the world be dominating your mind or the infallible truth of God's Word? 2 Cor. 10:4-5 "(For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;"
- x. Challenge: Purge out the secret idols in your life. They may seem innocent and harmless but they will bring the influence of the world and the devil into your life and home. Later on, Jacob would issue a challenge to his family – "Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments." (Gen. 35:2)

C. The Procedure of Jacob's Obedience (Vs. 20-21)

1. Jacob had to flee Laban in haste. Some are critical of Jacob for this but in the context, it was probably the right action. Laban was a ruthless and godless man who no doubt would have stood in Jacob's way. As it was, he pursued Jacob and would have done him harm had it not been for the intervention of God.
2. It is sad when someone has to flee a Laban-like family member but it sometimes happens. What a sad commentary on the kind of man Laban was that his daughters and son in law didn't feel it was safe for them to even try and say goodbye.

III. THE OPPOSITION TO GOD'S LEADING (VS. 22-43)

The road to Bethel is a contested road! When we begin doing the will of God, it will not be long before others will protest our actions in one way or another. Laban viciously opposed God's leading in Jacob's life. Mark it

¹ Ezekiel 14:3 "Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart,"

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down, the path of God's will and blessing in your life is rarely trial and trouble free! How did Laban oppose Jacob in his quest to follow God's leading?

A. By Pursuing Jacob (Vs. 22-25)

1. Look at the great lengths Laban was prepared to go to in order to try and stop Jacob in his tracks. We are reminded that the devil is relentless in his attempts to try and obstruct us in the path of God's will and blessing.
2. No doubt Laban had evil intentions against Jacob (See Vs. 29) but God intervened and overruled. God's hand of preservation was upon Jacob and God would ensure that His will was carried out in his life. Jacob was living in fear of Laban at this time (Vs. 31) but God was already dealing with Laban.

B. By Accusing Jacob (Vs. 26-43)

Accusation is one of the enemy's favourite tactics he uses to try and slow you down in the path of God's will!

1. Laban's accusations (Vs. 26-30)
His accusations involved
 - a. Exaggeration (Vs. 26) – Jacob had not carried away Laban's daughters like captives at all. On the contrary, he had taken the time to discuss his plan of action with Rachel and Leah and had their full support. Slanderers love to sensationalize and scandalize a situation to try and make it appear to be one way when in actual fact it is another. Matthew Henry writes, "Those that mean ill themselves are most apt to put the worst construction upon what others do innocently."
 - b. Dishonesty (Vs. 27-28) – Knowing Laban's character and history, we highly doubt that this was an honest and sincere statement. Laban had already thwarted Jacob from leaving once before (Gen. 30:26). Some people are very good and making claims about what they would have done in a hypothetical situation but in practical reality their actions expose them as empty lies.
 - c. Intimidation (Vs. 29) – Laban's words unmask the true attitude of his heart. He was malicious towards Jacob and would have done him harm if he could have. What a terrible, unkind thing to say - "It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt"!
 - d. Misapplication (Vs. 30) – Laban's idols had been stolen it was true but not by Jacob. Laban is making accusations without evidence.
2. Jacob's answer (Vs. 31-43)
Jacob speaks about:
 1. The question regarding his action (Vs. 31). Jacob had fled because he legitimately feared that Laban would take his wives by force and sent him away empty handed (Vs. 42).
 2. The accusation concerning false gods (Vs. 32-35). Jacob's reply appears a bit hasty. So confident was he that this was a false accusation that he pronounced the death penalty against the one found with the idols. Little did he know that his favourite wife had those very idols in her tent!

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3. The indignation over the injustices (Vs. 36-42)
 - a. The injustice of Laban's pursuit of Jacob (Vs. 36-37)
 - b. The injustices of Laban's past treatment of Jacob (Vs. 38-42)
 - i. Jacob had acted with integrity (Vs. 38-40)
 - ii. Laban had acted with dishonesty (Vs. 41-43)

IV. THE OVERCOMER IN GOD'S LEADING (VS. 44-55)

By the grace of God Jacob was able to overcome Laban's opposition, part ways and continue on his journey in God's will. This was made possible through:

A. The Protection of God (Vs. 24, 29, 42)

1. We see the faithfulness of God to His promises in Jacob's life all through this account. No matter how determined Laban might have been to obstruct Jacob in his journey, God's would overrule and ensure His will was carried out.
2. In like manner, only the protecting, preserving hand of God in our lives can keep us from the attacks of the enemy.

B. The Parting with Laban (Vs. 44-55)

For Jacob to go forward, he had to part ways with Laban. This was made possible through a covenant that was made between them.

1. The symbols of the covenant (Vs. 44-48)
 - a. Stones and a stone pillar (Vs. 45-49)
 - i. Jergarsahadutha = means "The Heap of Testimony" in the Aramaic or Chaldaic language of Laban.
 - ii. Galeed = means "The Heap of Witness" in the Hebrew language.
 - iii. Mizpah = means "watchtower" and "denotes it as a sort of sentry guarding the boundary between Laban's sphere of activities and Jacob's sphere of activities." (Morris)
 - b. A ceremonial meal (Vs. 46b)
2. The terms of the covenant (Vs. 49-53)
3. The worship after the covenant (Vs. 54). Jacob offers sacrifices to God after the covenant has been made. It could be that these were a part of the formal ceremony but its more likely they represented an act of worship on Jacob's part. No doubt Jacob was thankful for God's gracious intervention into this difficult situation.
4. The separation after the covenant (Vs. 55). This is the last mention of Laban in the Bible. We leave this sad figure behind us as we follow Jacob's life from here. God had used this season with Laban to teach Jacob some valuable lessons but now the time had come to take him upwards and forwards. What a lesson Laban provides in how not to live as a Christian! Laban in his greed ended up missing out on what was truly special in life (e.g., family). "Laban is an unfortunate example of a worldly, covetous man, one who knows about the true God and to whom a thorough witness had been given. 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. Nevertheless, he continued in idolatry and covetousness, seeking material gain for himself to the exclusion of

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all other considerations...His life constitutes a sober warning to a great host of semireligious but fundamentally self-worshiping and self-seeking men and women today." (Morris)

Conclusion:

1. Are you yielded to God's will in your life and are you seeking to discern His will through Scriptural principles?
2. Are there any idols in your life that need to be purged out?
3. Are you an opposer or an encourager of God's will in the lives of others?

Face to Face with God

Jacob becomes Israel!

Text: Gen. 32:1-32

Introduction:

1. Genesis 31-33 document Jacob's journey from Haran back to Canaan. His long season of 20 years under Laban has finally come to an end and the next phase of God's gracious work in Jacob's life is opening before him.
2. God was accomplishing some powerful and significant things in Jacob's life on his return journey to Canaan. First Jacob is confronted by Laban (Gen. 31), then he has to face Esau (Gen. 32-33). Through it all, God was working to bring Jacob to the end of himself and turn him into Israel.
3. The lead up to Jacob's encounter with Esau was used mightily in the purposes of God to deepen the work of sanctification in Jacob's life. We will study the events of this chapter that climax at Peniel under four headings.

I. THE VISITATION TO JACOB (VS. 1-8)

A. The Place of the Visitation (Vs. 1a)

1. This visitation from heaven came when Jacob was on the path of God's will.
2. When we are faithful and obedient to step out on the path of God's will for our lives, the Lord grants us the encouragements and assurances we need at key points on that journey.

B. The Persons in the Visitation (Vs. 1b-2)

1. The method of God's visitation – God allowed Jacob to have a second encounter with angels. The first was at Bethel, 20 years prior. God was again reminding Jacob of His power.
2. The memorial of God's visitation – Jacob names the place 'Mahanaim' meaning "two hosts" or "two camps".
 - a. The reference was to Jacob's host and God's host. Jacob's camp was not alone. They had the company and protection of God's heavenly host.
 - b. Note some significant memorials in Jacob's life:
 - i. Bethel – the house of God.
 - ii. Mahanaim – the host of God.
 - iii. Peniel – the face of God.

- C. Illustration: The manifestation God gave Elisha and his servant when the Syrian army surrounded them in Dothan. 2 Kings 6:15-17 "And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that *be* with us *are* more than they that *be* with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

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- d. When confronted with an Esau and his army in our lives, let us remember that we have the “Lord of hosts” in our lives to protect us. Psalm 27:1, 3 “The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this *will I be* confident.”

C. The Problem after the Visitation (Vs. 3-8)

1. God knew that Jacob was about to be faced with a terrifying threat from Esau, hence why God gave Jacob this heavenly visitation. How merciful and gracious our God is to send us the encouragements, assurances and comforts we need to prepare us to face a trial.
2. Jacob is clearly apprehensive of meeting Esau and as he approaches his territory, sends messengers ahead to try and get a sense for how Esau’s attitude was towards him.
3. The messengers returned with distressing news. Esau had already caught wind of Jacob’s return and was already on his way with 400 men. Clearly his intent was hostile at this point otherwise the messengers would have returned with a positive word from Esau to reassure Jacob.
4. Jacob was understandably “greatly afraid and distressed”. He then divides the people and livestock into two companies with the plan that if Esau came and attacked, at least one band would have the chance to escape while he destroyed the other.

II. THE SUPPLICATION OF JACOB (VS. 9-12)

While Jacob’s response to the Esau threat still had a lot of the “Jacob nature” in it, to his credit he does pour out his heart to God in prayer about the situation. Jacob’s fervent prayer highlights the genuine faith he had in Almighty God and the fact he had grown since Bethel. If you lay the two prayers side by side (the prayer from Bethel and this prayer 20 years later), you have to conclude Jacob has grown. We note four qualities of Jacob’s supplication. It was:

A. Reverent (Vs. 9a)

1. He addresses God in a manner which is fitting Almighty God. There is a clear recognition of God for who He is.
2. He addresses God as the God of Abraham and Isaac.

B. Humble (Vs. 10)

This is one of the most touching sayings of Jacob recorded in Scripture and reveals a real humility of heart that had developed in Jacob. Without this growth in humility from the proud, cocky man he was initially, it is unlikely Jacob would have yielded to the Lord at Peniel the way he did. He acknowledged he was unworthy of:

1. The mercifulness of God – “I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies” (Vs. 10a). This is more than an acknowledgment that he wasn’t worthy to receive mercy from God in general. Jacob is saying he considers himself unworthy to received even one of the smallest of God’s many mercies.

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2. The faithfulness of God – “and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant” (Vs. 10b). God had revealed precious promises to Jacob and had been faithful to those promises.
3. The goodness of God – “now I am become two bands” (Vs. 10c). God had been good to Jacob and had blessed him abundantly.
4. We would do well to cultivate the same humble heart attitude in our lives. The only thing we deserve is hell for our sins against a Holy, Righteous and Good God and yet we have experienced the infinite oceans of his love, mercy, grace and goodness towards us through salvation and a myriad of other undeserved blessings.

C. Fervent (Vs. 11)

1. Jacob pleads with God for the specific need at hand in this crisis, namely, protection from Esau.
2. Jacob was fearful at this time but at least he was pouring out his heart to his God about those fears. It is true that God wants us to choose faith over fear but if you find your heart gripped with fear, take those fears to the Lord in prayer and give them to Him.

D. Anchored (Vs. 9b, 12)

1. Jacob commences (Vs. 9b) and ends (Vs. 12) his prayer with an appeal to the promises of God. Jacob knew that being wiped out by Esau did not fit God’s promise to do him good and make of him a great nation.
2. Effective prayer is not about trying to force God to do what you want but about pleading with God in line with His own purposes and promises. The Word of God forms a vital foundation for effective prayer.

III. THE REACTION OF JACOB (VS. 13-21)

These verses record Jacob’s response to the report about Esau. At this time, we still see a real mix in Jacob of faith and self-reliance. Jacob’s prayer to God was commendable but on the balance of things, he is still leaning too heavily on his own scheming and planning to fix the situation.

A. The Plan of a Gift for Esau (Vs. 13-15)

1. The magnitude of the gift – this was a sizable and generous gift on the part of Jacob. The gift consisted of:
 - a. Two hundred and twenty goats (200 female, 20 males).
 - b. Two hundred and twenty sheep (200 females and 20 males).
 - c. Thirty milch camels with their colts (so 60 camels total – 30 mums and 30 babies). The word ‘milch’ means “giving milk”. Camel’s milk was a prized and valuable resource in an arid land as it still is in some countries in the world today.
 - d. Forty cows and ten bulls.
 - e. Twenty female asses and ten foals.
 - f. Total = 580 livestock.
 - g. Jacob hoped that this generous gift would help ‘appease’ (Vs. 20) Esau.
2. The makeup of the gift – you will notice that what was considered to be the ideal ratio of males to females at that time.

B. The Presentation of the Gift to Esau (Vs. 16-21)

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1. To maximise the impact of the gift, Jacob decided to send the livestock in droves with a space in between each drove. Presumably there were 5 droves if the animals were grouped according to their kind (goats, sheep, camels, cows and asses).
2. While this action of Jacob's was not sinful,¹ it serves to again highlight the bent of Jacob's nature. He is 'Jacob', the supplanter, the schemer the planner. When his back is against the wall, his natural tendency is to rely on his own wisdom and cunning. Thus, we see the self-life of Jacob again on display.
3. This is why God was going to use this crisis in Jacob's life to bring him to the end of himself. God would deal a powerful blow to Jacob's self-reliance at Peniel.

IV. THE TRANSFORMATION OF JACOB (VS. 22-32)

We come now to the climax of this account where God meets Jacob in a dramatic and special way. There are three discernible phases in this encounter between Jacob and His God – Wrestling, Clinging and Blessing.

A. Wrestling (Vs. 22-25)

1. The place of the wrestling (Vs. 22-23)
 - a. Jacob guides his family over the Jabbok River during the night at a place where it was fordable (crossable). Which way he crossed we are not told but it may be Jacob was taking a further safety measure by putting the stream between himself and Esau.
 - b. Jacob helps his family across then remains alone on the opposite bank. Given the seriousness of the crisis he found himself in it was going to be one of those sleepless nights and he wanted to be alone with his thoughts. Perhaps he intended to pass the night in prayer to God.
 - c. What an unexpected answer to prayer he received that night! Jacob was primarily looking for deliverance from Esau but God was interested first in delivering Jacob from Jacob. "Jacob must meet God before he meets Esau, and the one meeting will be the only and sufficient way of preparing for the other." (Thomas)
2. The Person in the wrestling (Vs. 24a)
 - a. The intrusion of the Heavenly Man. Can you picture the scene? There's Jacob standing alone in the darkness. Perhaps there is a little light from the moon and stars filtering down gently illuminating his fear lined countenance. The Jabbok brook babbles and chatters by in the background. All of a sudden Jacob's thoughts are interrupted by the sound of footsteps coming in his direction. Fear grips Jacob as he peers through the darkness trying to identify his intruder. Was it Esau? No this was not Esau. The Mysterious Man continues the approach and takes hold of Jacob. Jacob begins to fight back in terror!
 - b. The identity of the Heavenly Man.

¹ Proverbs 21:14 "A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath."

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- i. At the end of this encounter Jacob believed he had come face to face with God (Vs. 30), therefore we believe it was a Christophany – a preincarnate appearance of Christ.
 - ii. It is true that Hosea 12:3-4 refers to this incident and refers to the Personage as “the angel”. The word ‘angel’ means ‘messenger’ so this is not a created angel but the Angel of the LORD, the Divine Messenger of Jehovah God.
 - iii. Jacob prays to this Mysterious Person and receives blessing from Him. Only God can answer prayer and dispense Divine blessing.
- c. The initiative of the Heavenly Man
- i. Some see this as a picture of prevailing prayer. That may be a nice application but it is inaccurate. Jacob would prevail in prayer at the end of this encounter but for a significant amount of time he wrestled in resistance against the Heavenly Visitor. We should also note that it was God who took the initiative to wrestle with Jacob, not the other way around – “there wrestled a man **with him**”. “The attack, so to speak, begins with his mysterious antagonist, not with the patriarch. The man seeks to overcome Jacob, not Jacob the man.” (Maclaren)
 - ii. “The wresting was an endeavour on God’s part to break down Jacob’s opposition, to bring him to an end of himself, to take from him all self-trust, all confidence in his own cleverness and resource, to make him know that Esau is to be overcome and Canaan obtained not by craft or flattery, but by Divine grace and power...the self-life in Jacob is to be overcome, the old nature is to be conquered, the planning is to be rendered futile, and the resourcefulness made impotent. Instead of gaining Canaan by cleverness he must receive it as a gift from God. Instead of winning he must accept it from Divine grace.” (W.H. Griffith Thomas)
 - iii. Little did he realize to begin with that these were the hands of the Heavenly Man Himself. These were not the hands of an evil aggressor but the Hands of a Loving God, a God who was too wise and too loving to let Jacob go on living the Jacob life. And yet Jacob is resisting rather than yielding. How often we do exactly the same thing in our lives. We fail to recognize that the loving hands of our Heavenly Father are seeking to shape and mould us and we **struggle** rather than **submit**.
 - iv. Principle: God has to work against us (our Adamic nature) before He can really work through us. God works to bring us to the end of our selves that He might be our life. “At the cross I see that I am ended, not mended”.
3. The Period of the wrestling (Vs. 24b)
- a. Jacob keeps up this resistance until the day begins to dawn. Jacob had been wrestling for hours with this Heavenly Visitor.

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- b. This highlights how strong Jacob was and that was his very problem. Self was far too strong in Jacob. This is so often the same problem in our lives. We are too strong for God to use in any significant way and so in love He breaks us that we might learn that we serve not in our strength but His.

B. Clinging (Vs. 25-26)

A change takes place and now all of Jacob's strength is focused on clinging instead of resisting. "From cunning to clinging, from resisting to resting – this was the literal and symbolical experience of the crafty but now conquered Jacob." (Thomas)

1. The Touch that occasioned Jacob's clinging (Vs. 25)
 - a. "And when he saw that he prevailed not against him" = this does not mean that God didn't have the power to overcome Jacob but rather that God saw that Jacob was not going to voluntarily yield. God could have totally overwhelmed Jacob with His Mighty Power but God desires voluntary submission from His children. Seeing that Jacob was determined to keep on with the struggle, God wounds him by putting his thigh out of joint. The "hollow of his thigh" refers to "the socket of his hip" (Whitelaw).
 - b. Without the use of both legs, Jacob is powerless to continue the struggle and begins to flounder. In order to stand upright, he must now cling to the Heavenly Antagonist. As the power of God surges through Jacob's hip joint, rendering it dislocated it suddenly dawns on Jacob that this is no ordinary man he is wrestling with! He had come face to face with the God man! God knows just how to touch our lives to bring us to the end of ourselves. Sometimes that touch hurts but oh that we might recognize all the love that is behind that touch!
 - c. "That laming of Jacob's thigh represents the weakening of all the life of nature and self which had hitherto been his. He had trusted to his own cunning and quick-wittedness; he had been shrewd, not overscrupulous and successful. But he had to learn that "by strength shall no man prevail," (1 Sam. 2:9) and to forsake his former weapons. It is the path by which we must all travel if we are to become princes with God. The life of nature and of dependence on self must be broken and lamed in order that, in the very moment of discovered impotence, we may grasp the hand that smites, and find immortal power flowing into our weakness from it." (Maclaren)
2. The Tears in Jacob's clinging (Vs. 26; Hos. 12:3-4)

Jacob now begins to sob and supplicate. He is clinging and pleading! This is just where God wants Jacob.

 - a. Jacob sobs – "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he **wept**, and made supplication unto him" (Hos. 12:4).
 - b. Jacob supplicates – "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and **made supplication** unto him" (Hos. 12:4).
3. The Tenacity of Jacob's Clinging (Vs. 26)

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- a. The Lord tests Jacob's resolve and says "Let me go, for the day breaketh" but Jacob has now assumed the position of prevailing prayer. He will not cease clinging until he has the answer from God.
- b. It is fascinating to see that Jacob requests blessing from God. Jacob had been blessed materially (Vs. 10) but now he is more conscious than ever for the need of spiritual blessing in his life.

C. Blessing (Vs. 27-32)

The answer is now given and Divine blessings are poured into Jacob's life. There is:

1. A New Name (Vs. Vs. 27-28a)
 - a. The Question (Vs. 27). The purpose of this question was not to get information – God knows all things and He knew Jacob's name. It was in order that Jacob would admit the reality of who he was in humility. Jacob met the Lord that night and he also met himself! He was brought face to face with Jacob and all the ugliness of his Adamic nature. Before we can begin to be like the Lord, we have to face ourselves and admit what we are in ourselves. "The Lord didn't ask this question because he didn't know Jacob's name. The question was designed to make Jacob face himself in honesty and to decide if he was going to keep going the Jacob way or yield to the Lord's way in his life. A new name in the Bible signifies a new beginning." (Wiersbe)
 - b. The Designation (Vs. 28a). The new name is symbolic of the new nature. Jacob did not become sinlessly perfect at Peniel. The work of sanctification was not finished and there are times after this point where he is still called Jacob but Peniel did mark a major turning point in Jacob's life. To use New Testament language, Jacob learned the truth of "not I but Christ" in a deeper way at Peniel and this stayed with him the rest of his life. "From this time onward there was a very distinct change in Jacob; and although the old nature was still there, Peniel had its effect and exercised transforming influence." (Thomas)
Maclaren adds, "The change of name indicates a new epoch in a life, or a transformation of the inner man. The old nature remains but its power is broken and Jacob has learnt that He does not have to live by the power of his corrupt nature but by the heavenly power of God."
2. A New Power (Vs. 28b)
 - a. Power with God – Peniel reveals the pathway to the power of God. God's power works through yielded, surrendered men who know what it is to die to self. Note the word 'prevailed'. From the human perspective, Jacob had lost the contest and yet from God's Divine perspective, He had prevailed. Victory comes through surrendering and strength comes through weakness. It doesn't make sense to the natural man but it is the wisdom of God. Illustration: The Apostle Paul's testimony (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). "Prayer is power. It conquers God. We overcome Him when we yield. When we are vanquished, we are victors. When the life of nature is broken within us, then from conscious

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weakness springs the longing which God cannot but satisfy.”
(Maclaren)

- b. Power with men – note the order. All his life, Jacob had sought advantage over men. Now he found himself in a situation where he was powerless against Esau but through brokenness, he would have an influence that would never have been possible through his own strength. “Power with man comes from power with God. **Power with God came by surrender.** Self is the greatest foe to blessing from God or influence with men.”
(Thomas)
3. A New Blessing (Vs. 29). Jacob had been abundantly blessed of God in multiple ways but there was a fresh blessing to be experienced through brokenness. Jacob knew that he could not go on without God’s blessing in his life. Over 20 years prior, Jacob had been focused on getting the blessing from his father Isaac. Now he longs above all for blessing from heaven!
4. A New Memorial (Vs. 30). This location became a special place to Jacob and so he named it ‘Peniel’ meaning “face of God”. As we walk with God, we will come to our own Peniel’s where God meets with us in a powerful and special way.
5. A New Walk (Vs. 31). Jacob’s walk was never the same from that day forward. For the rest of his life, he would walk with a limp. His infirmity would be a constant reminder of Peniel and what God did in his life. The Bible sets the scene as the rays of the rising sun shine upon Jacob as he limps into view. He would never be the same again.
6. A New Legacy (Vs. 32). So significant was this event in the consciousness of Jacob’s descendants, that they refrained from eating a certain portion of muscle.² This was not commanded by God but reveals how important this event was to the nation of Israel. The self-life will leave nothing of any value behind for the next generation but a life of selflessness and surrender to God will!

Conclusion: Hebrews 11:21 “By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, **leaning upon the top of his staff.**” Here we see Jacob at the end of his life and the writer to the Hebrews notes that he is leaning on his staff. Jacob was still living in the power of Peniel. He wasn’t standing in his own strength but in dependence upon his God.

Are you wrestling against your God or clinging to your God? Will you submit to what God is seeking to accomplish in your life?

² According to Henry Morris, “probably the portion of the hindquarter containing the sciatic nerve”.

Reconciling with a Rogue

Jacob comes face to face with Esau

Text: Gen. 33:1-20

Introduction:

1. This chapter records the encounter between Jacob and Esau after the build up of the previous chapter. The lead up to Jacob's encounter with Esau had been used mightily in the purposes of God to deepen the work of sanctification in Jacob's life. Now the time had come to face Esau in the flesh and see God work to bring about peace between the two estranged brothers.
2. The word 'reconcile' comes from an old Latin word meaning "to make good again, repair". In this chapter we see some repair work taking place in Jacob and Esau's troubled relationship. At the same time, we will note the ongoing limitations of their relationship due to the fact they were walking different paths.
3. We will divide the chapter into **three sections** for our study as we seek to learn the lessons God has for us from this important epoch in the life of Jacob.

I. **THE OCCASION OF THEIR RECONCILIATION (VS. 1-7)**

"The timing of this encounter came the day following Jacob's high spiritual experience of wrestling all night with the angel of God. In that experience Jacob gained much blessing from God. However, trial often follows closely on the heels of triumph. Blessings are often followed quickly by battle."

(Butler)

A. **The Preparation before Reconciliation (Vs. 1-2)**

1. Jacob sees Esau approaching with the 400 men and again partitions his family in order to give his family the best chance of escape should Esau prove to be hostile (See 32:7-8). He sets the handmaids (Zilpah and Bilhah) and their children out in front, followed by Leah and her children then Rachel and Joseph in the rear. Jacob's actions again demonstrate the sad dynamics of a polygamist marriage where there is partiality.
2. Some are very hard on Jacob for doing this, accusing him of a lack of faith. Try to put yourselves into Jacob's shoes for a moment! At worst it shows that Jacob, like us, was very human and even after all of God's promises and blessings still struggled when faced with the actual problem. On the other hand, perhaps this did not represent a lapse of faith but rather the principle that while our faith is to be totally in God, it is still appropriate at times to take some actions to prepare for what is ahead of us on our end. It could be that for Jacob it went something like this, "Well Lord, I have sought you in prayer and prepared my family as best I can for this confrontation with Esau, now it's in your hands." There are appropriate actions on our side that can accompany faith. There is both the active and the passive side of the walk of faith.

B. **The Process of the Reconciliation (Vs. 3-7)**

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1. Jacob's bowing to Esau (Vs. 3)
 - a. Jacob steps forward towards his brother and the 400 men as they approached. This took courage.
 - b. As Jacob approached Esau, he bowed 7 times. This means he would take a few steps, prostrate himself on the ground, take a few more steps and repeat the process until he had done it 7 times. Ancient records indicate that this was the kind of homage afforded a king.
 - c. Jacob was demonstrating by his actions a change in attitude towards his brother from what he had been like 20 years previous. Matthew Henry wisely commented that "the bullet files over him that stoops".
 - d. Note: For reconciliation to take place between two estranged parties, it takes humility. Jacob had wronged his brother Esau in his handling of the birthright and the blessing and it was appropriate that he demonstrate some contrition.
2. Esau's running to Jacob (Vs. 4)
 - a. The moving moment is now described where Jacob and Esau embrace.
 - b. The text indicates that this was no brief hug between the two estranged brothers – "fell on his neck".
 - c. Both Jacob and Esau weep for some time in each other's arms. Think of all the emotions that must have welled up in their hearts at this moment. It had been twenty long years since they had seen each other and there had been much pain and hurt in their history together. The pain of a home with divided affections from Mum and Dad. The pain of Jacob's deceitful ways. The pain of Esau's years of bitterness and murderous spirit towards Jacob.
 - d. Note: Reconciliation is a precious thing and can take place even after many years. It is a wonderful thing when members of a natural family make right the wrongs of the past and reconcile with each other. It is also precious when members of the family of God get things right with one another after years of holding on to hurt and bitterness.
3. Esau's meeting with Jacob's family (Vs. 5-7)
 - a. Esau looks up and sees the women and children watching the scene. Evidently, they had gathered and watched as their husband and father reunite with Esau.
 - b. Instinctively they sensed the danger was past and so they came forward, each in their respective groups and paid their respects to their uncle and brother-in-law.
 - c. Jacob's reply to Esau's question is instructive – "Who are those with thee? And he said, the children which God hath graciously given thy servant". Jacob viewed his children as gracious gifts from God (Psalm 127). Jacob is very conscious of the grace of God in his life at this time (See Gen. 32:10). Every blessing in our lives should be attributed to the goodness and grace of God.

C. The Power behind the Reconciliation

Our hearts are stirred by the moving scene before us but we would do well at this point to pause and consider what the secret was behind

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this. How was it that the heart of a hardened man like Esau had been melted? What had just taken place was almost impossible humanly speaking. Proverbs 18:19 says, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." The events recorded in chapter 33 were made possible through:

1. The promises of God – God had promised to be with Jacob and He had not failed. "And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and **I will be with thee.**" (Gen. 31:3). The presence of God was protecting and preserving Jacob in his walk of faith. We serve a God who is faithful to do what He promised. We can rely wholeheartedly on His precious promises!
2. The Prayers to God – if there is one thing Genesis 33 should teach us it is that God hears and answers prayer! This was a direct answer to Jacob's prayer recorded in the previous chapter (32:9-12). For Esau to go from wanting to hurt Jacob to embracing Jacob was due to answered prayer!
3. The Power of God – Jacob knew the power of God in a fresh way in his life at this time. It was a power that came through brokenness. If Jacob had approached Esau in self-sufficiency and self-reliance how different the outcome might have been. Jacob had "power with God" and as a consequence "power with men" (Gen. 32:28).
 - a. Jacob had hoped to appease Esau with his gifts but in reality, it was the power of God, not Jacob's planning that had delivered this outcome.
 - b. When we embrace the death to self principle, we come to know something of the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus working in and through us. Then and only then can we really be a force for God in the lives for others.

II. THE NEGOTIATIONS OF THEIR RECONCILIATION (VS. 8-11)

These verses contain the conversation and negotiations that followed concerning Jacob's gift to Esau.

A. The Cultural Concern behind Jacob's Gift (Vs. 8-10)

1. In the culture of the East, the receiving of a gift had great significance. It would assure Jacob that the reconciliation between them was genuine. The test in the East is not so much if someone is willing to give you something but whether they are willing to receive something from you.
2. Whitelaw: "In Eastern countries the acceptance of a gift is equivalent to the striking of a covenant of friendship. If your present be received by your superior you may rely on his friendship; if it be declined you have everything to fear. It was on this ground that Jacob was so urgent in pressing Esau to accept his present."

B. The Condition of the Gift (Vs. 11)

The one condition was that Esau be willing to accept Jacob's generous gift of the 580 livestock.

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1. The Reluctance towards the gift (Vs. 9).
What was behind Esau's reluctance?
 - a. Esau's sense of sufficiency. He felt he had enough. Why should he receive Jacob's gift?
 - b. Esau's pride. To receive this gift would require humility on Esau's part and so he balked at it initially. We sometimes forget that it doesn't just take humility to give. It also takes humility to receive. Our pride can get in the way of us receiving!
 - c. Esau would have to overcome both of these things if he was going to receive Jacob's gift.
2. The Receiving of the Gift (Vs. 11b)
 - a. Jacob urges Esau and eventually he relents and receives the gift.
 - b. Gospel application: We are reminded of the principle that a gift cannot be earned but must be received by the one to whom it is offered. This reminds us of the Gospel.
 - i. Many are reluctant to receive God's free offer of salvation because they think they have enough when in reality salvation is their greatest need.
 - ii. Many are reluctant to receive God's free gift of salvation because of their pride. To admit you are a sinner and that there is nothing you can do to earn God's favour and eternal life in heaven requires humility!
 - iii. As Jacob urged Esau to accept his gift, we urge you to receive God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8-9, Rom. 6:23). God's gift of salvation is undeserved; we are guilty sinners (Rom. 3:10, 23; 5:12; 6:23). But God offers it to us because of His great love (John 3:16) if we would be willing to receive it (John 1:12).

III. THE SEPARATION AFTER THEIR RECONCILIATION (VS. 12-20)

A. The Logic of the Separation (Vs. 12-15)

Having made peace with one another, it was important that Jacob and Esau go their separate ways. There were a number of reasons for this.

1. Practical reasons (Vs. 12-14)

Jacob was conscious of:

- a. The limitations of Jacob's family and flock (Vs. 13)
 - i. Jacob demonstrates wisdom and understanding as the leader of his family and flocks. He was conscious of their limitations and that if he drove them too hard, they would suffer. Jacob knew that trying to keep up with a wild hunter like his brother and his band of 400 men would be detrimental to his family and flocks. He was conscious not to 'overdrive' them.
 - ii. Jacob was expressing the wisdom and insight of an experienced shepherd who had spent many years with the flock. He was also a family man who understood the limitations of young children.

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- iii. Pastors (shepherds) of God's sheep would do well to keep Jacob's words of wisdom in mind in relation to their approach to shepherding the flock of God. Some pastor's drive the sheep under their care until they wither and die.¹ While it is vital that a pastor lead the church follow and serve the Great Shepherd passionately, he must also be aware of what the flock can realistically cope with and give time for a pause and rest when needed. The other extreme is to encourage laziness in the flock and that is wrong too! The flock needs to be moving but the shepherd must be conscious of how much distance can be 'endured' (Vs. 14) at a given time.
- b. The leadership of Jacob's family and flock (Vs. 14-15)
 - i. Esau's offer was to head up the clan and lead – "I will go before thee" (Vs. 12). Jacob was not prepared to surrender leadership of his family and flocks to the likes of Esau. That Esau had been willing to make peace with Jacob was commendable but Esau was still Esau the wild hunter and unpredictable by nature.
 - ii. Jacob had a different leadership philosophy to Esau's. He was conscious to lead 'softly' meaning "slowly, gently, easily, step by step" (Gill). This does not mean we need leadership that is soft and weak. Strong leadership in families and churches is a must but in needs to be coupled with gentleness. 2 Timothy 2:24 "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient," Gentleness is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).
 - iii. Esau offers to leave some of the men with him, probably to act as body guards, but Jacob graciously refuses (Vs. 15). To try and walk together with Esau's men would simply not work.
- 2. Spiritual reasons
 - Beyond the practical reasons, no doubt Jacob was conscious of deeper reasons why he could not walk together with Esau in this way.
 - a. They were men on different paths – Esau was headed in the direction of Seir (Edom) in a dry, barren region south of the Dead Sea. Jacob was going in the direction of Canaan, the land of fruitfulness and blessing.
 - i. We are reminded that while we should seek to live peaceably with the Esau's in our lives, that does not mean we should walk or work closely with them. Jacob did not allow the emotional high of the moment to override wisdom in this area.

¹ This doesn't just happen in fundamental Baptist circles. In fact, some of the business oriented, results driven mega churches are the guilty of burning out dear people in their lust to have a "big church". There are some very burnt out, bitter people out there who got chewed up in the machinery of a mega church.

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- ii. There is a place to make peace, if possible, with someone and then part ways amicably afterwards. Romans 12:18 **“If it be possible²**, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”
- iii. We are reminded of the truth of Amos 3:3 **“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”**
- b. They were men with different priorities – Esau was a profane man with worldly priorities and pursuits whereas Jacob was a spiritual man with heavenly priorities and pursuits. Jacob was a man of God, Esau a man of the world. It simply would not be possible to work and walk closely together. Esau’s men could not be allowed to mingle with Jacob’s family.
- c. As God’s people we are to maintain a peaceful disposition to the unsaved world and at the same time, maintain separation from the unsaved world. Both are Christian duties.

B. The Locations after the Separation (Vs. 12-15)

- 1. Esau returns to Seir which later became known as Edom, the territory of Esau’s descendants (Edomites). It was a dry and barren region south of the Dead Sea. What a picture of the world the profane man inhabits. It may appear attractive from a distance but when you arrive, you find you were fooled by a mirage and all that is there is dry sand and disappointment. “God had called Jacob back to Canaan, not Seir. How the world likes to get us to go with them to some other land than the promised land.” (Butler)
- 2. Jacob sojourns in two places – Succoth and then Shechem.
 - a. We note that sadly Jacob slipped back into his deceptive ways, giving Esau the impression he would follow him to Seir when he had no such plan at all. It is a sobering reminder that the “Jacob nature” is always with us until we go to heaven and even if we have experienced God’s power at Peniel, we can still yield to the dictates of the self-life again apart from the grace of God. There is no such thing as sinless perfection this side of heaven! Sanctification is an ongoing process in our lives and we have a choice each day between the self-life or the crucified life.
 - b. Succoth is located near the Jordan River a bit north of Jabbok. It is noted that at Succoth, Jacob constructed booths for his cattle. This is why the place was called ‘Succoth’ meaning ‘booths’.
 - c. Shechem was located on the west side of the Jordan between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. It is about thirty miles (48 km) north of Jerusalem.
 - i. Evidently, Jacob dug a well there as many years later Christ would meet the woman of Samaria at that very well (John 4:5-6). Shechem was a prominent city throughout biblical history. It was very close to the future city of Samaria, which became the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel.

² God’s Word recognizes that sometimes peace with certain individuals is not possible in a fallen world but if it is possible, then it should be sought and strived for.

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- ii. Jacob purchases a tract of land from Hamor and his sons for a hundred pieces of silver. Many years later, Jacob's favourite son, Joseph would be buried on this same spot. Joshua 24:32 "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph."
- iii. Jacob builds an altar and calls it "El-elohe-Israel" meaning "the mighty God of Israel. This is the first record we have of Jacob using his new name.
- iv. We do pause at this juncture and wonder why Jacob chose to stop short of going all the way to Bethel at this time. It would seem that God wanted him in Bethel from the instruction that would come a little later (Genesis 35:1). The sojourn at Shechem would be marred with some sad events in Jacob's family. This will be the focus of our next lesson in chapter 34.

Conclusion: What impossible things are you asking God for in prayer? Is there an Esau individual in your life with whom you need to make peace? Who are you walking and working with closely in your life?

The Dinah Disaster (Part 1)

Text: Gen. 34:1-31

Introduction:

1. Jacob and his family must have dwelt at Shechem for some years as Dinah, the youngest of Leah's children, was now clearly a young woman, likely in her teens when this tragic incident occurred. She would only have been a child when they left Haran as 11 children were born to Jacob during his final 13 years there (7 years to pay of Rachel and 6 years to earn the livestock).
2. It appears that Jacob chose to settle down here on account of its favourable pastures for his flocks (See Gen. 33:17-19). Evidently life was uneventful for Jacob and his family for some time at Shechem until tragedy once again visited Jacob's home.
3. The Word of God does not sugar coat the glaring faults of the heroes of the faith and everything is in God's Word for a reason that we might receive instruction and warning.
4. We will divide the chapter into **5 sections** for our study as we seek to learn the lessons God has for us from this sobering and yet necessary chapter.
 - The Danger at Shechem (Vs. 1)
 - The Defilement at Shechem (Vs. 2-7)
 - The Deception at Shechem (Vs. 8-24)
 - The Devilry at Shechem (Vs. 25-29)
 - The Damage at Shechem (Vs. 30-31)

I. THE DANGER AT SHECHEM (VS. 1; 33:18-19)

The Bible notes that Jacob "pitched his tent before the city". The land and the location may have had a lot going for it but there were some spiritual dangers to Jacob's family lurking in Shechem. There was the danger of:

A. Closeness to the World (Gen. 33:18-19)

1. The world is never far from the Christian home and it is full of dangers. You cannot afford to have a naïve and ignorant view of the world and its spiritual dangers. Even if you are seeking to lead a separated life, you cannot afford to grow complacent. Nowadays, the world is only a couple of clicks or a couple of taps away!
2. **Be careful where you pitch your tent as a family!** It is true that we have to live in this world but to get too close to it is dangerous. There is safety in separation!
3. "Living so close to an ungodly city as his family was, soon began to foster serious perils of a sort Jacob had not anticipated. As his children grew into their teens and then into adulthood, the low moral environment around them began to have its deadly effect." (Henry Morris)
4. There are other examples in the Word of God of this principle. Lot pitched his tent "toward Sodom" (Gen. 13:12) which led to a devastating chain of events.

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5. We cannot live in total isolation from the world (we are separatists, not isolationists) but there will be key decisions in our earthly walk where we are presented with the temptation to pitch our lives dangerously close to the world and its seductions.
6. We would suggest that Bethel (the house of God) would have been a safer place for Jacob to pitch his tent. The same principle goes for Christian families today. Get your family's tent pitched in the New Testament house of God and be there each time the doors are open. It's a place of spiritual safety for your family! There is even physical safety in being regular in God's house!
7. Let us remind ourselves on some key exhortations of God's Word concerning the nature of this wicked world and our relationship to it. The message of God's Word is crystal clear:
 - a. **DON'T BE IGNORANT ABOUT IT!** 1 John 5:19 "*And we know that we are of God, and **the whole world lieth in wickedness.***"
 - b. **DON'T BE A FRIEND OF IT!** James 4:4 "*Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*"
 - c. **DON'T BE IN LOVE WITH IT!** 1 John 2:15-17 "*Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love 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 pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*"
 - d. **DON'T BE A PART OF IT!** 2 Cor. 6:14-18 "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. **Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*;** and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*"
8. "Worldliness is hard to define, but it is very easy to feel, to detect, and to describe. It is an atmosphere, enervating¹ (weakening), lowering, poisoning, deadening; and whenever individuals and churches are under its sway, the result, however long delayed, is as inevitable as it is disastrous to the soul and dishonouring to God." (Thomas)

B. Conformity to the World

- a. The low spiritual environment during this period appears to have had an effect on Jacob's household as in the next chapter, he had to call his family back to purity – "Then Jacob said unto his

¹ Depriving of strength, force or vigor; weakening; enfeebling. (Webster 1828)

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household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments:" (Gen. 35:2).

- b. We know that Rachel had an affection for idols (Gen. 31:19, 34-35) and apparently it was no longer confined just to her. Is it possible that nearby Shechem was having an influence on Jacob's family in this area?
- c. If the world's idols are entertained in the home, then don't be surprised if eventually members of your household start seeking out idolaters for their companions.

C. Companionship with the World (Vs. 1)

This danger is a natural and inevitable consequence of the previous two points. Closeness to the world can so easily lead to companionship with the world. This is what happened with Jacob's daughter Dinah. Dinah's desire for companionship was natural for a young lady her age and was not sinful in and of itself. She was surrounded by lots of brothers and wanted to find some lady friends. The problem was the kind of friends she sought out! There are a couple of clear warnings here.

1. Warning to young people – choose your friends carefully! They can make or break you! Proverbs 13:20 "He that walketh with wise *men* shall be wise: but a companion of fools **shall** be destroyed." There is no ambiguity with this verse; it is absolute.
2. Warning to parents – you better be involved in your children's choice of friends! We have to pause here and ask the glaring question – **where were Dinah's parents in all of this?!** The idea that when your child becomes a teenager, they enter a period of self-determination is totally wrong. You better be involved in their choice of friends or you will regret it!
 - a. Think carefully about how and where you educate your children. The influence of the teachers is one factor but the influence of their peer group is of even greater consequence. If you throw your children into the sewers of public education, don't be surprised if they get diseased! Be just as careful about "Christian schools" that have "Christian" on the outside but the world and the devil on the inside.
 - b. Don't swallow the lie that when your child reaches young adulthood your involvement in their lives practically ceases. While we do want our children to grow into adulthood and learn to stand on their own two feet, as parents we should still seek to speak words of wisdom and guidance into their lives.
 - c. You need to be asking the hard questions. Who is in their social group? Who is influencing their lives? Who are they connecting with online? Does my teen really need a smartphone? What potential devastation is going to take place in his/her heart with unrestricted access to the internet?

II. THE DEFILEMENT AT SHECHEM (VS. 2-7)

The danger to Dinah became a sad reality in her life as recorded in these verses.

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A. The Temptation leading to Dinah's Defilement (Vs. 2-3)

1. We see the sequence this temptation took. It is the sequence of temptation we see time and time again in the Scriptures. It moves quickly from lust to action – I saw, I desired and I took (e.g., Eve in the garden with the forbidden fruit)
 - a. Shechem looked at Dinah.
 - b. Shechem lusted after Dinah.
 - c. Shechem lay with Dinah.
 - d. Note: The Bible does not state specifically if Dinah was a willing participant in this act of immorality or if she was forced against her will. Either way, the situation was a tragic one. Dinah had made a decision to hang out with the wrong crowd and Shechem had pursued his self-centred lusts.
2. James describes the process in terms of conception to birth. The conception of lust in the heart leads to the birthing of sin in the actions. James 1:15 **"Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."**
3. Satan has been using the eye gate since Eden to tempt mankind to sin against God. With modern technology he has more tools than ever to dangle the forbidden fruit before our eyes!

B. The Perversion of Dinah's Defilement (Vs. 2b; 13, 27)

Three times in this chapter Shechem's illicit activity with Dinah is referred to as a defilement and it highlights the reality of how God sees the sin of fornication. Fornication is:

1. An unclean sin – the word 'defile' means "to make unclean; to render foul or dirty" and can refer to physical as well as moral uncleanness. To be 'defiled is to be "contaminated, polluted".
 - a. The Hebrew word is translated many times as 'unclean' in the Book of Leviticus. In fact, about 64 percent of the occurrences of this word appear in Leviticus.²
 - b. Ephesians 5:1-3 "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. **But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;**"
 - c. My prayer is that God will strengthen us to be a pure people in the midst of a polluted, perverse, promiscuous and pornographic society.
 - d. Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, purchased by the blood of Christ (1 Cor. 6:19-20); don't pollute and contaminate it with sin!
 - e. When something is unclean, what is the solution? The solution is cleansing/washing. The solution for a life dirtied and defiled with the uncleanness of impurity and sin is the cleansing of the precious, pure, powerful blood of Jesus Christ.

² According to the Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, p. 349.

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- i. 1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to **cleanse us** from all unrighteousness.”
 - ii. Rev. 1:5 “And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and **washed us** from our sins in his own blood,”
2. An unwise sin – “because he had wrought **folly** in Israel” (Vs. 7). The Biblical connotation is stronger than our present-day use of the word ‘foolishness’. The word means ‘villainy’, something ‘vile’. It means “a disregard for moral and spiritual claims” and refers to sins of immorality in multiple places in the Old Testament.³ For example:
- a. A request for Sodomy was regarded as an act of folly (Judg. 19:23-24).
 - b. Premeditated rape was stigmatized as a deed of folly (2 Sam. 13:12) 2 Samuel 13:12 “And she (Tamar) answered him (Amnon), Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this **folly**.”
 - c. The world would tell you it is wise to engage in such activity. The Bible says you are fool to do so!
3. An unlawful sin – “which thing ought not to be done”. The testimony of Scripture is consistent and clear on this point – this sin should NOT be done. This sin is still AGAINST God and His Word.
- a. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 “**Flee fornication**. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 “For this is **the will of God**, *even* your sanctification, that ye should **abstain from fornication**: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God:”
 - c. Eph. 5:3 “But **fornication**, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;”
 - d. Col. 3:5 “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; **fornication**, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:”

C. The Reaction to Dinah’s Defilement (Vs. 4-7)

We note the main characters in this story and their respective reactions to the sin that had taken place. There is something to be learned from each!

1. Hamor’s Response – Acceptance of the Sin (a pagan response) (Vs. 4).
 - a. The culture of ancient Shechem.

³ Ibid, pg. 547

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- i. Hamor has no word of rebuke for his fornicator son when he becomes aware of the situation.
 - ii. Hamor and Shechem do not even hint at an apology throughout the entire account.
 - iii. Shechem clearly believed that living together before an official marriage was finalised was acceptable and appropriate (Vs. 26).
 - iv. The reason for all of this was simple. The pagan society of Shechem had normalized sins of this nature. In fact, immoral sins like these were elevated to the level of something sacred. Sexual immorality and perversion were often incorporated into the rites connected with their idol worship.
- b. The culture of modern society. When you have widespread acceptance and promotion of immorality and perversion in a society you can be sure of one thing, that society is pagan and godless!
- i. Our culture, like the Canaanites, widely and openly accepts and promotes the sexual sins of Shechem and Sodom.
 - ii. Our culture, like the Canaanites, has practically elevated such sins to the level of something sacred. Our society calls good evil and evil good (Is. 5:20). In fact, if you hold to a biblical view of gender, marriage and sexuality, you are branded the immoral one nowadays! If you endorse every form of twisted perversion, you are considered virtuous. It's the complete reverse to the truth of God's Word!
 - iii. Our culture, like the Canaanites, sees no problem with living together before marriage (De Facto relationships). It used to be called "living in sin" even by the unsaved in our culture but not anymore!
 - iv. Our culture, like the Canaanites, is in a state of all out rebellion towards the Creator and His Word on gender, sex and marriage.
 - v. **REMEMBER!** God has not changed His mind on morality nor will He ever change. He is the unchangeable, immutable God. He is the Creator of male, female and the one flesh union and it is His Divine right to lay down the rules for how such a union is to take place. God has ordained the one flesh union to be entered into **ONLY** within the confines of biblical marriage; full stop. Anything outside of that is **SIN**. Make sure your view of morals is not being shaped and moulded by a Sodom-like society!
2. Jacob's Response – Apathy towards the Sin (a pitiful response) (Vs. 5-6).
- a. It is noted that Jacob "held his peace" (Vs. 5). It is true this silence was not permanent (note the word 'until') but if you read the whole account, you will find that Jacob was too silent and

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- passive in this situation. Instead of exercising strong leadership in the situation, he allowed his sons to direct things.
- b. We are not suggesting that Jacob wasn't grieved by what had happened to his daughter. However, we are suggesting that he was too passive in the situation, something we know from previous studies he was inclined to do at times.
 - c. Passivity in parents in relation to such sins in the lives of their children is a concerning trend in our day. Before you pull out the love card or the grace card, make sure you have first consulted the truth card! God's love, grace and forgiveness **IS** available to those who have sinned in this way. However, his grace and love are **NOT** available for you to abuse in an attempt to make such sins less serious than they are in the eyes of Almighty God.
3. Dinah' Brother's Response – Anger towards the Sin (a proper response) (Vs. 7) The initial response of the brothers to the news was appropriate.
- a. They were grieved at the news. The word 'grieved' means "to suffer pain" (Wilson) This was a healthy response. Such a sad and sordid event should pain the heart of anyone with any sense of decency.
 - b. They were angered at the news. Their anger was great – "they were very wrath". The word 'wrath' means "to burn, to be kindled, inflamed". Sin should anger us as it angers God (Ps. 7:11).
 - c. The attitude of Dinah's brothers to what had happened were right and appropriate. Their subsequent actions as recorded in the rest of the chapter were wrong!

To be continued in Part 2...

Conclusion:

1. Parents, where are you pitching your family tent? Are you getting too close to the world and its influences?
2. Are you walking with the wise or the foolish in your life? Who is in your social circle? Who are you pursuing as friends?
3. Are your morals being shaped by God's Word or by an immoral society?
4. Do you have the stain of unconfessed impurity in your life? The blood of Christ is the answer!

The Dinah Disaster (Part 2)

Text: Gen. 34:1-31

Introduction:

1. In our previous message we considered the tragic event that took place between Shechem and Dinah. Now we continue our study of the account and the aftermath and fall out from that event. The previous message focused on the problem of moral purity. This message will focus more on the problem of anger.
2. We have divided the chapter into **5 sections** for our study as we seek to learn the lessons God has for us from this sobering and yet necessary chapter.
 - The Danger at Shechem (Vs. 1)
 - The Defilement at Shechem (Vs. 2-7)
 - The Deception at Shechem (Vs. 8-24)
 - The Devilry at Shechem (Vs. 25-29)
 - The Damage at Shechem (Vs. 30-31)

I. THE DANGER AT SHECHEM (VS. 1; 33:18-19)

There was the danger of:

- A. Closeness to the World (Gen. 33:18-19)
- B. Conformity to the World
- C. Companionship with the World (Vs. 1)

II. THE DEFILEMENT AT SHECHEM (VS. 2-7)

The danger to Dinah became a sad reality in her life as recorded in these verses.

- A. The Temptation leading to Dinah's Defilement (Vs. 2-3)
- B. The Perversion of Dinah's Defilement (Vs. 2b; 13, 27)
- C. The Reaction to Dinah's Defilement (Vs. 4-7)

III. THE DECEPTION AT SHECHEM (VS. 8-24)

A dialogue and a negotiation now take place between Jacob's sons, Hamor and his son Shechem. Hamor and Shechem enter into the negotiations in good faith not knowing that Jacob's sons were actually plotting treachery. This is where Jacob's sons begin to err in their response to the situation. Remember, God holds us responsible for how we respond to things in the Christian life.

A. The Deception Presented (Vs. 8-17)

1. Hamor's proposal (Vs. 8-10)
 - a. The request for Dinah (Vs. 8)
 - b. The request for amalgamation (Vs. 9-10). The offer went way beyond the request for a wife for his son. Hamor proposed a merger of the two peoples – the Israelites and the Shechemites. This proposal was incompatible on multiple levels for Jacob and his family so to pretend to go along with it was wrong in itself. We ask again at this point, "where is Jacob in all of this?!"

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Hamor's underlying motive is revealed in verse 23. He saw it as an opportunity for material gain.

2. Shechem's offer (Vs. 11-12)
 - a. Shechem adds his own generous offer. He was willing to pay whatever dowry they would require in order to marry Dinah.
 - b. While Shechem's sin was wrong as noted above, the Bible does say he was "more honourable than all the house of his father" indicating he did have some character.
3. Jacob's sons' counterproposal (Vs. 13-17)
 - a. Jacob's sons' answer Hamor and Shechem 'deceitfully'. They were intent on murderous revenge, not a peaceful and spiritual resolution to the situation.
 - b. They misuse the sacred rite of circumcision, a sign of the covenant between God and Israel, in their deception. What a wicked thing to use something sacred as a cloak for a sinister plot. "The Shechemites must be circumcised; not to make them holy...but to make them sore" (Henry)
 - c. They lie to Hamor and his son that they were willing to consent to the proposal on the condition they and the other men of Shechem be circumcised. In reality, they did this not because they were concerned to try and make the Shechemites godly but because they knew that the surgical procedure would make them weak and vulnerable to attack on the third day when the pain would reach its peak (Vs. 25).

B. The Deception Accepted (Vs. 18-24)

1. The proposal was joyfully accepted by Hamor and Shechem (Vs. 18-19). It again highlights the cruelty and treachery of Jacob's sons in what they were doing. These men did not know the One True God of Israel.
2. The proposal was willingly accepted by the Shechemites (Vs. 20-24). Notice that Hamor and Shechem state that Jacob and his sons were "peaceable with us". Sadly, it couldn't have been further from the truth.
3. The actions of Jacob's sons are a reminder that you do not correct a wrong by engaging in wrongdoing yourself. That is not God's way!

IV. THE DEVILRY AT SHECHEM (VS. 25-29)

The sons of Jacob now carry out their devilish plan. We will look at their outward actions and their inward motivations.

A. Their Outward Actions (Vs. 25-29)

1. They Slaughtered the Shechemites (Vs. 25-26)
 - a. The moment of the massacre (Vs. 25a). They took advantage of the Shechemite's vulnerability on the third day after their circumcision when they would be most incapacitated because of the pain.
 - b. The men carrying out the massacre (Vs. 25a). Simeon and Levi were the two brothers who carried out this cruel massacre. They were Dinah's full blood brothers and they took the matter into their own hands and allowed their anger to drive them to carry out this murderous revenge.

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- c. Note: There is a hint of hypocrisy with Jacob's sons as some of them would go on to commit similar sins (e.g., Reuben and Judah).
 - d. Note: Bloodshed and violence are often fruits of immorality. David's immorality with Bathsheba brought about the death of Bathsheba's husband Uriah. Amnon's immorality with his half-sister Tamar resulted in Amnon being murdered by Tamar's brother Absalom. The immorality of Herod and Herodias led to the bloody death of John the Baptist. "Governments say we need more money to stop crime, but the Bible says we need more morality. Governments say we need more programs to stop bloodshed, but the Bible says we need more purity." (Butler)
2. They Spoiled the Shechemites (Vs. 27-29)
 - a. Simeon and Levi were the principal perpetrators of the slaughter of the Shechemites but the other sons of Jacob were happy to come along afterwards and join in the looting.
 - b. They took everything of value from the field (livestock) and the city (possessions). They even took the women and children as booty.

B. Their Inward Motivations (Vs. 7; Gen. 49:5-7)

1. Rage was clearly the driving force behind the viciousness and violence perpetrated by Dinah's brothers. Anger at the sin that had been committed was appropriate and had they stopped there and left the Shechemites in God's hands, the story would have ended a lot better. But they allowed revengeful rage to take over their hearts.
2. Never underestimate how much you can hurt others in word or action when you allow the fires of anger to burn unchecked in your life. It is frightening what we are capable of!
3. Jacob, Simeon and Levi's father, exposed the darkness of their (Simeon and Levi's) hearts in this matter and condemns it in no uncertain language. Genesis 49:5-7 "Simeon and Levi *are* brethren; instruments of **cruelty** *are in* their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their **anger** they slew a man, and in their **selfwill** they digged down a wall. Cursed *be* their anger, for *it was* fierce; and their wrath, for it was **cruel**: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel."
- a. Jacob is on the record at the end of his life that in no way did he have a part in Simeon and Levi's evil plot.
- b. Jacob draws a clear link between his son's cruelty and their fierce anger. Instead of yielding to God's will in the situation, they were self-willed.
4. The arm of the flesh is never the answer in situations such as these. When anger against an injustice/sin turns into murderous rage and a pursuing of revenge against individuals, a line has been crossed. You don't right the wrongs by committing a wrong yourself!
5. There are some helpful truths in Romans 12 for handling such situations. Romans 12:14, 19-21 "Bless them which persecute you:

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bless, and curse not...Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

- a. We are to bless them and not curse (Vs. 14) We think of Christ’s words in Matthew 5:44-45 “**But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.**”
- b. We are to leave justice in God’s hands (Vs. 19)
 - i. ‘avenge’ = to vindicate one’s right; taking the law into your own hands
 - ii. “give place” = to give the place occupied to another, to make room for. We are to step aside in the situation and leave matters in the hands of the Judge of the universe who will always do right.
- c. We are to repay ill treatment with kindness (Vs. 20-21)

C. The Bible and Anger

Since this is one of the prominent examples of unrighteous anger in the Bible, we would do well to pause for a few moments and remind ourselves of some of the key Bible lessons on anger.

1. The Causes of Anger

There are at least three flames that can get anger boiling in my heart and life:¹

- a. **Hurts** – injustices and mistreatments in our lives or in the lives of those we love. The case in point is a prime example! When our rights are violated or the rights of those close to us, the temptation to choose bitterness over forgiveness is very real. This doesn’t mean we have to endorse sin. We should be angry and wickedness but then be careful that this does not turn into malicious, revengeful rage against the individual.
- b. **Frustrations** – the agitation that results from thwarted goals (e.g., my schedule gets interrupted or my wants and wishes don’t get fulfilled).
- c. **Fears** – the uncertainty of how things will turn out (anxieties).

2. The Consequences of Anger

Anger, if left undealt with can lead to:

- a. Hurting others – Proverbs 27:4 “**Wrath is cruel**, and anger *is* **outrageous**; but who *is* able to stand before envy?” The word ‘outrageous’ has the idea of ‘overflowing’ (e.g., as in a flood). In

¹ Adapted from Jim Berg’s “Quieting a Noisy Soul”.

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fact, the same Hebrew word is translated “the overflowing of waters” (Job 38:25) and ‘flood(s)’ (Ps. 32:6, Dan. 9:26, 11:22, Nah. 1:8). Webster defines the word as meaning “violent; furious; exorbitant; exceeding all bounds of moderations; as outrageous villainies; outrageous talk; outrageous abuse.” If you allow anger to dam up in your life, eventually it will burst out like a flood and wreak havoc and damage in the lives of others. Overflowing anger is exactly what we see in Simeon and Levi’s actions.

- b. Acting foolishly – Ecc. 7:9 “Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of **fools**.”
 - i. Prov. 14:17 “*He that is soon angry dealeth **foolishly**: and a man of wicked devices is hated.*”
 - ii. Prov. 14:29 “*He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but **he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.***”
 - iii. How many times have you made an unwise choice when you lost your temper?
 - c. Causing division
 - i. Prov. 15:18 “A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but *he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.*”
 - ii. Prov. 29:22 “An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression.”
 - d. Corrupting others – Prov. 22:24-25 “Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.”
 - e. Living wickedly - Prov. 29:22 “An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man **aboundeth in transgression.**” An angry person uses their anger to justify all kinds of sins.
3. The Cure for Anger
- a. Be slow to anger – Prov. 16:32 “*He that is **slow to anger** is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.*” James 1:19-20 “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, **slow to wrath**: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”
 - a. Deal with it promptly – Eph. 4:26 “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:” Keep short accounts with the Lord and with others. The quicker you confess it and put it right, the better. If you leave anger to smoulder in your life, it can turn into malice and bitterness.
 - b. Put it off by God’s power. If you have an anger problem, don’t leave it undealt with in your life. Actively seek God’s help to change.
 - i. Eph. 4:31 “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, **be put away from you**, with all malice:”

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- ii. Col. 3:8 “But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.”
- iii. Remember the emphasis on being “in Christ” in both Ephesians and Colossians. Because you are “in Christ”, you have all the resources you need in the all-sufficient Christ to overcome sin.
- c. Yield to the Holy Spirit. You don’t have the power to overcome anger yourself but there is Someone who dwells in you if you are saved Who does! His Name is the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” Wrath is one of the fruits of the flesh (See works of the flesh in Vs. 19-21). Patience and self-control are fruits of the Spirit. When you recognize anger boiling up in your heart, pray and ask God to quench your anger and to sweeten your heart. If you ask, He WILL help you!

V. THE DAMAGE AT SHECHEM (VS. 30-31)

The wicked actions of Jacob’s sons caused:

A. Damage to Jacob’s Testimony (Vs. 30a)

1. Jacob rebuked Simeon and Levi for their ungodly actions, charging them that their ungodly actions would make his name ‘stink’ amongst the inhabitants of the land.
2. Henry Morris writes, “Instead of being a witness for truth and love, their name would become associated with deception and cruelty. They had become an actual stench to the other Canaanites in the land, with their vaunted moral purity becoming an excuse for murder and pillage rather than an example of God’s holiness and mercy.”
3. Wiersbe adds, “What good was it for Jacob to build an altar and worship the true God before his pagan neighbours if his children were going to act like pagans?”
4. Anger in the unsaved is a stench but they don’t have the Lord and His Word in their lives. Unrighteous wrath in the lives of God’s people brings a terrible stink upon the Name of Christ. Before you entertain boiling anger in your life, pause and think about your testimony!

B. Damage to Jacob’s Family (Vs. 30b-31)

1. Vulnerability (Vs. 30b) – Jacob and his family were now in danger of reprisals from the other heathen nations around them.
2. Unity (Vs. 31) – Simeon and Levi’s curt response to their father’s rebuke highlights the disunity that this sad event caused in the family. Remember. If tragedy comes to you your family in one form or another, anger, hatred, bitterness and disunity are never the answer!

Conclusion: How do you respond to difficult situations in your life? The hot water doesn’t create the contents of the tea bag, it merely reveals them. Do you have an anger problem in your life? Will you seek God’s help for victory over it?

Back to Bethel

Recovery from spiritual decline

Text: Gen. 35:1-7

Introduction:

1. There are some triumphs and tragedies in this chapter.
 - Triumphs: Spiritual revival for Jacob and his family as they go back to Bethel.
 - Tragedies: Three deaths take place in Jacob's family – Deborah, Rachel and Isaac die. There was also the tragedy of Reuben's affair with Bilhah, Jacob's wife.
2. This chapter is quite a contrast the previous one. Wiersbe explains it this way, "Moving from Genesis 34 to Genesis 35 is like going from a desert to a garden or from an emergency room to a wedding reception. The atmosphere in Genesis 35 is one of faith and obedience, and the emphasis is on cleansing and renewal. God is mentioned ten times in chapter 35; and He used His Name El Shaddai which means "God Almighty, the all-sufficient One". "The thirty-fourth chapter of Genesis is God-less; the thirty-fifth is full of God." (Thomas)
3. There is a wonderful message of recovery in Jacob's return to Bethel. We will consider **four facets** of Jacob's return to Bethel and the lessons and challenges they teach us.

I. THE PROMPTING TO RETURN TO BETHEL (VS. 1)

There are two points about this to consider.

A. The Initiative of the Prompting (Vs. 1a)

1. The grace of God. What a testament to the mercy and grace of God when you consider the events that had just transpired as recorded in the previous chapter (Gen. 34).
 - a. God took the initiative in stirring Jacob to return to Bethel. God is interested in our spiritual progress as His children! Without this stirring of God, Jacob may have stayed on at Shechem indefinitely.
 - b. It reminds us that God is in the business of restoration and in His mercy and grace, He offers His erring children another chance!
2. The timing of God. We see God intervening in Jacob's life at key points. This was another key moment in the life of Jacob and God was faithful to reveal His will to him.

B. The Instructions in the Prompting (Vs. 1b)

God essentially exhorts Jacob to take **four steps** and they are the same steps you need to take if you desire to recover spiritually.

1. Rise – "Arise". God tells Jacob to get up! He has sat in that position for long enough. It was time to get stirred up afresh to go forward with God. Can you see yourself in Jacob? Have you sat in the one

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place spiritually for too long? Is God calling you to get up and get moving again?

2. Return – “go up to Bethel, and dwell there”
 - a. The direction of Bethel – “go up”. Bethel was ‘up’ geographically (Bethel was only about 15 miles (24km) from Shechem but it was 1,000 ft (304m) higher) but most importantly, it represented an upward move spiritually for Jacob. Bethel was higher ground! Which direction are you going spiritually? Are you going up, down, or have you just plateaued?
 - b. The destination of Bethel – “to Bethel”. The word ‘Bethel’ means “house of God”. Bethel was a special place in Scripture. God met Jacob at Bethel twice and even called Himself “the God of Bethel” (See Gen. 31:13; 35:1, 15). Bethel would therefore represent a return to fellowship with God. We can apply this in two areas:
 - i. Individual fellowship with God in my personal life. How we need revival in this area! Have you been neglecting the Word and prayer in your life?
 - ii. Corporate fellowship with God in church life. The meaning of the name Bethel (“house of God”) reminds us of the fact we have the same description in the New Testament for the local church. 1 Timothy 3:15 “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in **the house of God**, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” Get back to church (make sure it is a biblical one that belongs to God, is submitted to His authority and is seeking to be the pillar and ground of the truth). Want to know if a church is biblical or not? Apply the TRUTH TEST. Do they preach the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?!
 - c. The dwelling at Bethel – “dwell there”. Jacob was to make the house of God his home! He wasn’t to go back to Shechem.
3. Rebuild – “and make there an altar unto God”. Jacob had built an altar there well over 20 years prior (probably around 30 years by this stage) but now he was to go and build another altar. This speaks of the need to not only return to God but then to rebuild. It takes time and effort to rebuild and re-establish the altar of consecration in your life but it is worth the effort!
4. Remember – “unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother”.
 - a. God stirs up Jacob by way of remembrance. The remembrance of the goodness and grace of God experienced in his life all those years ago at Bethel would encourage Jacob to return to Bethel. This was clearly something that was at the forefront of Jacob’s mind (See Vs. 3 & 7). Bethel would have reminded Jacob of:
 - i. The presence of God – God had met him there.
 - ii. The promises of God – God had spoken to him there.

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- iii. The protection of God – God had kept him there from Esau.
- b. Can you look back to times when you have personally experienced God's grace and goodness in your life? If you have been backslidden for a time, remember that you are being called to return to a God who is Good and Gracious. Remember His love, faithfulness, kindness and goodness, get up and return to Bethel!

II. THE PREPARATION TO RETURN TO BETHEL (VS. 2-4)

These verses record Jacob's response to God's moving in his life. Take note of:

A. The Example in the Preparation (Vs. 2a)

1. Having heard from God, Jacob calls his household together and seeks to lead them in the pursuit of God's will. This is a breath of fresh air after Jacob's lack of leadership in the previous chapter.
2. It is a wonderful thing when heads of homes will lead their families to Bethel! It is hard for the family to move ahead spiritually if dad still wants to hang around Shechem. It is not impossible but it is very hard.
3. Abraham was a good example of a godly leader in his home. God could say of him. "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Gen. 18:19)

B. The Exhortation for the Preparation (Vs. 2b-3)

Jacob issues a clarion call to his family to take steps towards spiritual revival. There was a call to:

1. Clear out their idols – "Put away the strange gods that are among you".
 - a. Jacob called out the presence of idols in his household. We know that this would have included Rachel who had stolen her father Laban's gods when they left Haran (Gen. 31:19, 30). But clearly the problem had spread beyond Rachel's tent to others. When the sons of Jacob looted Shechem, they likely brought back Shechem's false gods amongst the other treasures they took. Clearly the idolatrous atmosphere of Shechem had affected Jacob's household in a negative way. Some members of Jacob's family "were trying like so many professing Christian people today, to worship God while at the same time hanging on to some of the superstitions and practices of the world around them." (Morris)
 - b. Jacob commanded the purging out of idols in his household. Jacob knew that they couldn't take those idols with them to Bethel. Bethel was all about devotion and consecration to the One True God. False gods could have no place at Bethel nor would they be tolerated by a God who demands no rival (A Jealous God).
 - c. There is a powerful lesson here. If you would know spiritual revival in your life from returning to the Lord, you can't bring your

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- junk from the world with you. The idols must be dethroned in your life and the way made clear for King Jesus to rule in your life! Going to Bethel to build an altar unto Jehovah would permit no idols.
- d. What idols are in your life that you need to give up? Idols come in other forms besides statues! There are idols of the heart (Ez. 14:3). An idol is anything that usurps the rightful place of God on the throne of your heart and life.
- i. Is it the idol of materialism? That is one of the biggest idols in our nation! You have no time to give to the Lord but you can be consumed in the pursuit of financial gain.
 - ii. Is it the idol of ungodly media? You can't find time to come faithfully to God's house each Sunday and struggle to sit through a 1-hour sermon when you do but you have no problem staring at a screen for hours and consuming the world's media. You can't find time to spend in God's Book but you can waste hours of Facebook!
 - iii. Is it the idol of worldly music? Are those albums on your iTunes or Spotify account holding you back in your spiritual progress? Is that collection of records, tapes or CDs an idol in your home?
 - iv. Is it the idol of unwholesome literature? E.g., books and magazines that unholy fanaticizes in your life.
 - v. Have you made an idol out of a hobby? This is another big area of idolatry in our day. Hobbies, while not sinful in themselves, can turn into idols if we let them take God's place in our lives. There are Christians who can't give an hour on a Wed night for prayer at God's house with God's people but they can find hours to watch their favourite sport's programs or hours to watch tutorials on YouTube for their favourite pastimes. You can't get in the car to come to church faithfully but can spend hours working on your favourite car in the back shed. You can't find time to go out soul-winning on a Saturday but can find time to crack out the surf board or the fishing rod. If none of these fits you, then fill in the blank for your personal favourite hobby/pastime that could become an idol if not kept in its proper place.
 - vi. Don't let the toys and trinkets of Shechem (the world) keep you from returning to Bethel. It will be well worth you giving them up and, in their place, knowing close fellowship with God and His blessing.
- e. Illustration: The Ephesian bonfire – Acts 19:18-20 “And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all *men*: and they counted the price of them, and found *it* fifty thousand *pieces* of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.”
- i. Salvation for the Ephesians meant a new life! The ‘books’ were likely what were know in antiquity as the “Ephesian

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- letters” which “appear to have been amulets, inscribed with strange characters, which were carried about the body for the purpose of curing diseases, expelling demons, and preserving from evils of different kinds.” (Adam Clarke)
- ii. Challenge: Much of today’s technology has changed but the principle is the same. For you it might mean a purge of the DVD cabinet, a cleanup of your iTunes account, a wipe of a hard drive, deleting songs and movies that dishonor the Lord, discontinuing your Netflix subscription and disconnecting from destructive social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. It means a clean-up of the wardrobe, the closet and the home. Books, posters, pictures, statues, clothing; all must be reviewed in the light of God’s truth and holiness.
 - f. May our prayer be in the words of the hymn “O for a closer walk with God”, “the dearest idol I have known, Whate’re that idol be; Help me tear it from thy throne, And worship only thee.”
2. Clean up their lives – “and be clean”. Physical cleanliness would be important as they prepared to meet with God but above all, spiritual purity and personal holiness would be vital. This represents the call to personal separation and holiness.
 - a. We are called to purity as believers – 1 Peter 1:15-16 “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”
 - b. We have two powerful cleansing agents available to us as believers.
 - i. The cleansing of the blood (1 John 1:9).
 - ii. The purifying of the Word (Ps. 119:9, John 15:3, Eph. 5:26).
 3. Changeover their clothes – “and change your garments”. There are at least two truths conveyed in this picture of the changing of their cloths. There is a need to:
 - a. Change the clothes of your inner life – the “put off” and “put on” principle we read about in the New Testament. For example, Ephesians 4:22-24 reads, “That ye **put off** concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye **put on** the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” A specific list of what needs to be put off then follows (Vs. 25-31) and includes things like lying, anger, stealing, corrupt communication, bitterness, wrath, clamour, evil speaking, malice and so on. Colossians 3:8-17 contains a similar exhortation and includes in the “put on list” things such as mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, forgiveness and love. With God’s grace and power, seek to put off the dirty garments of self and sin and to put on the pure garments of holy living.
 - b. Change the clothes of our outer life – this is no doubt the main thing Jacob was instructing his family to do. They were to dress

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appropriately for their audience with God. No doubt with the inroads of idolatry in Jacob's family had come a deterioration in their dress code. God is concerned about both the inner adornment of the heart and the outward adornment of our bodies which are His temple. If you are going to meet with God at Bethel (the house of God), then you should dress accordingly. It is a pity that we have to talk about something that should be so basic but, in a day when the concept of a sloppy, messy, even outright immodest approach to worship is encouraged, we need to emphasize it. When you get saved you don't talk the way you used to talk, go to the sinful places you used to go or dress the way you used to dress. The inward transformation of salvation DOES have an effect on the outside, even if it takes time.

4. Come forward to Bethel (Vs. 3). God had told Jacob to "arise, go up to Bethel" and now Jacob issues the same call to his family – "let us arise, and go up to Bethel". Jacob emphasises the goodness of God that He had been gracious to him all those years ago by answering him in the day of his distress and being with him on his journey.

C. The Execution of the Preparation (Vs. 4)

1. The totality of it – "all the strange gods". There was a total giving up of the idols in their lives. God would have first place! This was total surrender.
2. The specificity of it – "all their earrings which were in their ears". They not only gave up their idols but the pieces of jewellery that were associated with it. The earrings they were wearing must have had some connection to their pagan gods. Perhaps they were like an amulet or charm.
3. The finality of it – "hid them under the oak". They gave them up and left them behind!

III. THE PRESERVATION IN THE RETURN TO BETHEL (VS. 5-6)

A. The Dread used in the Preservation (Vs. 5)

1. A supernatural fear from God came over the surrounding nations so that they did not attack Jacob and his family as they journeyed to Bethel. This was of God as the Canaanite nations would have easily outnumbered Jacob and his band.
2. We are reminded that the path of submission to the will of God is the path of spiritual safety. We need to remember this as when we are challenged and convicted to return to the Lord or go forward for God, we can hold back because of fear of the unknown. The devil wants you to think the path to Bethel is too hard and too dangerous for you so you will stay in defeat at Shechem. In reality Bethel wasn't too far away. It was within reach if Jacob would only step out in faith! God's hand of preservation will be upon us as we walk the walk of faith in obedience to Him.
3. We are reminded that the path of purity is the path of spiritual safety. Jacob and his household had just had a clean-up! Matthew

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Henry noted, "While there was sin in Jacob's house, he was afraid of his neighbours; but now that the strange gods were put away...his neighbours were afraid of him."

B. The Duration of the Preservation (Vs. 6)

God's protection ensured they arrived safely.

1. Jacob arrived safely in Bethel.
2. Jacob's whole household arrived safely in Bethel. His obedience to God had a positive influence on his family and "all the people that were with him".
3. We are reminded of the truth that God keeps those He saves all the way until they arrive safely in the house of God in heaven. Praise God for His hand of preservation upon us throughout our earthly walk of faith. – "Who are kept by the power of God" (1 Pet. 1:5); "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen." (Jude 1:24-25)

IV. THE PERFORMANCE AFTER THE RETURN TO BETHEL (VS. 6-7)

A. The Arrival of Jacob (Vs. 6)

1. Jacob followed through on his commitment to obey God and go to Bethel. Many start on the journey but then give up along the way. Praise God Jacob went all the way.
2. Maybe you have started on the pathway of spiritual revival and restoration. Don't quit! Keep going! Getting to Bethel is worth it!

B. The Altar of Jacob (Vs. 7)

1. Jacob builds a new altar and calls it 'El-bethel' which means "God of the house of God". It is interesting to see how there is a greater focus in Jacob's life upon his God at this time. He is at Bethel, the house of God, but it is the Person of God that makes the place so special.
2. In like manner, it is the presence of God that makes your personal Bethel (your fellowship with God) so special and it is the presence of God in the New Testament house of God, the church, that makes it so valuable and precious.

Conclusion:

1. Are you saved? Maybe you have never even started on the walk of faith and need to turn from your idols and receive God's gift of salvation (1 Thess. 1:9).
2. What idols in your life need to be removed? Will you remove them with God's help?
3. Are you in a place of apathy or even a backslidden place? Will you respond to God's call and allow Him to revive and restore you?

The Triumphs and Trials of Faith

Text: Gen. 35:8-29

Introduction:

1. We continue our study of this great chapter in Genesis. In our last message we followed Jacob as he and his household returned to Bethel. This was a season of spiritual revival for Jacob and his family and yet it would quickly become a season of trial also.
2. There are triumphs, trials and a tragedy in this chapter.
 - Triumphs: Spiritual revival for Jacob and his family as they go back to Bethel.
 - Trials: Three deaths take place in Jacob's family – Deborah, Rachel and Isaac die.
 - Tragedy: There was the tragedy of Reuben's affair with Bilhah, Jacob's wife.
3. In this message we will study the rest of the chapter focusing on the triumphs and trials Jacob faced.

I. THE TRIUMPHS OF FAITH (VS. 9-15)

Let's note three triumphs in Jacob's life at this time:

A. The Return to Bethel (Vs. 6-7)

1. We dealt with this extensively in our previous message but remind ourselves that this was a significant victory for Jacob at this time in his life.
2. Getting back on track for the Lord or going forward with the Lord in your walk of faith is a triumph to rejoice in and is due to the goodness and power of God working in our lives, just like He worked in Jacob's life.

B. The Revelation at Bethel (Vs. 9-13)

God works in Jacob's life afresh at Bethel. We are reminded of the truth of James 4:8 "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you..." Jacob had taken steps to draw nigh to God by returning to Bethel and God rewarded him by drawing near to him. What blessings there are in walking closely with our God! This revelation of God involved:

1. The presence of God – "And God appeared unto Jacob again" (Vs. 9a)
 - a. God met with Jacob for the second time in this special place. What comfort there is in that word 'again'. God was graciously meeting with Jacob and working in his life again. God does the same for us as His children.
 - b. It is noted that God appeared to him "when he came out of Padanaram". A clear connection is drawn between the coming out in obedience to God's call and God's intervention in Jacob's life.

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- c. Interestingly, much of what God said to Jacob He already knew but to be reassured of it afresh must have been a tremendous blessing to him.
2. The Blessing of God (Vs. 9b). How God blesses faith and obedience in our lives. Whatever you may have “given up” (Vs. 2) is more than made up by what you gain. The empty trinkets of this world are worthless and nothingness when compared with God and the rich blessings He gives.
3. The Assurance of God (Vs. 10)
 - a. God speaks to Jacob about his name and that he would no longer be called Jacob but Israel. The new name represents the new nature, the old name the old nature. “Jacob needed this reminder as he had not been living the Israel name but had been living the Jacob name.” (Butler)
 - b. What is fascinating about this is that Jacob already knew about his new name from his encounter with God at Penial (See Gen. 32:27-28). Why then would Jacob need to hear about it again?
 - c. God in His wisdom knew that Jacob needed to be reminded of his new identity. In like manner, we need to be reminded of the fact we have a new nature in Christ so that we might be encouraged to live in the power of that new life by the grace of God.
4. The Person of God (Vs. 11a).
 - a. God reveals much of His character through His names and God revealed Himself to Jacob here as “God Almighty”. It speaks of God as the all-powerful, all sufficient One. God had revealed Himself by this name to Abram (Gen. 17:1) and to Isaac (Gen. 28:3), and now to Jacob.
 - b. God then reminds Jacob to “be fruitful and multiply”. We are reminded of the principle that fellowship with God is intended to lead to fruitfulness for God. We see this connection in Colossians 1:9-10 “For this cause we also, since the day we heard *it*, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be **filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That** ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, **being fruitful in every good work**, and increasing in the knowledge of God;”
5. The Promises of God (Vs. 11b-13)

Again, Jacob was aware of these promises but it would be beneficial for him to hear them again. The repetition of these promises emphasises that they are very important to Almighty God and that they are immutable. The promises concern:

 - a. The lineage of Israel (Vs. 11b)
 - b. The land of Israel (Vs. 12). “This fact of God giving the land to Israel is repeated in nearly 150 passages in the Old Testament.” (Butler) A lot of strife in the Middle East would be solved if everyone just accepted God’s Word and let the Jews have their land!

C. The Renewal at Bethel (Vs. 14-15)

1. The renewal of consecration (Vs. 14)

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- a. Jacob sets up a new pillar to commemorate the Lord's meeting with him, just as he had all those years earlier when God had first met him at Bethel. The purpose of the pillar was to be a public witness to the important event to others of what had taken place plus serve as a reminder to the individual of that special event. So, the pillar speaks of:
 - i. Witness – this was a public witness of what God had done in Jacob's life. We also should not be ashamed to have the pillar of witness in our lives. Our salvation testimony is one such pillar we should stand up high.
 - ii. Remembrance/memorial – the memorials in our lives are places we can go back to in our minds and give thanks to God.
 - b. Jacob pours out a drink offering on the pillar. This included oil. "The drink offering was a supplement to the regular sacrifices and was poured out on the altar as the sacrifice was burning (Ex. 29:40-41; Num. 6:17; 15:5-10, 24; 29:22-38). It was a symbol of dedication, the worshiper's life poured out for the Lord (2 Sam. 23:16-17; Phil. 2:17)." (Wiersbe)
 - i. The drink offering symbolizes the surrendered life of the saint. Total surrender should be the response of our hearts to the goodness and grace of God. Let your life be a living sacrifice for the Lord for Him to use.
 - ii. The drink offering typifies the sacrifice of the Saviour. Ultimately the drink offering speaks to us of Christ who poured out His life's blood for us at the cross.
2. The renewal of Bethel's name (Vs. 15)
 - a. Jacob had already named this place Bethel the first time he met God here but now he reaffirms it again. Jacob is declaring for the second time "this is God's house". The name spoke of the essential character of the place.
 - b. There is a need in our day to affirm our commitment to the local church as "God's house". It is not the world's house nor is it the people's house. It is God's house and is to be run according to God's Word!

II. THE TRIALS OF FAITH (VS. 8, 16-29)

The fact Jacob experienced personal revival did not mean he would be exempt from trials and tests. In fact, the blessings and the burdens, the grapes and the giants, the triumphs and the trials, often come together. The key thing is to not wrongly interpret the trials as evidence you should never have embarked on the path of spiritual victory but rather to take the position of faith and rest in God as He deals with our lives according to His unfailing wisdom and faithfulness. Griffith Thomas writes, "The cloud of sorrow hangs heavily on these verses. There are three graves and one sin recorded." He also refers to this section as "The School of Sorrow", a fitting title.

A. The Death's in Jacob's Family (Vs. 8, 16-20, 28-29)

1. Deborah – the homegoing of a family friend (Vs. 8)

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- a. Deborah was Rebekah's nurse and is first mentioned back in Genesis 24:59 where she accompanies Rebekah on her journey from Haran back to Canaan to marry Isaac.
 - b. James Freeman in his book *Bible Manners and Customs* explains the role of a nurse in Bible times, "In an Eastern family the nurse is a very important personage. She is esteemed almost as a parent; and, accompanying the bride to her new home, there remains with her. She becomes the adviser, the assistant, and the friend of the bride. To the nurse, as to a mother, the bride will confide her greatest secrets. Thus, Rebekah took with her on her long journey to her future home the nurse who had cared for her since childhood, so that, besides the female servants she took with her, (Vs. 61), she might have one intimate familiar friend among strangers."
 - c. Deborah would have helped raise Jacob and would have been like another mother to him. She probably joined Jacob after Rebekah's death. It would be natural for her to want to minister to Rebekah's beloved son in her sunset years. For Jacob, Deborah would have been a link to the past, especially in relation to his mother Rebekah. "As time goes on, and friend after friend passes upward, we find ourselves more and more severed from the past and more and more united with the future." (Thomas)
 - d. We get a sense for how precious she was to Jacob and his family by the name they gave the oak tree where they buried her. The name "Allonbachuth" means "the oak of weeping". What a picture of the journey of faith.
 - e. Illustration: Growing up with Aunty Su (Nee Coventry, now Olmstead).
2. Rachel – the homegoing of a cherished wife (Vs. 16-20) "Now the scene moves from the voice of God to a baby's cry and a mother's last words." (Wiersbe)
- a. This was a sad season in Jacob's life. Rachel was the great love of his life. For him it had been love at first sight and he had worked willingly and waited 7 long years for her hand in marriage.
 - b. Rachel died giving birth to her second and final child. This is the first record in the Bible of death at child-birth. How many dear ladies have died bringing children into the world down through history, only God knows but it is a sad feature of life in a fallen world.
 - c. The midwife speaks a word of encouragement to Rachel in her final moments that the son was going to be born safely. What an insight into the heart of a mother. The chief concern of Rachel's heart in her dying moments was her precious baby!
 - d. Rachel lived to see the birth of her second son. In her final moments as she cradled the precious bundle, she whispered his name "Benoni" meaning "son of my sorrow". She had born him in suffering. Jacob renamed him "Benjamin" meaning "son of my right hand". From the tribe of Benjamin would come two

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significant men named Saul. Saul, Israel's first king and then many years later Saul of Tarsus who would become the Great Apostle Paul.

- e. "Life is a mosaic of lights and shadows, joys and sorrows; and the same baby that brought Rachel and her husband joy also brought tears." (Wiersbe)
 - f. Rachel is buried at Bethlehem in a place called Ephrath. Ephrath is another name for Bethlehem (See Gen. 48:7). It is also called Ephratah (Mic. 5:2). Jacob sets up a pillar to mark the spot. At the time when Moses was writing, the pillar was still standing. The location of Rachel's grave was also still known during Samuel's day (1 Sam. 10:2). Many years later in that very special town, Mary would give birth to Jesus Christ the Messiah.
 - g. Note: Don't forget that standing by Rachel's graveside that tragic day was the young lad, Joseph. To lose one's mother as a child would have been a grievous experience indeed. It was kind of symbolic of the fact that Joseph's life was destined for suffering.
3. Isaac – the homegoing of a faithful father (Vs. 28-29)
- a. The age of Isaac at his death (Vs. 28). Jacob lived the longest out of the three patriarchs to the ripe old age of 180 years.
 - b. The account of Isaac's death (Vs. 29) The phrase "gathered unto his people" teaches four facts about death:¹
 - i. There is life after death.
 - ii. We will know our loved ones after death.
 - iii. Death is not annihilation.
 - iv. Death is not followed by reincarnation.
 - c. "The phrase "he gave up the ghost" means he yielded up the spirit to God Who gave it. The phrase "gathered to his people" gives another beautiful suggestion of the life to come – that of reunion with those whom we have loved and lost awhile. And so, with the spirit at rest with God and at home with our loved ones, we learn something of what heaven is. "With Christ" and "with them, all must and will be well." (Thomas)

B. The Defilement in Jacob's Family (Vs. 21-22)

It must have been a bitter blow for Jacob that this sin came so soon after the heartache of losing Rachel. How the waves of trial and sorrow can come crashing in on our lives all of a sudden!

1. Reuben's sin is a reminder of the terrible capacity for perversion there is within the depraved nature of man. A similar sin took place in the Corinthian church (See 1 Cor. 5). Similar sins still take place today and are even being promoted in popular culture.
2. Reuben's sin is a reminder that adult children can stray from the morals and values taught to them by their parents. Of course, that is now what we are aiming for as parents but it is a sad reality at times in a fallen world.
3. Reuben's sin is a reminder that you always lose more than you gain when you say yes to temptation. There is temporary pleasure in sin but what a price tag comes with it! At the end of his life, Jacob had

¹ Points from John Butler's commentary.

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these sad words to say to his son Reuben. Genesis 49:3-4
“Reuben, thou *art* my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power: Unstable as water, **thou shalt not excel**; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou *it*: he went up to my couch.”
Reuben did not ‘excel’. Scripture does not record any prophet or judge or outstanding leader coming from the tribe of Reuben. Reuben also forfeited the birthright because of his immorality and it was given to the sons of Joseph (1 Chr. 5:1).

C. Practical Lessons from these trials in Jacob's life:²

1. Sorrow is not always sent as punishment. Sometimes we suffer sorrow as a result of our foolishness and sin. Other times we suffer sorrow when we are in the centre of God's will. The death of Deborah came when Jacob had put himself right with God.
2. Sorrow is often used for spiritual training. There is a connection spiritually as well as etymologically between discipleship and discipline. We only become real disciples through discipline.
3. Sorrow is intended to yield the peaceful fruits of righteousness. Psalm 119:71 “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.” “Just as the pattern of the China vase is made permanent by being put into the fire, so the impressions of God's truth and grace become part of our character by our being passed through the furnace of affliction.”

Conclusion: Are you moving forward in spiritual victory? Don't be surprised if tests accompany the triumphs! Allow those trials in the purpose and Providence of God to conform you to Christ's image.

² By W.H. Griffith Thomas.

Esau & the Edomites

Text: Gen. 36:1-43

Introduction: In this brief lesson, we consider a summary and an overview of this historical record in Genesis 36 with several devotional thoughts along the way.

Concerning Genesis 36, David Sorenson writes, “This chapter gives a genealogical account of Esau’s family, his wives and sons with whom he moved to Seir in verses 1-10; of his sons’ sons, or grandsons, who were dukes in the land of Edom in verse 11-19; after which is inserted a genealogy of Seir the Horite, into whose family Esau married, and of his children, and the dukes among them in verses 20-30. Then follows a list of the kings of Edom in verses 31-39. The chapter ends with a brief narration of the dukes of Esau, according to their families in verses 40-43.”

The record can be neatly divided into **seven sections** as follows:

I. THE RECORD OF ESAU’S WIVES AND CHILDREN (VS. 1-5)

- Esau is noted as having three wives – two of the daughters of Canaan and one daughter of Ishmael. Their names differ in this record to that of Gen. 26:34 and 28:9. Critics are quick to seize on this but they forget that in the ancient world, it was not at all uncommon for people to be known by two different names.
- It is also noted that his five sons were born to him while he was still in the land of Canaan.
- Question: Why does the Bible include Esau’s genealogy? Why was it important?
 1. Esau was a son of Abraham and while Esau was not chosen to carry on the seed line, God did promise Abraham that he would make a great nation out of him (Gen. 17:20). The record of the multiplication of Esau’s descendants is evidence that God kept His Word.
 2. Records such as these add to the historicity and credibility of the Word of God. They prove conclusively that ancient record keeping was a practice in these early civilizations, contrary to evolutionary and liberal theories that tend to prevail amongst liberal theologians and critics of the Bible. Moses was clearly drawing on these ancient records under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
 3. It is possible that these family records were exchanged at funerals. In the previous chapter Esau and Jacob come together for their father Isaac’s burial so that would be a very natural and logical time for family records to be shared.
 4. It was important that a clear distinction be maintained between the two peoples (Edom and Israel) and these family records would help ensure they did not intermarry and mix.

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II. THE RECORD OF ESAU'S SETTLEMENT IN EDOM (VS. 6-8)

- The reason for Esau moving is noted. The land of Canaan was not able to sustain both he and Jacob with their vast cattle empires.
- Esau moving out of Canaan was a fulfilment of the Divine prophecy to Rebekah that the elder would serve the younger. It also fulfilled the Patriarchal prophecy of Isaac.
- The broader principle is that the man of the flesh and the man of the Spirit cannot work and dwell together. Jacob was a man of faith, a believer in the One True God of Abraham and Isaac. Esau was a profane and fleshly man with no interest in spiritual things.

III. THE RECORD OF ESAU'S DESCENDANTS (VS. 9-14)

- This list contains the grandsons of Esau who were born to his five sons.
- Amalek is mentioned as the son of Eliphaz (likely Esau's firstborn as he was the son of the first wife mentioned in Vs. 2). Amalek was a son of a concubine named Timnah. Amalek is also listed as one of the 'dukes' in verse 16 indicating he became one of the powerful Edomite chieftains.
- Amalek was the father of the Amalekites, a people who while descendants of Esau and related to the Edomites, became such a powerful nation they took on an identity of their own and eventually lived in a separate region to the other Edomites. They would become serious enemies of the people of God and a constant thorn in their sides.
- Amalek, as a direct descendant of Esau, a fleshly man, teaches us some important truths about the battle we have with the flesh.
 1. The reality of Amalek. Amalek doesn't go away! Exodus 17:16 "For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn *that* the LORD *will have* war with Amalek **from generation to generation.**" The old man, the flesh nature, is present with us until we get a new body in heaven.
 2. The battle with Amalek. Amalek were constant enemies of God's people and in like manner, our battle with the flesh is an ongoing one. Galatians 5:17 "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."
 3. The tactics of Amalek. The Amalekites were sneaky and cunning in the way they would attack. It speaks of the subtilty of the flesh and how it tends to operate in our lives.
 - Exodus 17:8 "**Then** came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim." When was "then"? Amalek attacked Israel when she was on her way to the promised land, representing the victorious Christian life. Amalek did not make an appearance when the children of Israel were still walking in that early joy of their deliverance from Egypt by the blood of the Lamb but when they had progressed further along in their pilgrimage to Canaan.
 - Deuteronomy 25:17-18 "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; How he met

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thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, *even all that were* feeble behind thee, when thou *wast* faint and weary; and he feared not God." Amalek's tactics were dirty. They would attack from the rear when God's people were feeling weak and weary and target the feeble lagging behind. It is when we are weak and weary that we tend to have some of our greatest battles with the enemy within (the flesh). We are also reminded that to lag behind in the Christian walk in spiritual weakness makes us very vulnerable to being taken out by the flesh.

4. The victory over Amalek. God's solution to the problem of the Amalekites was death. Exodus 17:14 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this *for* a memorial in a book, and rehearse *it* in the ears of Joshua: for I will **utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.**" God's command to Saul was to completely wipe out the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15). God's solution for the flesh nature is also death. Praise God the old man was crucified at the cross so that we can have victory. Amalek must die! Romans 6:6-7 "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin." See also Galatians 2:20.

IV. THE RECORD OF THE EDMITE DUKES (VS. 15-19)

- The word 'duke' means a "chief or prince". Evidently these were chieftains of various clans within the Edomite kingdom.
- There are 14 'dukes' listed altogether.
- The presence of these 'dukes' is a reminder that the descendants of Esau were a numerous and powerful people.

V. THE RECORD OF THE HORITE CHIEFS (VS. 20-30)

Henry Morris provides a helpful summary in his commentary "The Genesis Record":

- "This section of the "generations of Esau" lists the prominent descendants of Seir, and is included no doubt because of the fact that these people became so closely associated with the descendants of Esau by intermarriage that the two groups finally were one people, the Edomites."
- "The Hurrian patriarch Seir evidently was the pioneer settler of the region. His seven sons became prominent chieftains in the land. In turn they are listed as having nineteen sons of their own."

VI. THE RECORD OF THE EDMITE KINGS (VS. 31-39)

- Appears that over time the position kings developed within the Edomite kingdom.
- It is noted that these kings of Edom predated the kings of Israel (Vs. 31).
- It is also of interest to note that "the Edomite kings never became a family dynasty. When each king died, another unrelated individual

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acceded to the throne, probably by force of arms. Altogether, eight such kings are listed.”

VII. THE RECORD OF THE EDMITE DUKES (VS. 40-43)

Concerning these dukes, Henry Morris notes,

- These last verses of the chapter give the names of the more important dukes, or chieftains, descended from Esau – eleven in all. These names do not seem to be listed chronologically, but geographically.
- It is interesting that most of these “generations of Esau” have been incorporated in the genealogical lists of 1 Chronicles 1:35-54. Not only Moses, but the much later chronicler, considered them important enough to include in the genealogical records of Israel.

Conclusion: Wiersbe writes, “Genesis 36 is a long chapter containing many names, but it’s the end of the story as far as Esau is concerned! The Edomites are named in the Old Testament only because they’re a part of the story of Israel. “Esau” and “Edom”, the avowed enemies of the Jews, are mentioned over 200 times in the Bible (207 by my count), but “Jacob” and “Israel” are found over 2,000 times!”

Remember, watch out for the flesh! Esau is never far away from the man of faith!

Joseph – The Early Years

Text: Gen. 37:1-11

Introduction: As we embark on a study of the life of Joseph as a part of our exposition of the Book of Genesis, let's consider a number of introductory points.

- The biblical biography of Joseph's life divides neatly into three segments based on three, time markers given to us in the Divine record of his life:
 1. From birth to seventeen years (Gen. 30:24-37:2).
 2. From seventeen to thirty years (Gen. 37:2-41:46). These years were marked by deep trials and tests as Joseph experiences hurts and injustices at the hands of others. They are also years of preparation for his main life's work that God would use him for.
 3. From thirty to one hundred and ten years (death) (Gen. 41:46-50:26). These last 80 years of Joseph's life are the glory years of blessing and reward.
- We can benefit from the study of Joseph's life from at least four viewpoints.¹
 1. We can look at it *historically* for his life explains the development of the Hebrew race. Without this account of the life of Joseph, we would be in the dark as to how the children of Israel came to be in Egypt as described in the next Book in the sacred Canon (Exodus). God had prophesied to Abraham that his descendants would dwell in a strange land for 400 years (Gen. 15:13-14). The story of Joseph's life shows how that came about.
 2. We can look at it *Providentially*, for here we see the heart of God planning and the hand of God shaping.
 3. We can look at it *devotionally*, for Joseph is a wonderful example of godliness.
 4. We can look at it *typically*, for Joseph is a beautiful type of the Lord Jesus.
- The account of Joseph's life falls under the next "generations" division/heading of the Book of Genesis called "the generations of Jacob" (Vs. 2). "The "generations of Jacob" are mainly occupied with the history of Joseph, because through him mainly was the divine purpose carried on. Jacob is now the head of the chosen family, since Isaac's death (Gen. 35:29), and therefore the narrative is continued under that new heading." (Alexander Maclaren)
- The theme of Joseph's life is summarised in the phrase "God meant it for good" and is a living demonstration of the truth of Romans 8:28.
- In this message, we will seek to set the scene by reminding ourselves of Joseph's family background from our previous studies and then consider these opening verses that describe Joseph's life at 17 years of age. Our lesson will be organised under three headings.

I. THE DYNAMICS OF THE EARLY YEARS (GEN. 30-36)

Let's remind ourselves from our studies of the preceding chapters of some of the key features of Joseph's family background. While there were some positive things in Joseph's upbringing, there was much disfunction and difficulty. The influence of the home in the shaping and moulding of a

¹ By Pastor Denis Lyle, Joseph sermon series: God meant it for good, sermon notes.

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child's life cannot be overstated. In Joseph's childhood, he was confronted with:

A. Polygamy in his Father's Marriage

1. Joseph was born as the 11th of 12 children. He would have quickly discerned as a young child that his mother was one of four women in his father's life. Imagine being raised with four mums!
2. No doubt as a child Joseph would have experienced the tension and strife that is the inevitable consequence of polygamy.

B. Problems in his Mother's Life

1. His own mother Rachel had her fair share of problems. Joseph was an answer to her prayers but she also had an affection for pagan gods. While Rachel was attractive outwardly, she had a tendency to be weak spiritually.
2. Those idols were present in Rachel's tent where Joseph spent his early years and could have been very destructive in Joseph's life if he had chosen to pursue pagan worship over the worship of the One True God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

C. Perversion in his Siblings' Lives

As a growing lad, several wicked things were committed by his older siblings:

1. Dinah's defilement with Shechem.
2. Simeon and Levi's murderous rampage of the town of Shechem. It appears that Simeon was one of the main ringleaders in the ill treatment of Joseph described in the second half of the chapter (See Gen. 42:24).
3. Reuben's affair with his step mother Bilhah.
4. The wickedness of the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah as noted in this chapter (Gen. 37).

D. Pain in his Mother's Death

1. To lose one's mother at any stage of life is a difficult trial but to lose one's mother in the early days of youth would be a bitter blow indeed. Joseph was probably around the age of 15 when he stood by his mother's grave at Bethlehem.
2. Little did he realize then that this early experience of suffering was a foretaste of a life that was destined to endure much suffering within the will of God for his life.

E. Practical Lesson to Learn

1. One of the great lessons we can learn from the life of Joseph right here is that by the grace of God, your family upbringing does not have to ruin you. **The dysfunction and damage of your past does not have to define and determine your future!** That does not mean that you won't have burdens and even baggage to deal with as a result of a broken home environment but through salvation and the blessed work of God's grace in your life, you can rise above it and overcome.
2. This is such an important lesson to remember in our day of victim culture where everyone wants to use hurts or injustices of the past as excuses for bitterness and bad behaviour in the present. We are not suggesting that genuine victims should not be the objects of Christian care and compassion but we are saying that no matter

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what injustices, hurts and difficulties you may have experienced as a young person, the grace of God is the answer, not bitterness and indulgence in sinful behaviour.

II. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE EARLY YEARS (VS. 1-4)

Genesis 37 is where the Spirit of God begins to really paint the canvas of Joseph's life for us, commencing the record of his life's story at the age of 17. There are at least two features of Joseph's life that are clearly described:

A. Joseph's Purity within the Family (Vs. 1-2)

The purity of Joseph's life as a **17-year-old youth** is evidenced by his response to the evil activities of his older brothers. The sons of Bilhah and Zilpah were apparently Joseph's main companions at this time in his life, probably because they were close to him in age. That would be Dan and Naphtali, the sons of his own mother Rachel's maid and Gad and Asher, the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maid. Look at Joseph's response to his brothers' wicked behaviour.

1. Joseph **refused** the temptation of his brothers' evil example.
 - a. This says a lot for Joseph's godly character at the young age of 17. To say 'no' to temptation at any time in the Christian life is difficult, but it is especially difficult during the days of youth, hence why the Bible speaks of "youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22).
 - b. Joseph's courage to say 'no' to temptation was to become one of the **defining qualities** of his life and testimony. This will particularly come into the spotlight in chapter 39 with the incident involving Potiphar's wife.
 - c. There is a great encouragement for Christian young people in Joseph's godly example. By the grace of God, you don't have to follow the typical road of rebellion and sin followed by the majority of teenagers (e.g., drugs, drunkenness and depravity). By the grace of God, you can be a godly teenager like Joseph and walk the narrow path of truth. Make 17 (and your teenage and young adult years) a spiritual time of revival, not a sinful time of ruin.
 - d. It takes **no courage** at all to follow the crowd into sin (though the world and the devil try and portray it as such) but it takes courage and the power of God through a close walk with God to break out to the right and pursue purity as a teenager.
 - e. Make the heroes of the faith like Joseph your role models and your heroes in your youth, not the sports stars, pop stars and movie stars of this empty world!
2. Joseph **resisted** the influence of his brothers' evil example.
 - a. The temptations of youth are very difficult to refuse from any source (e.g., friends, the world) but they are even harder to refuse when they come from one's older siblings. It is a very natural thing for young people to aspire to follow their older siblings. If following God, older siblings can be a tremendous influence for good and godliness in the lives of their younger brothers and sisters. Conversely, if they are living a sinful life,

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they can be such a destructive influence in their younger siblings' lives.

- b. The Book of Genesis records murder (34:25), incest (35:22), immorality (38:12-18), hatred (37:4), envy (37:11), the selling of Joseph into slavery (37:28), and lying (37:31-33) by these older brothers of Joseph. Despite the bad example of 10 older brothers, Joseph chose to live right for the Lord. What a testament to God's grace and Joseph's walk with God. **It is a reminder that no matter how your older siblings may be living, you can choose to do what is right by God's grace.**
3. Joseph **reported** the wickedness of his brothers' evil ways.
 - a. Not only did Joseph not participate in his brothers' sinful ways, he also did not remain **silent**. He raised a voice of protest against the evil activities of his brothers by appealing to their father Jacob as the authority in the home.
 - b. Silence in the face of compromise and sin is one of the great travesties in the church today. Evil is encouraged to flourish in an environment of silence where godly people refuse to speak up. The Christian church today, with rare exceptions, is all but silent today in the face of shocking apostasy and unspeakable depravity.
 - c. There is a time when it is spiritual to be silent but there is also a time when to be silent is sinful!
 - d. Note: Some accuse Joseph of being a talebearer here but he was not a talebearer for two reasons:
 - i. Joseph was speaking the truth whereas a talebearer spreads falsehoods with a malicious motive.
 - ii. He was speaking to the right person in the situation which was the head of the home. A talebearer discusses issues with just about everyone except the appropriate individual.
 - iii. It is not gossip/slander to communicate the facts of a situation to a God ordained authority who can be a part of the solution.
 - e. Note: No doubt Joseph's purity of life was one of the major causes behind the hatred his older brothers had towards him. If he had just shut his mouth and let them get away with their sin, they might never have done anything to him but he was a reproof upon their sinful ways in life and lips, and they hated him for it. You can get into a lot of trouble when you try and stand between someone and their pursuit of lust!
 - f. "Their hatred shows that his purity had made their doing wrong more difficult. **It is a grand thing when a young man's presence deprives the Devil of elbow-room for his tricks.**" (Maclaren)

B. Joseph's Position within the Family (Vs. 3-4)

Joseph occupied a high position in the family which contributed to his brothers' animosity towards him. He held the position of:

1. The highly favoured son (Vs. 3a)

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- a. This was a **fateful** mistake on the part of Jacob. Partiality in the home, exercised by either parent, always promotes contention, discontent and bitterness.
 - b. This was a **fleshly** mistake for Jacob to make. Joseph was easier to love than the other children! Partiality stems from selfishness on the parent's part. Joseph was seeking to live a godly life and compared with his brothers so he was not a source of pain and difficulty in his father's life. Jacob was a passive father and therefore was even more vulnerable to the sin of partiality. Passive men have a tendency to make personal peace their main priority and so it would be easy for Jacob to make Joseph his favourite as he caused him the least amount of stress. He was also the son of his favourite wife and the son of his old age.
 - i. Note: While a parent may love all of their children equally, it is not always possible to have the same closeness with all of them. A lot depends on the child as they grow into adulthood. If they rebel, your love for them does not change but your closeness with them will be damaged until such time as they get right with God and with you. But that is a scenario altogether different to that of Jacob where he was engaged in carnal favouritism.
 - c. This was a **foolish** mistake for Jacob to make. Jacob knew firsthand what favouritism could do in a home from his own experience. Much of the bitter division between him and his brother Esau in their early years was a result his parents playing the favourites game.² Before you are hasty in condemning Jacob for repeating the mistakes of his upbringing, be reminded that apart from personal vigilance and the grace of God, you will be very likely to repeat the same mistakes of your parents, even if you dislike them!
2. The honoured son (firstborn) (Vs. 3b)
- a. The coat of many colours was given to Joseph not only because of Jacob's affection for him but also to indicate his exalted position in the family. The coat of many colours "marked the owner as the one whom the father intended to be the future leader of the household; an honour normally given to the firstborn son." (Macarthur) The coat symbolized that he was to hold the privileged position of firstborn in the family.
 - b. Why was Joseph given the position of firstborn?
 - i. Reuben forfeited the birthright because of his immorality with his father's wife Bilhah. The reason the birthright did not pass on to Simeon, the second born was because Joseph was the firstborn of the second wife Rachel. It was also given to him because of his godly character. Jacob may well have discerned the early signs of Joseph's leadership gifts which would become so prominent in later life.

² Jacob was his mother Rebekah's favorite son and Esau, his father Isaac's.

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- ii. 1 Chronicles 5:1-2 “Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he was the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him *came* the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's:)”
3. The hated son (Vs. 4)
 - a. The provocation of their hatred (Vs. 4a). Their father's favouritism of Joseph was the catalyst for their hatred. While Jacob had a lot to answer for in this situation, the brothers did not have to go down to bitterness. Remember, God holds us responsible for how we respond to hurts and injustices in our lives. Had they known God and been walking closely with Him; they could have been made better rather than bitter out of the situation. Sadly, they chose bitterness.
 - b. The expression of their hatred (Vs. 4b). Their inward animosity found expression in their attitude and words towards their brother Joseph. “They not only inwardly hated him, but they could not conceal their hatred, but betrayed it by their speech unto him; they could not speak to him on any occasion, but in a cross, surly, ill-natured manner.” (John Gill) Our tongues have a way of revealing what's on the inside!

III. THE DREAMS OF THE EARLY YEARS (VS. 5-11)

At this time in Biblical history, God at times made his Divine Will and Word manifest through dreams. This is not the primary method God uses in the New Testament era as we have the completed revelation of God's Word which is far superior to dreams but at this time in Biblical history it was a means God used at times to communicate with the saints of old. Dreams would become another defining feature of Joseph's life. “The chief incidents of his life turn on dreams – his own, his fellow-prisoners and then Pharaoh's” (Maclaren).

A. The Revelation in Joseph's Dreams (Vs. 5-10)

Both of these dreams drew on familiar imagery from Joseph's life.

There was:

1. The sheaf dream (Vs. 5-8)
 - a. The scene of the dream. Joseph's first dream was set in a field at harvest time when the straw would be gathered into sheaves. In the dream, Joseph's sheaf stood upright and his brothers sheaves bowed down to his sheaf.
 - b. The sense of the dream. The interpretation of the dream was very clear to Joseph's brothers. They understood it to mean that Joseph would reign over them. Of course, that is exactly what was being revealed in the dream by God and was fulfilled literally when Joseph's brothers bowed to him in Egypt, not knowing at that stage that it was their brother Joseph.
2. The star dream (Vs. 9-10)
 - a. The second dream. Each time Joseph came into contact with Divine dreams, they came in pairs. “The meaning of both

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dreams is the same, but the second goes beyond the first in the grandeur of the emblems, and in the inclusion of the parents in the act of obeisance.” (Maclaren)

- b. The scene of the dream. This time the scene is a heavenly, rather than an earthly one. In this dream Joseph sees the sun, moon and eleven stars bow to him.
- c. The sense of the dream. Joseph’s father understood the dream straight away. The eleven stars were a clear reference to Joseph’s 11 brothers and the sun and moon were a clear reference to him and his wife (probably a reference to Leah at this time since Rachel was dead). Jacob as second command in Egypt would eventually be over his whole family in rank and position, including his father.
- d. Note: Joseph may well have lacked maturing in the way he approached the gift God had given him at this time of his life. These were early exercises in that gift that would help prepare him for later but Joseph would need another 13 years of preparation before he would be ready for the life’s work God had in store for him.

B. The Reactions to Joseph’s Dreams (Vs. 8, 10-11)

1. His brothers – a malicious response (Vs. 8, 11a)
 - a. Joseph’s brothers already hated him a lot before this point but hearing his dreams only intensified their hatred even more. Their bitter, hateful envy towards Joseph went from a smouldering flame to a raging fire in their lives. They went from hot to boiling. It was this seething rage in the hearts of Joseph’s brothers that was the motivation behind their unjust and cruel treatment of their brother described in the second half of the chapter. Jim Berg wisely observed, “This bitterness of these brothers is the single hinge upon which the next 14 chapters turn. It is this bitterness that changed the course of history.”
 - b. Two words are used to describe the hostility of their hearts towards Joseph in this passage – they ‘hated’ him (Vs. 4, 8) and they ‘envied’ him (Vs. 11). Envy and bitterness (hatred) are partners. Envy embitters the heart.
 - c. Acts. 7:9 reveals that envy was the driving force behind Joseph’s brothers selling him into slavery. “And the patriarchs, **moved with envy**, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him.”
 - d. James warns about “bitter envying” and “strife” in the believer’s heart and the terrible fruit it produces. James 3:14-16 “But if ye have **bitter envying** and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* **confusion** and **every evil work**.” Bitter envy in the heart, if not dealt with by the grace of God, can lead to “every evil work”. In other words, bitter envy prepares your heart to commit any sin. Proverbs warns, “A sound heart *is* the life of the flesh: but **envy** the rottenness of the bones.” (Prov. 14:30) It

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further warns, “Wrath *is* **cruel**, and anger *is* outrageous; but who *is* able to stand before envy?” (Prov. 27:4)

- e. Bitterness can be a response to hurts and injustices in our lives but it can also be the byproduct of jealousy. You are so envious of a person that they become an object of hatred and bitterness to you. “Bitterness,” says Jim Berg, “is the discontent of the soul that says I don’t like what God has allowed.”
 - f. It is true that some things weren’t fair in Jacob’s home but jealousy and hatred were not the answer! You will encounter many things that are not fair in a sin cursed world but the sweetening influence of God’s grace is the answer, not the souring influence of bitterness and envy. This is why God’s Word exhorts us in Hebrews 12:15 “Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;”
 - g. Beware of where bitter envy will take you! Joseph’s brothers would even contemplate murder, such was the extent to which their hearts were poisoned by the disease of bitter envy against their brother.
 - h. The crowning example of the evil envy was that of the Pharisees against our Lord (Matt. 27:18).
2. His father – a mixed response (Vs. 10-11)
- a. Jacob’s initial response was carnal (Vs. 10)
 - i. This was a hasty response from Jacob. He should have remembered that God had spoken to him through dreams in his own life. His pride rose up initially to this Revelation God had given his son.
 - ii. Sometimes older saints can be a source of discouragement in the lives of the young who have a desire to do something for the Lord. Be careful how you react to a young believer when they open their heart to you about their desire to serve God! Even if there is immaturity in their youthful ambition, encourage rather than excoriate. Guidance and counsel are usually needed but that is very different to a carnal response that discourages.
 - b. Jacob’s secondary response – spiritual (Vs. 11). Upon further reflection, Jacob realized there might be something to his son’s dreams after all and he pondered them.

Conclusion:

1. Have you had a difficult family background? God’s grace is available to you to lift you so you don’t make the same mistakes. God can use you!
2. Are you pursuing purity in your teenage years?
3. How are you responding to the hurts and injustices in your life? Are you becoming bitter or better?
4. Do you believe God has given you a gift for Christian service? Let God work with you and use you in His time and in His way.

Joseph's Dreams Get Shattered

Text: Gen. 37:12-36

Introduction:

1. This section opens up the first major chapter in Joseph's life. Up until this point at the age of 17, he has enjoyed the privileged status as Jacob's favorite son and the princely status of holding firstborn rank in the family over his brothers. But what was about to unfold looked more like a nightmare in contrast to his previous happy dreams. Joseph was about to have his life catapulted at the hands of his embittered brothers into a searing trial; a trial that appeared from the human standpoint to shatter any hope of the Divine Dreams coming true.
2. Concerning this section Alexander Maclaren writes, "We have left the serene and lofty atmosphere of communion and saintship far above us. This narrative takes us down into foul depths. It is a hideous story of vulgar hatred and cruelty."
3. In this lesson we study the betrayal of Joseph at the hands of his brothers as Joseph goes from the lofty heights of dreams and visions to the bottom of the pit and into slavery in Egypt. There will be lessons about practical things but most importantly, the truth of the Providence of God is seen. What is the Providence of God? One author defined it this way, "Providence is that work of God in which He preserves all His creatures, is active in all that happens in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end."
4. We will study this passage under **5 headings**.

I. **THE CONTEXT OF JOSEPH'S BETRAYAL (VS. 12-17)**

The Bible paints the occasion and the scene for this momentous event. There are three points to the setting to consider. Take note of:

A. The Family's Division (Vs. 1-11)

We studied this in our last lesson but keep in mind the division within the family that is described in those verses.

1. There was favouritism in Joseph's home (Vs. 3-4)
2. There was friction in Joseph's home (Vs. 4, 8, 11)

There was hatred and jealousy towards Joseph from his brothers.

- a. Vs. 4 – "they **hated** him and could not speak peaceably unto him".
- b. Vs. 8 – "And they **hated** him yet the more for his dreams, and for his words."
- c. Vs. 11 – "And his brethren **envied** him".
- d. Hatred and envy make a deadly combination in the heart and the bitter fruit of it is about to be manifest.

B. The Brothers Departure (Vs. 12)

1. The purpose of their departure (Vs. 12a).
 - a. The revealed reason. The brothers went to feed the flocks in Shechem. They may have simply needed to find better pasture for their livestock.

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- b. The root reason. It is possible they departed on account of their animosity and hatred towards Joseph and the situation in the home.
- 2. The place of their arrival (Vs. 12b)
 - a. It is interesting to note that despite the events of Genesis 34, Jacob's brothers were more than comfortable returning to Shechem. You would think that if there had been a deep work of repentance in these boys, they would be reluctant to go back to the place where they committed such heinous crimes.
 - b. Joseph's brothers were pretty wicked men at this time in their lives and evidently had no reservations about going back to Shechem.
 - c. When you are truly repentant over a sinful defeat in your life, you won't be comfortable in Shechem. You will want to stay away from it!

C. The Father's Directive (Vs. 13-17)

- 1. The sending of Joseph to his brethren (Vs. 13-14)
 - a. The readiness of Joseph to go (Vs. 13). Notice Joseph's "here am I" response. Joseph was a submissive and obedient son who was willing to serve. Would to God our response would be "here am I" when our Heavenly Father asks us to serve His eternal cause. Some have noted that Joseph seems to have "combined all the best qualities of his ancestors – the capacity of Abraham, the quietness of Isaac, the ability of Jacob, and the personal beauty of his mother's family."
 - b. The reason for Joseph to go (Vs. 14). Jacob was concerned to know:
 - i. The wellbeing of his sons.
 - ii. The wellbeing of the flocks.
- 2. The searching of Joseph for his brethren (Vs. 15-17)

Joseph departs from the valley ('vale' Vs. 14) where Jacob's family was encamped to go North to Shechem which was about 50 miles (80 km) away. Little did Jacob and Joseph realize that they when they said goodbye that day, that it would be over 22 years before they saw each other again.

 - a. Joseph arrives at Shechem (Vs. 14b-17a). Joseph arrives in Shechem and can't find his brothers. Another man who was in the area finds Joseph wandering in the field and informs him that he heard his brothers say they were going on to Dothan. Dothan was approx. 15 miles (24 km) further north from Shechem. "The name 'Dothan' is believed to mean "two cisterns", and was presumably so named because of two storage wells there. One of these cisterns was dry at the time Joseph's brothers were there, and it was into this well that they later decided to place him." (Morris)
 - b. Joseph goes on to Dothan and sees his brothers in the distance. Little did he know what was in store for him and that he was going to find himself swept up in a chain of events that would eventually culminate in him being second ruler over the most powerful nation on earth at that time; the nation of Egypt.

II. THE CONSPIRACY IN JOSEPH'S BETRAYAL (VS. 18-22)

Joseph's brothers see him coming afar off and immediately their hatred towards him is stirred up afresh. Now in the absence of their father, they feel emboldened to take matters into their own hands.

A. The Plot to Murder Joseph (Vs. 18-20)

1. Their hostility towards Joseph (Vs. 18)
 - a. Their desire to kill Joseph was on account of their bitterness and envy. We are reminded of the danger of harbouring these poisonous attitudes in our hearts. Hatred and jealousy, if allowed to fester in the heart, can easily lead to murder or some other heinous crime. If you allow your heart to be overtaken with the poison of bitter envy, you have no idea of knowing where it might take you. Never say never! If you indulge these evil attitudes, you could end up in a place much darker than you imagined.
 - b. Hatred is the attitude of murder. 1 John 3:15 warns, "Whosoever **hateth his brother is a murderer**: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."
 - c. Note: Ultimately only God's saving grace can make bitter hearts sweet and hateful hearts holy. Come to the foot of a blood stained cross and let Christ cleanse away your sinful bitterness and jealousy.
2. Their mockery of Joseph (Vs. 19)
 - a. It is interesting to note that it was particularly the dreams God had given Joseph that were the focus of their attack against Joseph. No doubt these brothers were irritated by Joseph's purity of life and the fact he had heard from God.
 - b. They thought they could thwart what God had revealed to Joseph – "and we will see what will become of his dreams". (Vs. 20)
 - c. Remember, in this dispensation, mocking Joseph's dreams amounted to mocking the Word of God as that was the means sometimes God used to communicate His truth to His people.
 - d. Ungodly family members can still get incensed by the presence of the truth in the lives of saved relatives in our day. Remember, their opposition is ultimately to God and His Word in your life.
3. Their conspiracy concerning Joseph (Vs. 20)
 - a. They discussed how they could commit the murder (Vs. 20a). Their plan was to kill Joseph and then conceal the body by throwing it into a pit. Perhaps it was the very pit they threw Joseph into was the pit into which they originally planned to throw his dead body.
 - b. They discussed how they could cover up the murder. They also came up with the story they could tell Jacob and the rest of their family.

B. The Proposal to Manhandle Joseph (Vs. 21-22)

Reuben, the eldest brother, stepped in and stopped the other brothers from carrying out their diabolical plan. We note two things about Reuben's proposal:

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- a. The compassion in the proposal. Reuben's objection to the plan to murder Joseph does say something for his character. As the eldest in the home, he seems to have had some tenderness towards Joseph. At the very least, he knew it was wrong to shed their brother's blood.
- b. The compromise of the proposal. Reuben's proposal did not represent a strong stand for what was right but a compromise. What he was proposing may not have been as bad as the original proposal but it was still wrong. There was an instability in Reuben ("unstable as water" Gen. 49:4) on account of his moral failure with his step mother Bilhah. Compromise in one's personal life leads to a lack of courage to make a strong stand for truth and right. Courage to stand for what is right is linked to a clear conscience. Remember, past sins should not stop you from standing for what is right in the present. If those sins are under the blood, then you can stand for what is right with a clear conscience. Reuben would go on to also support the lie to their father about what had happened to Joseph.

III. THE CRUELTY OF JOSEPH'S BETRAYAL (VS. 23-30)

Joseph arrives on the scene and the brothers carry out their cruel plan. Imagine what it must have been like for Joseph as he arrives in simplicity of heart to carry out his father's task with no idea of what his brothers were about to do. Can you see the pained, shocked expression on his face and feel all the emotions surging through his heart and body as his brothers seize him with hateful hands. Look at what transpired:

A. Joseph was Stripped of his Coat (Vs. 23)

This action represented:

1. The humiliation of Joseph. To be stripped of one's outer clothing would have been deeply humiliating and shameful to Joseph as an upright young man.
2. The rejection of Joseph. Joseph's coat was not just a symbol of the fact he was the beloved of his father. It represented his rank as the one holding the position of firstborn in the family. These brothers were making it clear by their actions that they rejected his position of authority in the home.

B. Joseph was Slung into the Pit (Vs. 24-25a)

Joseph has gone from the exalted position as the beloved one of his father to the pit; from the heights of dreams of future glory to the place of shame and potential death. Joseph's brothers further revealed the hatred of their hearts in their actions towards Joseph while he was in the pit. We get further insight into this from the comments of Joseph's brothers in their first trip to Egypt during the time of famine. Genesis 42:21-22 "And they said one to another, **We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us**, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore, behold, also his blood is required."

They hardened their hearts and ignored:

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1. Joseph's heartbroken anguish – “we saw the **anguish** of his soul”. The word ‘anguish’ is also translated ‘distress’ (Gen. 35:3; 42:21). John Gill describes Joseph's anguish in a most touching way, “when in the utmost agony, with trembling limbs, and quivering lips, and floods of tears, as they stripped him of his coat, he most earnestly and importunately requested of them they would not put him into the pit, and leave him there; and in the same manner entreated them they would not put him into the hands of strangers, but restore him alive to his father; but they turned a deaf ear to all his cries and entreaties, and hardened themselves against him.”
2. Joseph's heartfelt pleadings – “when he **besought** us”. The word ‘besought’ means to beseech, beg, intreat earnestly.
3. Note: It is a sobering reminder and warning of the kind of hatred and hostility that can exist in a family between siblings. Hatred directed at you from any individual is hard enough to bear but when it comes from a close family member, your own flesh and blood, it is all the more grievous.

C. Joseph was Sold into Slavery (Vs. 25-30)

Imagine the glimmer of hope Joseph must have had when his brothers let down the rope to pull him out of the pit. Perhaps they had finally heard his tearful pleadings and would show him some pity? Imagine his heartbreak when having been drawn up out of the pit, they dragged him over to the Ishmaelite caravan and handed him over in exchange for 20 pieces of silver. What a hurtful and bitter experience! What a miracle that Joseph was given grace by God not to become the most bitter individual on earth at that time!

1. The people to whom he was sold (Vs. 25)
 - a. Joseph was sold to an Ishmaelite caravan on its way to trade in Egypt. The Ishmaelites were descendants of Ishmael and therefore distant relatives of Joseph and his brothers. Never underestimate what ungodly relatives can do to you!
 - b. The Egyptian practice of embalming meant there was a lucrative trade for spices, balm and myrrh that were used in the embalming process.
2. The proposal for him to be sold (Vs. 26-27)
 - a. It was Judah who suggested Joseph be sold. To Judah this was a win-win solution. They avoid the guilt of shedding Joseph's blood and at the same time make some money. “The original scheme to **slay** Joseph was changed to **sell** Joseph. Money looked more attractive than murder.” (Butler)
 - b. His brothers were ‘content’ (satisfied) with the proposal. It appears there were ongoing discussions about what to do with Joseph as they ate their meal and up until then, murder was still on the table as a possibility.
3. The price for which he was sold (Vs. 28). Joseph is sold for the price of a common slave at that time – 20 pieces of silver. For the ten brothers, this would allow for 2 pieces of silver each. What dirty money!
4. The pain after he was sold (Vs. 29-30).

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- a. For some reason, Reuben was absent when his brothers sold Joseph to the Ishmaelite traders. He returns to the pit with the plan of retrieving Joseph to return him to his father. He was too late! Imagine if he had arrived a little earlier? How often significant things in history are determined within a very short time window. What a reminder of the Sovereignty of God. Joseph's brothers thought they sold him into Egypt but in reality, God was sending Joseph into Egypt for a much higher purpose.
- b. Reuben found out that compromise, while appearing to be the easier option, never bears good fruit. How much better it would have been if he had just stood squarely and firmly on the right side of the issue against his hot-headed brothers.

D. Joseph Symbolised the Saviour

So often as you study the life of Joseph you will see a picture of the Lord Jesus. There are too many parallels to be a coincidence. Christ can be found in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:27) and this incident in the life of Joseph is no exception.

1. Joseph was the beloved son of his father; Christ is the only Begotten, Beloved, Eternal Son of God the Father.
2. Joseph was commissioned of his father to go and seek the welfare of his wayward, sinful brothers; Christ was sent by the Father into this wicked world to save undeserving sinners. Luke 19:10 **"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."**
3. Joseph was rejected of his brethren and in like manner, Christ "came unto his own, and his own received him not." Christ was "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief..." (Is. 53:3)
4. Joseph was stripped of his princely robe by wicked hands and Christ was stripped of his seamless robe and scourged. Then he was stripped at the hands of wicked Roman soldiers bearing shame and humiliation. Matthew 27:28 "And they **stripped him**, and put on him a scarlet robe."
5. Joseph was sold into slavery for 20 pieces of silver at the suggestion of Judah; Christ was betrayed by his disciple Judah (Judas is the N.T. equivalent to the Hebrew name Judah) for 30 pieces of silver. Both were betrayed by Judah and both were sold for the price of a common slave!
6. Joseph suffered anguish at the hands of his wicked brothers; Jesus Christ went through all the agonies of the crucifixion as he suffered for the sins of the world.
 - a. Consider his agony in the garden as he stood under the shadow of the cross and was faced with the reality of "being made sin for us who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21) Luke 22:44 "And being in an **agony** he prayed more earnestly: and his **sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.**"
 - b. Consider the agony of His physical sufferings (bruised, beaten and nailed to the cross). Isaiah 53:5 "But he was wounded for our transgressions, *he* was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

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- c. Consider his anguish of soul as he cried “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

7. Joseph so beautifully pictures Jesus Christ!

IV. THE COVERUP OF JOSEPH’S BETRAYAL (VS. 31-35)

A. The Deceitfulness of their Plan (Vs. 31-32)

1. Instead of being willing to tell their father the plain, cold facts about what they had done, they concoct a further plan to cover up what they had done. Deception runs thick in this family!
2. They slay a baby goat (kid) and dip Joseph’s coat of many colours in the blood and bring it to their father and say “This have we found: know now whether it by thy son’s coat or no.”
3. Confessing our sin is God’s way, not covering up our sin. Prov. 28:13 “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy.”
4. Note: Bullies are actually cowards. They are happy to mistreat someone who is vulnerable but don’t have the courage to face what they have done honestly. Their brutal activities thrive in an environment of secrecy.

B. The Heartlessness of their Plan (Vs. 33-35)

1. Not only had their bitterness and envy made their hearts cold and hard towards their brother Joseph, it had also made their hearts hard towards their own father. How our hearts can be “**hardened** through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13).
2. Think about it. Those brothers watched their elderly father cry his eyes out for day after day and yet they would not tell him the truth of what they had done. What staggering cruelty we are capable of against even the ones closest to us when our hearts are hardened by bitterness. Jacob was so overcome with grief, he thought it was going to put him in the grave.

V. THE CONTROL OVER JOSEPH’S TRIAL (VS. 36)

The story of Joseph from start to finish is the story of the Providential workings of God. Genesis 50:20 is like the Romans 8:28 statement for Joseph’s life – “But as for you, **ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good**, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.” The bigger picture was that God was sending Joseph to Egypt in order to preserve the seed of Abraham. Psalm 105:16-19 “Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread. **He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who** was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.” God’s Providential ruling is seen in this event in at least two ways:

A. The Protection of Joseph from Murder

1. If the brothers had their first wish, they would have killed Joseph. But God moved through Reuben to spare his life.
2. Judah’s suggestion of selling Joseph into slavery, though an evil one, put to rest any further thought of killing Joseph. They assumed, based on the typical treatment of slaves in that day, that they would never hear from Joseph again and that he would

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probably perish in Egypt at the hands of cruel slave masters. Little did they know how God's hand would work as they watched Joseph being tugged along by the Ishmaelite traders as they lead him off into the distance towards Egypt.

3. Don't get the idea that Joseph's brothers were trying to be a part of helping fulfill God's purposes in Joseph's life. As far as they were concerned, this marked the end of Joseph's dreams. It was all over. They meant it for evil! They were doing all they could to try and thwart God's plan for Joseph's life. But God would overrule their plans and even use their evil actions as threads to weave the tapestry of Joseph's life. God can make even the wrath of man to praise him (Ps. 76:10).

B. The Placement of Joseph in Egypt (Vs. 36)

1. God's sovereign hand ensured that out of all the people Joseph could have been sold to, he was sold to Potiphar, a high ranking official of Pharaoh. This was to prove Providential as the story unfolds from here.
2. "It is a miserable story of ignoble jealousy and cruel hate; and yet, over all this foaming torrent, God's steadfast bow of peace shines. These crimes and this "affliction of Joseph" were the direct path to the fulfilment of His purposes." (Alexander Maclaren)
3. "The grace of God is seen in this chapter in the way in which sin is defeated and the Divine purposes accomplished... Sin is never necessary, though it may be used and overruled by God. It is absolutely impossible to bring good "out of" evil; for there never has been any good in evil... But good can be brought about in spite of evil, **and so it came to pass that the very steps Joseph's brethren took to defeat God's purposes were used to fulfill those dreams.**" (Griffith Thomas)

Conclusion: Are you struggling to accept a trial God has allowed in your life? Will you submit to God's purposes and let his grace make you better rather than bitter?

Corrie Ten Boom was a Dutch lady whose family risked their lives during the Second World War to provide a hiding place in their home for persecuted Jews. Someone betrayed them and as a result her watch maker father was sent to a concentration camp where he died ten days later. Corrie and her beloved sister Betsie were incarcerated at Ravensbruck concentration camp. They were starved, covered with fleas and made to suffer. ***Betsie did not survive the horror of the camp but Corrie gaunt, filthy, and weak was released in October 1944.*** She later found out that an order had been given at the end of that very week to kill all women her age and older. An error in prison paperwork was the what God used to release her. Corrie vowed if the Lord allowed her to live, she would tell as many people as possible about the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. She also promised to go wherever the Lord led. Although she was fifty-nine years of age when released she travelled all over the world for the next thirty years speaking in more than sixty countries, captivating audiences with her inspiring faith and love for the Lord. She went to be with the Lord in 1983 on her ninety first birthday.

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Before she died in the concentration camp In Ravensbruck, her sister Betsie said to Corrie, **“Corrie your whole life has been a training for the work you are doing here in prison and for the work you will do afterward.”** Corrie used to say, **“God has plans, not problems for our lives.”** In the course of her talks, she often showed the reverse side of an embroidered bookmark. It looked like a meaningless mass of tangled threads. Corrie would turn it over and there written plainly were the words, **“God is love.”** She then quoted these words,

***My life is but a weaving, between my God and me,
I cannot choose the colours He weaveth steadily.***

***Oft' times He weaveth sorrow and I in foolish pride,
Forget He sees the upper and I the underside.***

***Not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly
Will God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why.***

***The dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skilful hand,
As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern He has planned.***

***He knows, He loves, He cares, nothing this truth can dim,
He gives the very best to those who leave the choice to Him.***

Corrie Ten Boom in a recorded video interview for the film “The Hiding Place” as a woman in her eighties said this, “Some questions remain but they are not to be feared. **Our Heavenly Father holds all things in His hand, even our questions.** As for myself in the years since Ravensbruck (the German concentration camp), the Lord has sent me to some 60 countries and I have told to anyone who would listen, **“No pit is so deep that He is not deeper still.** With Jesus, even in our darkest moments the best remains and the very best is yet to be. I promised my sister I would tell it and I tell you.”

In so many ways, Joseph's coat of many colours symbolised the life God had in store for him. It would be a multifaceted, multicoloured life filled with many experiences: trials, tears and triumphs; pain, sadness and joy would all be woven into the fabric of his story but over it all God was weaving a life that would be a beautiful and powerful testament to His grace and power.

Judah Vs. Joseph: What a contrast!

Text: Gen. 38:1-30

Introduction:

1. The narrative concerning Joseph's life is now abruptly interrupted with this account of Judah and some key events that take place in his life.
2. The chapter almost appears out of place and deals with some pretty sordid sins and yet we know the Holy Spirit includes it right here for a reason. As we study the account, those reasons will become apparent.
3. "This chapter appears to be out of place in that it interrupts the record of Joseph. But it is not out of place, for it parallels the record of Joseph and shows the history of the son of Jacob who received the Divine-prince portion of the birthright (Joseph got the double portion part of the birthright). This Divine-prince portion of the birthright is the part of the birthright that includes the promise and lineage of the Messiah, which is why this chapter is included in the Scriptures." (John Butler)
4. Timeframe: About 22 years intervene between the sale of Joseph and the settlement in Egypt (13 years till Joseph's promotion + 7 years of plenty + 2 years of famine).
5. The account not only serves as a warning against the sins of the flesh, it is also a testament to the triumph of God's grace out of the wreckage of man's sin and depravity. We will divide this passage into **5 sections** for our lesson.

I. THE SEPARATION OF JUDAH (VS. 1-5)

A. His Moving (Vs. 1)

1. The timing of the move – "at that time". This is a clear reference to the events that had just transpired with Joseph (Gen. 37). It is likely that the strife and division in the home was the catalyst for Judah's departure. He was probably filled with guilt over his own role in the Joseph saga. After all, it was his idea to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites (Gen. 37:25-28).
2. The direction of the move – "Judah went down". As the account develops, he certainly went down spiritually. If there is one principle we encounter again and again in the Bible it is this: **think about your spiritual direction. Are you going up or down spiritually?**
3. The destination of the move – "turned in to a certain Adullamite". "Adullam was not nearly so far away as Shechem or Dothan. Adullam was a small, and long established, Canaanite settlement about 8 miles (12 kms) northwest of the family home." (Morris)

B. His Marriage (Vs. 2-5)

1. The identity of his wife (Vs. 2). Her name is not given but she is simply noted as the "daughter of a certain Canaanite, whose name was Shuah".
2. The progeny by his wife. Three sons are born to Judah from this woman:
 - a. Er (means "watcher") – named by his father (Vs. 3).
 - b. Onan (means "strong") – named by his mother (Vs. 4).

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- c. Shelah (meaning uncertain) – named by his mother (Vs. 5). It is noted that he was born at a place called “Chezib” believed to be a small town near Adullam.
- d. Note: All three sons are prominent in the drama that follows.

II. THE SONS OF JUDAH (VS. 6-10)

Sadly, Judah’s sons (at least the first two) are noted in Biblical history for their wickedness.

A. Er’s Wickedness and Judgment (Vs. 6-7)

Judah arranges a marriage for his firstborn son with a woman named Tamar. The specifics of Er’s sin are not given. Some suggest it was similar to that of Onan but we don’t know for sure. What we can say is that for God to directly take his life as an act of judgment, Er must have been very wicked. God’s dealing with Er reminds us of two truths in relation to sin:

1. The seriousness of sin to God. Er was wicked “in the sight of the LORD”. We are reminded that sin does not escape the all-seeing eyes of God and that it is offensive to him. God has perfect knowledge of every sin
2. The sentence against sin by God. God “slew” Er because of his wickedness. Er’s sin brought a death sentence.
 - a. Sin brings a death sentence upon our lives. Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” We all deserve separation from God for our sins and until we receive God’s free forgiveness through Christ, we are under the Divine death sentence.
 - b. Christ paid sins penalty for us when he died in our place on the cross. Romans 5:8 “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

B. Onan’s Wickedness and Judgment (Vs. 8-10)

Unlike Er, the Bible provides the details of Onan’s sin and why God slew him.

1. The custom of Onan’s time (Vs. 8). What we see in this section is the duty of “Levirate marriage”. The word is from the Latin word ‘levir’ which means “brother-in-law”. It was already a custom in those days, that if a man died without children, his next younger brother should marry his wife and “raise up seed to his brother”. This was later incorporated as a part of the Mosaic Law (Deut. 25:5-10; Matt. 22:24).
2. The character of Onan’s sin (Vs. 9)
 - a. The motivation of his sin – selfishness. Onan selfishly did not want to help beget a child for his deceased brother. This is stated clearly twice – “And Onan knew that the seed should not be his”, “lest he should give seed to his brother”. It wasn’t that he outright refused to take Tamar as a wife. He was happy to enter into the pleasure of the one flesh union but at the same time deliberately prevent his wife from conceiving.
 - b. The perversion of his sin. Onan departed from the natural order of the one flesh union and engaged in coitus interruptus, spilling the seed on the ground to prevent conception and child birth.

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The seed carries life potential and Onan was wilfully seeking to thwart the possibility of conception. The Hebrew grammar indicates that this was not a one-off occurrence but something he engaged in repeatedly each time he entered into the one flesh union with Tamar. Modern commentators often try to downplay the spilling of the seed as not being Onan's primary sin but the plain sense of the passage says otherwise – “the thing which he did **displeased** the LORD”. It is interesting to read the comments of older commentators from a bygone era where matters pertaining to the one flesh union between a man and his wife were viewed in a much more sacred light compared to the sexualized culture we live in today. Here are a few examples:

i. Martin Luther (1483 – 1546)

“Onan must have been a malicious and incorrigible scoundrel. This is a most disgraceful sin. It is far more atrocious than incest and adultery. We call it unchastity, yes, a Sodomitic sin. For Onan goes into her; that is, he lies with her and copulates, and when it comes to the point of insemination, spills the semen, lest the woman conceive. Surely at such a time the order of nature established by God in procreation should be followed. Accordingly, it was a most disgraceful crime to produce semen, excite the woman, and to frustrate her at that very moment... He preferred polluting himself with a most disgraceful sin to raising up offspring for his brother.”

ii. Matthew Poole (1624 – 1679)

“Two things are here noted: 1. The sin itself, which is here particularly described by the Holy Ghost, that men might be instructed concerning the nature and the great evil of this sin of self-pollution, which is such that it brought upon the actor of it the extraordinary vengeance of God, and which is condemned not only by Scripture, but even by the light of nature, and the judgment of the heathens, who have expressly censured it as a great sin, and as a kind of murder (Of which see my Latin Synopsis). Whereby we may sufficiently understand how wicked and abominable a practice this is amongst Christians, and in the light of the Gospel, which lays greater and stricter obligations upon us to purity, and severely forbids all pollution both of flesh and spirit. 2. The cause of this wickedness; which seems to have been either hatred of his brother, or envy at his brother's name and honour, springing from the pride of his own heart.”

iii. Keil and Delitzsch (commentary first published in 1861)

“This act not only betrayed a want of affection to his brother, combined with a despicable covetousness for his possession and inheritance, but was also a sin against the Divine institution of marriage and its object, and was therefore punished by Jehovah with sudden death.”

iv. English conformist Andrew Willet (1562-1621) in his Hexapla upon Genesis (1595)

“It was against the order of nature, using the act of generation for pleasure only, and not for generation; it was against God, whose institution he brake; against his wife, whom he defrauded of the fruit of her womb; against himself, in preventing his issue; against mankind,

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which should have been increased and propagated... this sin of envy [was] against his brother, to whom he should have raised seed.”

- v. Reformed commentator Johann Peter Lange (1802-1884)

“Onan’s sin, a deadly wickedness, an example to be held in abhorrence, as condemnatory, not only of secret sins of self-pollution, but also of all similar offences in sexual relations, and even in marriage itself. Unchastity in general is a homicidal waste of the generative powers, a demonic bestiality, an outrage to ancestors, to posterity, and to one’s own life. It is a crime against the image of God, and a degradation below the animal. Onan’s offence, moreover, as committed in marriage, was a most unnatural wickedness, and a grievous wrong.”

- c. We need to remind ourselves of the three main purposes established by God for the one flesh union:
 - i. Procreation – it is for conception and childbearing (Gen. 1:28, 9:1, 35:11; Mal. 2:15).
 - ii. Pleasure – it is for the mutual joy, comfort, bonding and enjoyment of husband and wife (Gen. 18:12; 24:67, Song of Solomon). God created it to be a pleasurable experience for a married couple.
 - iii. Protection – a happy marriage helps the believer avoid the sin of fornication (1 Cor. 7:1-5).
 - iv. Note: Modern society has made sex all about pleasure and disconnects it from the sacred duty, responsibility and privilege of procreation. When you divorce the one flesh union from one of its primary purposes (conception and child bearing), it loses meaning. Most Bible believers today are against abortion but very few question the practice of birth control in the light of the Scriptures. But we must be prepared to check all our thinking by the Word of God to make sure we haven’t adopted the philosophies of the world.
- 3. The condemnation of Onan’s sin (Vs. 10)
 - a. Man’s perspective on the seriousness of Onan’s sin is of no consequence. The only perspective that matters is God’s and if he slew Onan for what he did, then his sin was serious in the eyes of God. Onan’s sin clearly went beyond just his refusal to provide his deceased brother an heir as later in the Mosaic law, a refusal to fulfill this duty did not carry the death penalty. Rather, the individual would be publicly shamed (See Deut. 25:5-10). His unclean act of spilling the seed was also offensive to a Holy God.
 - b. Note: This is an important passage to encourage unmarried men to avoid the sin of indulging in wilful self-gratification.

III. THE SIN OF JUDAH (VS. 11-26)

A. The Season of his Sin (Vs. 11-12)

Look at what was going on in Judah’s life at this time.

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1. It was a time of uncertainty (Vs. 11-12a)
 - a. Judah had lost two sons. He promises his daughter in law Tamar his third son Shelah but inwardly had no intention of following through, fearing that he would also die like his two older brothers. Judah wrongly attributed his sons' deaths to Tamar when in reality their death was due to their own sin.
 - b. Judah loses his wife (Vs. 12a). This would have been a trial for Judah. Times of sorrow can make us more vulnerable to temptation.
2. It was a time of festivity (Vs. 12b).
 - a. His mourning over, Judah goes to join his friend Hiram the Adulamite for the sheep shearing season. In the ancient world, these were often times of festivity.
 - b. The various seasons of life with their joys and sorrows present certain challenges and temptations. Walking closely with God is the key to not falling into one of Satan's traps in times of trial or rejoicing.

B. The Seduction of his Sin (Vs. 13-23)

Tamar hears that her father-in-law Judah is on his way to Timnath to shear sheep and concocts an evil plan to seduce him in the hopes she will be able to conceive by him. We cannot justify Tamar's actions but we do have to note that Judah shared some responsibility for this as he had not followed through on his promise to give Tamar to his son Shelah. This was cruel to this dear lady who was left destitute in her father's house with no marriage prospect. We note four aspects to Tamar's seduction of Judah.

1. The apparel of the seduction (Vs. 13-15)
 - a. Tamar dressed according to how harlots of her day would dress in order to entice Judah. We are reminded that clothing communicates a message. Judah clearly got that message from Tamar's attire – "When Judah saw her, he thought her to be an harlot; because she had covered her face". Proverbs warns of the attire of a harlot – "And, behold, there met him a woman *with the attire of an harlot*, and subtil of heart." (Prov. 7:10)
 - b. God's Word **DOES** have something to say about the Christian's apparel and it is important that our clothing doesn't communicate a contradictory message to our Christian profession. 1 Timothy 2:9-10 "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in **modest apparel**, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works."
2. The appeal of the seduction – "in an open place" (Vs. 14). Sitting in the open was the practice of harlots in those days (See Prov. 7:12, 9:14; Jer. 3:2; Ez. 16:24-25). Satan is very good at putting temptation before our eyes as we journey through life. You don't have to go looking for temptation. Satan will put it right in front of you!
3. The arrangements in the seduction (Vs. 16-18a)

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- a. Negotiations are entered into between Judah and Tamar as to what the price would be for the encounter. Judah promises to give her a kid from the flock in exchange for her services.
 - b. She asks for a pledge, a guarantee, that he would follow through on the promise. She requests his signet, staff and bracelets. These were Judah's personal effects and would feature later in this sordid story. Henry Morris explains, "These items probably were, respectively, his seal, the cords by which the seal was strapped to his arms, and a rod with his own particular insignia attached to its head. In any case, they were items which were particularly his, and thus would be identified with him and no other."
 - c. A kid from the flock probably seemed to Judah like a small price to pay to indulge his lusts but in reality, he would pay a whole lot more for this sin! Sin always comes with a heavier price tag than what is presented. Sin claims to be cheap, free even, but in reality, sin will cost you dearly. Knowing Christ and living for Him brings real blessings.
4. The acceptance of the seduction (Vs. 18b)
- a. There is no sign of resistance from Judah to this temptation at all. He can't say yes to the seduction quick enough. He would "commit fornication as casually as a man today would buy a cup of coffee." (Barnhouse)
 - b. No doubt one of the purposes for the inclusion of this chapter is to provide a contrast to the life of Joseph. Here we have Judah saying yes to temptation and in the next chapter Joseph saying no to temptation.
 - c. "While Joseph was standing true and faithful to the Lord in a strange land, Judah was floundering in foul behaviour in the homeland. The contrast of Judah's behaviour in Genesis 38 with Joseph's behaviour in Genesis 39 is very pronounced. One yielded to immorality; the other spurned it. These two men were the recipients of the two parts of the Abrahamic birthright." (Butler)
 - d. "It is no accident that the story of Joseph is interrupted by chapter 38. The disreputable behaviour of other members of Joseph's family makes his conduct, by contrast, shine like a bright light in a sordid world." (William Macdonald)
5. The abomination of the seduction
- a. God's Word is crystal clear on the sin of harlotry (prostitution). To monetize God's sacred gift of sex is evil, wicked and depraved.
 - b. God's Word warns repeatedly about the sin of fornication (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:16-20; Eph. 5:3, 1 Thess. 4:3). Interestingly the Greek word is πορνείαν (porneia) The related word πορνή is translated 'harlot(s)' 8 times in the N.T. and 4 times as 'whore'. Our English word 'pornography' comes from two Greek words πορνεία and γραφή meaning, "to write about a whore or harlot." It is a broad term encompassing any form of illicit sex.

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- c. The Canaanites had elevated harlotry to the level of something sacred. Temple prostitution was common and was viewed as an act of devotion to the pagan gods. When a society promotes prostitution as an honourable profession, you know it is sinking fast into paganism!

IV. THE SEQUEL FOR JUDAH (VS. 19-26)

A. Judah's Helper (Vs. 19-23)

1. Judah attempts to send the promised payment by the hand of his friend, Hirah the Adulamite. Hirah inquires in the area as to the whereabouts of the harlot but the men of that place reply that there was no harlot in that area.
2. Hirah returns to Judah and tells him the story. Judah decides to not pursue the matter further, hoping that this would be the last of it. He would soon discover the truth – “Be sure your sin will find you out” (Num. 32:23).
3. Note: Hirah the Adulamite is the perfect example of the wrong kind of friend. A friend who is happy to support and help you in your sin is not a real friend at all!

B. Judah's Hypocrisy (Vs. 24)

1. Three months pass and Judah receives word that his daughter in law Tamar is pregnant from playing the harlot.
2. Judah pronounces a swift and severe death penalty upon her. What rank and wicked hypocrisy from one who was guilty of the same sin. In fact, he was the man who had been involved with Tamar!
3. Judah was probably suffering from a guilty conscience at this time over his own sin.

C. Judah's Humility (Vs. 25-26)

1. The exposure of his sin (Vs. 25). Tamar sends Judah's signet, bracelets and staff with the message “By the man, whose these are, am I with child”. The Tamar trap is sprung and Judah is caught and exposed.
2. The acknowledgement of his sin (Vs. 26). There seems to be an attitude of repentance in Judah's response.
 - a. He accepted the greater share of responsibility for what had happened – “she hath been more righteous than I”.
 - b. He admitted his wrong in not giving Tamar his son Shelah as promised.
 - c. He acted differently towards Tamar after this and did not repeat the sin with her.

V. THE SEED OF JUDAH (VS. 27-30)

A. The Birth of Judah's Seed (Vs. 27-30)

1. At the time of birth, it is discovered that Tamar has twins. An interesting thing happens where one of the baby's hands came out and the midwife ties a scarlet thread to the hand to identify it as the firstborn but then the baby withdraws his hand and the other twin comes out forth.

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2. The midwife exclaims “How hast thou broken forth?” Therefore, he was called Pharez meaning “breaking through”. Then Tamar gives birth to the second twin and he is named Zarah meaning “rising”.

B. The Grace Towards Judah’s Seed (Matt. 1:3)

We read this sordid scandal and ask, “what good could God possibly bring out of a mess like this?” The amazing, abounding grace of God is seen in the fact:

1. Pharez became a part of the lineage of Christ (Matt. 1:3; Luke 3:33). In fact, there are four women mentioned by name in Christ’s genealogy.
 - a. Tamar (Matt. 1:3).
 - b. Rahab (Matt. 1:5; Josh. 2, 6). Rahab was a harlot and yet she became a believer in the One True God of Israel, was spared in the overthrow of Jericho and married a Jewish man named Salmon and gave birth to Boaz whom we read about in the Book of Ruth. Rahab is even given the high honour by being included by the Holy Spirit in the great catalogue of the heroes of the faith in the New Testament (Heb. 11:31).
 - c. Ruth (Matt. 1:5). Ruth was a woman of upright character but she was a Moabite and therefore a Gentile.
 - d. Bathsheba (Matt. 1:6). Bathsheba committed adultery with king David.
 - e. Note: In no way is God’s Word glorifying or encouraging sin but we see the demonstration of the truth of Romans 5:20 “...But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” We live in a world full of brokenness because of sin. The grace of God in salvation is the only answer! Only God has the power to take the broken pieces of our sinful lives and make something out of us for His honour and glory.
2. Christ is called “the lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev. 5:5).
3. Griffith Thomas writes, “It is simply astonishing that God could take up the threads of this very tangled skein, and weave them into His own pattern. First of all, He dealt with Judah, and we know how great was the transformation of his character. And then, greatest marvel of all, God permitted the human descent of the Messiah to come not only from Judah, but even from Tamar. “It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah” (Heb. 7:14), and “Judah begat Pharez and Zarah of Tamar” (Matt. 1:3). No man could have done such a thing. Only Divine grace could dare to take up these sorry elements of human life and use them for its own blessed purpose. There is nothing more marvellous than the power and possibilities of grace. Grace forgives, uplifts, transmutes, transforms, and then uses for its own glory...While it is eternally true that what is done can never be undone, it is equally true that what has been broken can be mended, and the glory of grace is its power to heal broken hearts and mend broken lives. While life can never be as though sin had not been committed, yet the alchemy of grace has wonderful transforming power. Nature knows nothing of this, and can only tell of law broken and penalty exacted. But the Gospel comes to hearts broken by sin and despairing of redemption, and tells of pardon, peace and purity, in the blessed healing and transforming influences of Divine mercy, love and grace.”

Conclusion: Have you experienced God’s saving grace?

Joseph Passes His Greatest Test

Joseph's victory over Potiphar's wife

Text: Genesis 39:1-12

Introduction:

1. Context: Judah's moral impurity is documented in Gen. 38, preceding the account of Joseph's purity in Gen. 39. It appears the Holy Spirit orders the narrative this way to show the contrast between Judah and Joseph.
2. Joseph was 30 years old when he was elevated to ruler of Egypt by Pharaoh (Gen. 41:46). It was two years prior to that point that he had helped the butler and baker interpret their dreams in prison (41:1). Assuming Joseph had already been in prison for approx. 1-2 years, this would make him around 26 or 27 at the time of this temptation.
3. Concerning Joseph's life, Griffith Thomas writes, "Each scene in the record of Joseph's life reveals some distinctive trait of character elicited by means of a crisis."
4. This chapter records what would arguably be the greatest test of Joseph's life, a temptation that would test the very depth of his walk with God and the moral fabric of his inner life. Judah, under much less difficult conditions, succumbed quickly to moral seduction (Gen. 38). In this lesson we want to look at how Joseph came out the other side of this temptation victorious, winning the battle with the strange woman (Prov. 7:26).
5. We will study the account under **3 headings**.

I. **JOSEPH'S TESTIMONY IN POTIPHAR'S HOUSE (VS. 1-6)**

We note several truths about this:

A. **God's Providence in Joseph's Life (Vs. 1)**

1. Like every other aspect of Joseph's life, we again see God's hand of Providence directing him in Egypt. Out of all the people who could have purchased Joseph, he was purchased by Potiphar, one of Pharaoh's high-ranking officials.
2. Potiphar was captain of Pharaoh's personal bodyguard. He also oversaw a special prison for political prisoners where Joseph would later be incarcerated (40:3).

B. **God's Presence in Joseph's Life (Vs. 2-3)**

1. The reality of God's presence (Vs. 2a)
 - a. What a comfort this must have been for Joseph to be consciously aware of God's presence with him in the midst of this very difficult trial. In coming to Egypt, Joseph had lost so much but he had not lost the presence of God!

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- b. We are reminded of the truth of God's promise to us as His children in Hebrews 13:5 "...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."
 - c. The truth of God's personal presence is a great comfort in the believer's life, especially in times of trial. The Holy Spirit is called the Comforter (Jn. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7) and He indwells the believer.
2. The results of God's presence (Vs. 2b)
 - a. God's hand was upon Joseph as he went about his duties as Potiphar's slave. God caused him to prosper.
 - b. It is noted that Joseph laboured "in the house of his master the Egyptian". According to the Jamieson-Fausset-Brown commentary, "slaves who had been war captives were generally sent to labour in the field and subjected to hard treatment under the "stick" of taskmasters. But those who were bought for money were employed in domestic purposes."
 3. The recognition of God's presence (Vs. 3)

Joseph's life was a good testimony to his heathen master Potiphar and he recognized:

 - a. The presence of God in Joseph's life.
 - b. The prosperity from God in Joseph's life.
 - c. Note: What kind of testimony are you where you work?
Remember, wherever God has you, you are there first and foremost to be a light by your life and your lips.

C. God's Promotion in Joseph's Life (Vs. 4-6)

1. The responsibilities of Joseph's promotion (Vs. 4, 6)
 - a. The sense is given that over time as Joseph proved himself, Potiphar entrusted more and more responsibility to Joseph to the point where Potiphar only took note of what food he was served. Everything else he left in Joseph's capable hands, knowing he could be trusted and that it would prosper under his management.
 - b. We can see how God was using this time to prepare Joseph for his major life's work. In Potiphar's house, he learnt the Egyptian language and customs. Being a part of a household closely connected to the Pharaoh probably meant he learned much about Pharaoh and how Egypt was governed. But Joseph would need further refining before he would be ready for such an undertaking.
2. The blessings from Joseph's promotion (Vs. 5)
 - a. The statement of God's blessing (Vs. 5a). God blessed Potiphar because of Joseph. How the majority have little idea how much they owe blessings to the minority. The presence of God's

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people in a business and a nation often brings blessing. To Potiphar's credit, he recognised it!

- b. The scope of God's blessing (Vs. 5b). To highlight the magnitude of God's blessing upon Potiphar because of Joseph the Bible notes that "the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field."

II. JOSEPH'S TEMPTATION IN POTIPHAR'S HOUSE (Vs. 6B-7, 10-12)

We can observe six truths concerning Joseph's temptation which will help us understand how temptation tends to operate in our lives:

A. The Temptress in the Temptation (Vs. 6b-7)

1. She lusted after Joseph (Vs. 6b-7a)
 - a. It is noted that Joseph was a "goodly person and well favoured". The same description is used of Joseph's mother Rachel (Gen. 29:17). Evidently, he inherited his mother's stunning looks, albeit in a masculine version.
 - b. In the process of time, Potiphar's wife started to notice Joseph as he rose through the ranks in the household. Note the time reference – "And it came to pass after these things". This temptation came to Joseph during a time of **success**. There are temptations that come both in times of **sorrow** and in times of **success**.
 - c. Joseph had faced the pit of pain at the hands of his brothers. Now he faced an even more dangerous pit, the pit of pleasure. Proverbs 23:27 "For a whore *is* a deep ditch; and a strange woman *is* a narrow pit."
2. She sought to lure Joseph (Vs. 7b)

B. The Seductiveness of the Temptation (Vs. 7)

1. It appealed to a powerful, natural God-given drive. The one flesh union between a man and a woman was created by God and is not sinful so long as it is entered only within the confines of biblical marriage (Gen. 1:31) "Impurity is the using of a perfectly proper, holy function in a way not intended." (S.D. Gordan) Temptation simply tries to get us to fulfil an appetite, which in itself is not sinful, in an ungodly and unlawful way.
2. It appealed to the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes (1 John. 2:16). Temptation looks attractive and appealing. Satan is very good at making sin look glossy and glamorous!
 - a. Archaeological discoveries¹ reveal that the Egyptian women were devoted to external appearance, physical beauty and sex appeal. The women, at least high society women, were devoted

¹ Information from David Cloud's course, Bible Times and Ancient Kingdoms, PowerPoint set 10, Egypt.

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to cosmetics. Archaeologists have discovered mirrors, perfume and lotion bottles, and cosmetic containers. They have discovered containers and applicators for kohl, an ancient eye cosmetic used to highlight their eyes with black to make them more alluring and attractive (used in a similar fashion to modern eye shadow and mascara). The Bible referred to it as “painting the eyes” (Ez. 23:40) and it was the practice of the harlots of that time.

- b. There was jewellery for the neck, arms, hands, ankles, feet and ears.
 - c. There were revealing, tight clothing styles. A large number of the statues and paintings cannot be reproduced in a Christian publication because of the immodesty.
3. It appealed to the pride of life (1 John 2:16). To be propositioned by a woman of such high standing would be flattering to Joseph’s ego since his good looks and poise as an individual were the cause of his mistress’ infatuation with him (Vs. 6).
 4. An astute writer warns, “It is too little observed, and especially by young men who have most need to observe it, that in such temptations it is not only the sensual that needs to be guarded against, but also two much deeper lying tendencies – the craving for loving recognition, and the desire to respond to the feminine love for admiration and devotion...a large proportion of misery is due to a kind of uncontrolled and mistaken chivalry.” (Marcus Dods)

C. The Forwardness of the Temptation (Vs. 7)

1. Mrs Potiphar was bold and unashamed in her approach to Joseph. This is not a quality of a woman of character or even a natural trait of womankind.
2. Immorality was rife and culturally acceptable in Egypt.
 - a. Egyptian paintings portray a nation of adulterers (Berg). Keil and others have pointed out that Egyptian women were noted for their lascivious and unfaithful ways.
 - b. We get a hint at the sort of sensual sins which were prevalent in Egypt from God’s instructions to Israel in Lev. 18 – “After **the doings of the land of Egypt**, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do...” (Vs. 3) The catalogue of sexual sins includes incest (Vs. 6-18), adultery (Vs. 20), sodomy (Vs. 22) and bestiality (Vs. 23).
3. We are also living in a day when there is no shame in this area. We are bombarded with an in your face, bold invitation to immorality. Men are pressured to be playboys and women are pressured to lower themselves to the level of a skank on the street. In fact, the sordid sins of the flesh are now being aggressively promoted to children!

D. The Relentlessness of the Temptation (Vs. 10)

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1. She spoke to Joseph “**day by day**”. This temptation wasn’t just a once off, it came again and again and again over a period of time. How long this persisted for we are not told but some Hebrew commentators from the first and second centuries suggest this went on for a year according to oral tradition (Jim Berg sermon). Each morning when Joseph got up, he would be conscious that he would likely face the same temptation again that day.
2. It was persistent and relentless. This is the nature of temptation. Wholesome opportunity often only knocks on our life’s door once but temptation pounds it repeatedly.
3. Luke 4:13 “And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him **for a season.**”
4. “For in that he himself hath **suffered being tempted**, he is able to succour them that are tempted.” (Heb. 2:18)

E. The Secretiveness of the Temptation (Vs. 11)

- a. Potiphar’s wife made her boldest move when no one was around. It is probable that Mrs Potiphar had calculated and planned this. She was determined to get Joseph. Proverbs warns, “...the adulteress will hunt for the precious life.” (Prov. 6:26)
- b. Sin of this nature thrives in an environment of secrecy and anonymity. Today the digital Potiphar’s wife (the digital strange woman) has found her way into the rooms of many Christian homes. It takes place so easily and privately but it is DESAMATING Christian men on an alarming scale and sadly today, even Christian women.

F. The Forcefulness of the Temptation (Vs. 12)

1. Potiphar’s wife now takes things to the next level. Up until now, words hadn’t worked with Joseph. Now she gets close to Joseph and physically grabs a hold of him, hoping to stir his passions and overcome any last resistance he might have to her advances. Matthew Poole labels her “the shameless hussy”.
2. The devil, sin and temptation are not half hearted in their attempts to bring a believer down! This was a powerful temptation and could only be defeated by spiritual power from God.

III. JOSEPH’S TRIUMPH IN POTIPHAR’S HOUSE (VS. 8-12)

The odds were stacked against Joseph but he came out victorious! What was the secret to his victory?

A. He Refused the Temptation (Vs. 8-10)

Joseph could have rationalized/excused this sin in multiple ways but he did not! There were any number of excuses he could have used. For example:

- He could have used his older brothers’ bad example as an excuse.

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- He could have used his trial as an excuse. E.g., “I deserve this after all I have been through”. If Joseph had been bitter, he would have fallen to this temptation!
 - He could have used Egyptian culture as an excuse. E.g., affairs like this are accepted in Egypt. Joseph did not get his morals from Egyptian popular culture but from his knowledge of the Holy Character of God Almighty.
 - He could have used the excuse that no one would ever find out. After all, here he was alone as a Hebrew in the capital of the most powerful nation on earth a long way from home and family. Who would ever know?
1. The Perspective (reasons) behind his refusal (Vs. 8-9)
- Joseph’s reply to Mrs Potiphar’s advances gives us a window into Joseph’s heart, his inner thoughts and the godly convictions that kept him from yielding to this sin.
- a. Joseph believed in personal honesty and integrity.
 - i. He was governed by a sense of responsibility despite the fact he wasn’t being watched. His actions were governed by higher motives than the fear of being caught.
 - ii. “We tend to do what’s inspected, not what’s expected.”
 - b. Joseph believed in the sanctity of the marriage bond.
 - i. Remember that Joseph didn’t have a copy of the 10 commandments or even the Book of Genesis!
 - ii. Joseph had the light of the creation account (orally taught) and the light of a conscience sharpened by his close walk with God.
 - c. Joseph feared God and saw sin from His perspective.
 - i. “great wickedness” = he recognized the magnitude of this sin. A sin of this nature is in the category of a ‘great’ sin in the eyes of God. See 1 Cor. 6:13-20; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3-8. Joseph did not allow his morality to be shaped by the culture of his day or the bad example of his siblings (e.g., Gen. 38).
 - ii. “sin against God” = he recognized that sin is ultimately against God. Joseph was gripped by the fear of God. Not a fear like that of a pagan deity, but a sense of awe, respect, and honour for the God He knew, loved and served. **This was the highest motivation for Joseph above all else.**
 - iii. “He who has learned to call the sin to which he is tempted, “This great wickedness,” has already won half the battle.” (J.R. Bailey)
 - iv. Illustration: Teenage girl invited by friends to a dance.
2. The Persistence of his refusal (Vs. 10a)

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- a. Joseph did not meet the repeated attempts of temptation with a passive, half-hearted refusal. Fierce temptation must be met with fierce resistance! No doublemindedness!
 - b. Joseph was like Daniel who "...**purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself...**" (Dan. 1:8)
3. The Precaution of his refusal (Vs. 10b)
- a. Joseph took steps to try and avoid being with Mrs Potiphar – "or to be with her". As a slave, he could not always avoid her but he did so as much as was possible.
 - b. What wisdom! Instead of hanging around destructive sources of temptation, try and avoid them! If you know certain sections of the mall are going to be a source of destructive temptation then stay away from them! If your phone is becoming a source of temptation then work out a system to avoid those temptations!
 - c. Proverbs 4:14-15 "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil *men*. **Avoid it**, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."
 - d. Rather than avoiding the strange woman, the foolish young man of Proverbs 7 "passed through the street near her corner; and he went the way to her house, In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night: And behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart." (See Vs. 7-10).
4. The Power behind his refusal (Vs. 2, 3, 21). God's hand was upon Joseph and Joseph was clearly a man who walked with God. Joseph drew on the power of God to resist this temptation.

B. He Ran from the Temptation (Vs. 11-12)

"When Joseph was faced with her "crowning attempt" he did the best and only possible thing he could do, he fled and got him out. Flight is the only safety from certain forms of temptation. Some temptations we resist by meeting them, but we can only resist others by flight. Safety is found in putting distance between us and our foe, and there is not only nothing ignoble in such flight, but on the contrary, it is the highest and truest form of virtue." (Griffith Thomas)

1. The sacrifice in his retreat – "he left his garment in her hand" "He lost his coat but he didn't lose his character". It was better for Joseph to suffer in prison than to lose his purity! We need to get our priorities right! There are some things worth losing to keep your purity!
2. The speed of his retreat – "and fled, and got him out."
 - a. Joseph lived out the truth of 2 Tim. 2:22 "**Flee also youthful lusts**: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart:" This was not passive response to temptation.

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- b. Joseph took the way of escape God provided. 1 Cor. 10:13
“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation **also make a way to escape**, that ye may be able to bear it.”
- c. “It is dangerous to drive restive horses near the edge of a precipice; it is dangerous to bring gunpowder near the fire; it is dangerous to come near an adder’s fang; and it is equally so with these fallen natures of ours to approach temptation. Therefore, ‘avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away’ (Prov. 4:15)” (William M. Taylor).
- d. One of the best weapons against temptation is to **GET OUT!**

When temptation comes your way, get out! When the band begins to play, then get out! When at work the party starts, grab your Bible and depart, God will bless you for opting out but get out! When immodesty you see, turn your head in victory, trust the Lord for purity and get out! When at school the swearing starts and dirty stories assail your heart, end the chat and go out back, just get out! When she comes with wily tongue, saying let’s go and have some fun, say a prayer, turn and run and get out! When he says his love for you means to wait, he will not do, tell him no and turn and go and get out!

A useful tool a smartphone may be but unguarded it feeds iniquity, choose the right and make it tight, please get out! Television your life will ruin with its promotion of perversion, make your home a holy haven and get it out! The internet can be a tool, but it is also a porn-filled pool, hence the need to be accountable, so get sin out!

Joseph’s life to us doth speak, inspiring us sin to defeat; from temptation we must flee, this is how God gives victory. So, learn this lesson tried and true, it will work for you to, learn to run and to retreat and get out, get out, get out!

Conclusion:

1. Christ can redeem and rescue you from a sinful, immoral lifestyle. *“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”* (1 Cor. 6:9-11)
2. Christ can cleanse you as a Christian if you, like David have fallen morally. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9; Psalm 51)
3. Challenge to young people: Resolve before the Lord that with his help you will keep yourself pure for the spouse of God’s choosing.
4. Challenge to married couples: Guard your marriage!
5. Challenge to parents: Be aware of what your young people are facing and help eliminate safe spaces for sin and temptation in their lives.

Joseph in Prison

Joseph is wronged for doing right!

Text: Genesis 39:13-40:23

Introduction:

1. In our last message we studied Joseph's courageous stand against the advances of Mrs Potiphar. Now we will see how suffers wrong for that godly stand. You can get into a LOT of trouble for doing what's right! God's hand of Providence is again seen over what transpires as Joseph is further prepared by God for his main life's work.
2. Each phase in Joseph's life formed another link in the chain of God's Providence.
 - Concerning Joseph's life, Griffith Thomas writes, "The outstanding feature of Joseph's life was faithful loyalty to God under all circumstances. He carried his convictions with him and lived them out...Joseph never compromised his position, and as a consequence he never lost spiritual power or weakened his witness for God."
3. We will study the account under **3 headings**.

I. **THE ACCUSATION LEADING TO PRISON (VS. 13-20)**

Joseph is falsely accused with total lies from Mrs. Potiphar. In fact, she was the one guilty of the very things she accused Joseph of! How the devil loves to use the weapon of false accusation against the godly.

A. The Slander against Joseph (Vs. 13-18)

1. The Motivation behind her Slander (Vs. 13)
 - a. The response of Potiphar's wife is a reminder that there is a world of difference between lust and genuine love. Selfish lust, when denied fulfillment as it was here with Joseph, quickly turns to hatred and a spirit of revenge. She now determines to do all in her power to destroy this godly young man.
 - b. Illustration: Amon and Tamar – 2 Samuel 13:15 "Then Amnon **hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he had loved her.** And Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone."
 - c. Joseph lost a lot for his godly stand but he would have lost a whole lot more if he had said yes to temptation! What blessings God had in store for Joseph including a dear lady named Asenath who would become his wife.
2. The Men in her Slander (Vs. 14-18)
 1. She lied to the household (Vs. 13-15)
 - a. She slandered her husband – "See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us". Potiphar's wife was a

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calculating woman. Her plan was to get the other men of the household on her side and stirred up against both Potiphar and Joseph. These men were probably already jealous of this Hebrew man who had been promoted above them as overseer and would be happy to see him brought down.

- b. She slandered Joseph
 - i. She accused him of trying to force her when in actual fact she had tried to force him! The word 'mock' is the same Hebrew word translated 'sporting' in Genesis 26:8 in reference to Isaac and Rebekah.
 - ii. She falsely claimed that she had cried out for help and that Joseph had fled leaving his garment with her. In reality, she had grabbed hold of his garment and tried to seduce him and the only way he could get away was to leave it in her hand. She now uses it as false evidence against him. This is the second time a coat had been unjustly taken from Joseph in order to mislead others about him.
2. She lied to her Husband (Vs. 16-18)
 - a. There is a tone of accusation against her husband – "The Hebrew servant, which thou hast brought unto us". Clearly her marriage was not a happy one!
 - b. She repeats her tapestry of lies to Potiphar. She may have secretly hoped that he would execute Joseph since that was an accepted punishment for a crime of this nature, especially from a slave.

B. The Sentence against Joseph (Vs. 19-20)

1. Potiphar's anger (Vs. 19)
 - a. Potiphar anger is kindled upon hearing his wife's words.
 - b. We should not that it doesn't say his anger was kindled against Joseph. As the events unfold, it appears that Potiphar may have been somewhat in doubt of what his wife was claiming.
 - i. He did not execute Joseph which he could easily have done.
 - ii. He put Joseph into the royal prison. The prison was a roundhouse, from the form of its construction, usually attached to the dwelling of such an officer as Potiphar. It was partly a subterranean dungeon (Gen. 41:14), though the brick-built walls rose considerably above the surface of the ground, and were surmounted by a vaulted roof somewhat in the form of an inverted bowl. (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown commentary)
 - iii. He put the chief Butler and Baker under Joseph's care (Compare 39:1 and 40:4).

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- iv. Barnhouse said, "If Potiphar had really believed his wife, Joseph would probably have been tortured to death."
Leupold said, "The customary punishment for adultery was extreme. To be cast into a prison was a relatively light penalty."
2. Potiphar's action (Vs. 20)
 - a. Potiphar puts Joseph into the prison of which he was personally in charge (40:3-4).
 - b. Even if Potiphar doubted his wife's claims (we don't know for sure), he could not side with a slave over his wife. Further, she had already waged an effective smear campaign against Joseph to the rest of the men in the household, increasing the pressure on Potiphar to act.
3. Note: Rewards for doing right are not always immediate. You have to look at the long-term perspective! Blessing and reward were coming for Joseph but he would have to endure suffering for righteousness's sake first. Matthew 5:10-12 "Blessed *are* they which are persecuted **for righteousness' sake**: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, **for my sake**. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: **for great is your reward in heaven**: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."
4. Note: Nothing is recorded as far as a response from Joseph is concerned. Joseph pictures the Lord Jesus in his silence in the face of these accusations. Isaiah 53:7 "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

II. THE CONSOLATION IN PRISON (VS. 21-23)

God's hand was upon Joseph in prison and he experienced the comfort of:

A. The Presence of God (Vs. 21a)

1. Joseph suffered greatly in this situation.
 - a. He suffered the injury of injustice. Imagine what this must have been like for Joseph. He had acted with the utmost integrity and purity in the situation and yet was punished as if he had been guilty. One of his main stated reasons for refusing this hussy's advances was because of his loyalty and sense of responsibility to Potiphar his master (Vs.8-9). Now that very man he had done the right thing by throws him in prison, probably for his own political expediency!

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- b. He suffered the injury of imprisonment. Joseph was treated like any other prisoner initially. We get some insight into his sufferings from Psalm 105:17-18 “He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant: Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:” Joseph was hurt for being holy!
- 2. Joseph sensed the Lord’s presence in this situation.
 - a. God is everywhere present but he is present with his children in a special sense. Joseph lost much at this time but no one could rob him of the presence of his God.
 - b. It was the presence and power of God that helped Joseph become better rather than bitter when he suffered. Clearly Joseph was a man of faith who walked closely with His God during this time. Three times it is stated in this chapter that the Lord was “with Joseph” (Vs. 2, 21 & 23).
 - c. Joseph had known the presence of God when he was sold into slavery (Vs. 2). No doubt the fact he had proved the faithfulness of God during his first major trial gave him faith to trust God for this trial also.
 - d. God not only was “with Joseph” but also “shewed him mercy”. God in His mercy preserved Joseph from what could have been a much worse outcome.
 - e. How can you have the presence of God in your life? Like Joseph, you need to have a relationship with God. You need to be **born again** and **blood washed**.

B. The Promotion of God (Vs. 21b-23)

- 1. God gave him favour with the keeper of the prison (Vs. 21-23a)
 - a. Joseph was a man of exceptional gifts and talents but his promotion was not first and foremost because of that. It was the Lord’s doing.
 - b. We note a similar pattern with each promotion in Joseph’s life where he becomes second in command and is entrusted with much authority and responsibility.
 - c. It was good of the Lord to give Joseph a sphere of service in his imprisonment as it would give him a focus in his trial. While in some trials, one may have to relinquish some ministry responsibilities, it is wise to seek to continue in Christian service as God allows. It is therapeutic to get your mind off yourself and to serve the Lord by serving others in your trial.
- 2. God blessed the labours of Joseph’s hands (Vs. 23a). God made what Joseph did “to prosper”.

III. THE PREPARATION OF PRISON (VS. 21-23; 40:1-23)

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This period in Joseph's life was another period of Divine preparation. Nothing is wasted in God's economy. Joseph was sold into slavery at the age of 17 his main life's ministry didn't commence until he turned 30. He needed all 13 years of preparation in God's school! Take note of:

A. The Preparation of Joseph's Gifts

God was further refining and preparing Joseph in the gifts He had given him; the gifts that he would exercise for his main life's work as second in command to Pharaoh. God was developing these gifts in a humble context where Joseph would not be tempted to get puffed up.

1. The gift of Administration (Vs. 22-23)

Joseph clearly had the gift of organisation or 'ruler' to use the language of Romans 12:8 "...he that ruleth, with diligence". God was developing Joseph to be able to handle a large level of responsibility. Joseph went through three periods of preparation before he would finally be 2IC to Pharaoh.

- a. As overseer of his father's flock (Gen. 37:2). Remember, Joseph held the position of firstborn.
- b. As overseer of Potiphar's house (Gen. 39:4-6).
- c. As overseer of the prison (Gen. 39:21-23).

2. The gift of Interpretation (40:1-23)

Divine dreams are a prominent feature of Joseph's life. In fact, dreams feature three times in Joseph's life and each time it was at a critical juncture in his life. Each time the dreams also came in pairs. This chapter deals with the dreams of the chief Butler and Baker which would form another important link in the chain of God's Providence.

a. The context of the dreams (Vs. 1-8)

- i. Their imprisonment (Vs. 1-4). The chief butler and chief baker offended Pharaoh in some way and he put them into the prison under Potiphar's charge, the same prison where Joseph was incarcerated. We see the Providential Hand of God in this as the Butler would become a key link in Joseph's life in the near future. The captain of the guard (Potiphar. See 39:1) puts them under Joseph's care. Again, this raises a very strong question mark over whether Potiphar really believed Joseph to be guilty. Whatever the case may be, he still saw his value as a gifted administrator. It is noted that Joseph "served them". Note Joseph's servant's attitude in the midst of his trial.
- ii. Their dreams (Vs. 5-8). God gave both of these men a dream in one night. They sensed that there was something significant about the dreams and yet had no way of knowing the interpretation. Joseph came in to check on them in the morning and discerned the sorrow

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on their countenances and inquired as to the reason behind their sadness. Joseph's own trials and sufferings had made him compassionate towards the misfortune and sorrow of others.

- b. The content of their dreams (Vs. 9-19)
 - i. The Butler's dream and interpretation (Vs. 9-15). The Butler had dreamed of a grape vine with here branches. In his dream he saw the branches blossom and clusters of ripe grapes form. Pharaoh's cup was in his hand and he squeezed the juice from the grapes into the cup and gave it to Pharaoh. Joseph was enabled of God to see the interpretation of the dream. The three branches represented three days and in three days Pharaoh would restore him to his former position as chief Butler. Joseph then appeals to the Butler to make mention him before Pharaoh so he could be released from prison. We get another window into Joseph's heart and personal thoughts. He was very aware of the injustice of his situation and struggled with it.
 - ii. The Baker's dream and interpretation (Vs. 16-19). Seeing that the interpretation of the Butler's dream had been a positive one, the Baker proceeds to tell Joseph his dream. In his dream he was carrying three white baskets on his head and in the topmost basked there were various baked goods for Pharaoh. However, the birds were swooping down and eating the them out of the basket. This dream had a sad and difficult interpretation but Joseph was faithful to communicate the Divine message all the same.
- c. The carrying out of the dreams (Vs. 20-23)
 - i. God's Word through Joseph's interpretation of these two dreams was fulfilled exactly.
 - ii. The butler forgot Joseph and Joseph would spend another 2 full years in prison before his exaltation. On the human level we are reminded of the tendency of human nature to neglect thankfulness even when we have been the recipients of great kindness in the midst of suffering. On the Divine side, we see the Providence of God again at work. God, in His infinite wisdom knew that Joseph would need another two years of waiting before he was exalted to the high position of ruler over Egypt.
 - iii. Joseph would have been 28 years at this time (See Gen. 41:46).

B. The Preparation of Joseph's Character

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Through it all, we can see that God was using these trials in Joseph's life to shape and mould him into a useable vessel for His glory. God was growing Joseph through these trials in key areas. There was growth in the area of:

1. **Faith** – Joseph was proving God's faithfulness in his life despite the bleakness of the situation. He was learning to trust God to fulfill His promises in His way and in His timing. He was learning that God's grace was sufficient. Illustration: "In a certain coal-mining neighbourhood, where almost everything was covered with coal-dust, there was a beautiful white flower perfectly free from dust. When someone who was strange to the place remarked that the owner must take very great care of the flower to prevent it from being covered with coal-dust, another who was standing by threw over the flower some dust which at once fell off, leaving the whiteness and beauty as exquisite as ever. The explanation was that the flower had on it what might be called an enamel which enabled it to receive the dust and throw it off without feeling anything of the effects. So, it was with Joseph. His character was covered with the enamel of Divine grace, and all these sorrows and troubles came upon him and left him untouched except for the increased strength and power that came to him from God." (Thomas)
2. **Humility** – God allowed Joseph two seasons of great humiliation. The first was when he was sold into slavery by his brothers and he fell from the lofty position in the family. The second was the incident with Potiphar's wife where he was unjustly accused and imprisoned. We get a sense that God's work in this area went deep with Joseph. Despite the fact he was elevated at the age of 30 to the high position of second in command to Pharaoh of the mighty land of Egypt, he did not get puffed up. In fact, a spirit of humility pervades the life of Joseph from the time he first appears before Pharaoh (Gen. 41:16) till the end of his life (Gen. 50:20).
3. **Patience** – thirteen long years would pass from the time Joseph was 17 till the time he turned 30 before he would be ready for the main life's work God had in store for him. Joseph may have felt himself ready for the fulfillment of the Divine dreams at 17 but God in His wisdom knew that would have been disastrous for Joseph. Years of obscurity are important years of preparation for public ministry. God has a purpose in them.
 - a. Romans 5:3-5 "And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh **patience**; And **patience**, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

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- b. James 1:2-4 “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh **patience**. But let **patience** have *her* perfect work, that ye may be **perfect** and **entire**, wanting nothing.”
- c. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones used to say, “It’s tragic when a person succeeds before he is ready for it.”
- d. John Butler writes, “Waiting patiently in lowly service purifies our passions and provides needed preparation for higher service. Unless we have passion for lowly service and patience for lofty service, we will not do the former nor get to do the latter.”
- e. Griffith Thomas writes, “God is never before His time but He is never behind. The clock of Divine providence keeps strict time and has never been known to vary either in one direction or the other.”

Conclusion: The prison was a part of what God used to fit Joseph for his life’s work. Joseph was in God’s school! “Training, whether physical or moral, must necessarily be attended with hardship; and those whom God uses most have to be trained in the hardest schools.” (Thomas)

Pain’s furnace heat within me quivers, God’s breath upon the flame doth blow,

And all my heart in anguish shivers, And trembles at the fiery glow.

And yet I whisper, ‘As God will!’ And in His hottest fire hold still.

He comes and lays my heart, all heated, On the hard anvil, minded so

Into His own fair shape to beat it, with his great hammer, blow on blow!

And yet I whisper, ‘As God will!’ And at His heaviest blows hold still.

He takes my softened heart, and beats it; The sparks fly off at every blow.

He turns it o’er and o’er and heats it, and lets it cool, and makes it glow.

And yet I whisper, ‘As God will!’ And in His mighty hand hold still.

Why should I murmur? For the sorrow thus only long-lived would be;

Its end may come, and will, tomorrow, When God has done His work in me.

So I say, trusting, ‘As God will!’ And, trusting to the end, hold still.

He kindles, for my profit purely, afflictions fiery, glowing brand;

And all His heaviest blows are surely, inflicted by a Master hand.

So I say, praying, ‘As God will!’ And hope in Him, and suffer still.”

From the Prison to the Palace

Joseph's Faithfulness is Rewarded

Text: Genesis 41:1-52

Introduction:

1. In this chapter, Joseph's time in prison comes to a close and he is launched out into his main life's work. The Divine dreams God had given Joseph those 13 years earlier begin to be fulfilled as he goes from Potiphar's prison to Pharaoh's palace in one day. Joseph needed every year of preparation in God's school for the work that was about to open before him. Nothing was wasted!
2. Little did Joseph know when he woke up that morning that his life was about to be swept up in the next phase of God's Divine plan for his life. The tide was about to turn. Joseph had suffered much in the 13 years that had transpired since he was sold into slavery by his brothers. God was now going to reward Joseph abundantly for His faith and steadfastness.
3. Again, this key juncture in Joseph's life would hinge on a pair of dreams. We will study this account under three headings.

I. THE REVELATIONS IN PHARAOH'S DREAM (VS. 1-8)

Pharaoh now has two significant dreams that would set in motion the next phase of God's plan for Joseph. Note several points about Pharaoh's dreams.

A. The Timing of the Dreams (Vs. 1)

1. The dreams came to Pharaoh a full two years after the incident involving the Butler and Baker (Gen. 40). This represented a further period of waiting for Joseph. In the previous chapter, while very human and understandable, we do get a hint of self-vindication in Joseph. The drive to vindicate ourselves is so strong and even the most spiritual people struggle deeply with injustice, especially false accusation. It takes real grace to trust and wait and leave your reputation in the hands of God.
2. Remember! Seasons of waiting in the will of God are not wasted. They are very necessary seasons of preparation. By the time this season comes to an end and Joseph stands before Pharaoh, there is not a hint of self-vindication or self-promotion; only humility and a concern for the glory of God.
3. Psalm 27:14 exhort us, "**Wait on the LORD**: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: **wait, I say, on the LORD.**"

B. The Theme of the Dreams (Vs. 2-7)

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1. Dream # 1: The cow dream (Vs. 2-4). In this dream, Pharaoh stands by the Nile River and sees seven plump, healthy cows come out of the river and feed in the meadow. They are followed by seven thin, gaunt cows which also come out of the river and stand by the seven fat cows. Then a startling thing happens. The ghastly looking, thin cows each up the seven fat cows. Then Pharaoh wakes up. "The cows in the dream would have gotten Pharaoh's attention since the cow was the emblem of Isis, the revered Egyptian goddess of fertility. In the Egyptian "Book of the Dead," the chief Scripture of ancient Egypt, the god of vegetation and the nether world, Osiris, is represented as a great bull accompanied by seven cows." (Morris)
2. Dream # 2: The corn dream (Vs. 5-7). In this dream Pharaoh sees a seven headed stalk of grain grow up, healthy and full bodied. Then a thin, seven headed stalk springs up that has been blasted by the bitterly hot, East winds of the desert wilderness. Then the same startling phenomenon from the last dream is repeated. The thin ears of grain devour the healthy ears of grain. Pharaoh wakes up for the second time.

C. The Troubling over the Dreams (Vs. 8)

1. When the morning came, Pharaoh could not shake of the dreams of the night before. He sensed in his spirit that there was some ominous meaning in the dreams.
2. Pharaoh summons the magicians of Egypt to interpret his dreams. The word 'magician' literally means 'horoscopist' (as drawing magical lines or circles) (Strong's concordance). These magicians may have had satanic powers (E.g., Ex. 7:10-12,22; 8:7) and knowledge of sorcery but they were powerless to interpret Pharaohs dreams as they did not come from Satan but from God Almighty. Only God truly knows the future. If you want to find about the future, read the Bible!
3. Note: Magicians, ancient or modern, may have access to dark, occultic powers, but they have no power to provide real answers to life's great spiritual questions and needs. They are powerless to understand Divine truth with their darkened hearts and minds. Like Pharaoh, so many go to the wrong people to try and get help! In our day, many are turning to witchcraft to try and find hope for their troubled and broken lives. Satan as an angel of light beckons them on, promising power and freedom but in time they find themselves in more bondage than ever.
4. You don't need a magician, you need the Messiah Jesus Christ; you don't need a sorcerer, you need the Saviour; you don't need a witch, you need the Word of the Living God; you don't need a wedgy board, you need the Bible and the blood of Christ; you don't

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need tarot cards but the truth; you don't need horoscopes but the Holy Spirit; you don't need star signs, you need salvation from sin; you don't need palm reading, you need powerful redemption; you don't need luck, you need the Lord; you don't need the devil, you need deliverance; you don't need the new age, you need the new birth; you don't need crystals, you need Christ!

II. THE INTERPRETATION OF PHARAOH'S DREAM (VS. 9-32)

A. The Memory of the Interpreter (Vs. 9-13)

1. The Butler who met Joseph in prison two years earlier, now forms another important link in the chain of God's Providence for Joseph's life.
2. The Butler recounts his experience with Joseph in the prison and the accuracy of his interpretation. Clearly this impressed Pharaoh as he would have no doubt remembered those events two years earlier involving two of his highest-ranking officials.

B. The Meekness of the Interpreter (Vs. 14-16)

1. Joseph is summoned '**hastily**' out of the dungeon. The long period of waiting in prison was over and he literally went from the prison to the palace in a single day. There are seasons of waiting on the Lord but when it's the Lord's timing for you to take the next step, things can begin moving very quickly.
2. Joseph now stands before the powerful monarch of Egypt. Pharaoh tells Joseph that he has heard of his reputation as an interpreter of dreams. Joseph's response to Pharaoh is most instructive. There is not a hint of self-promotion, self-vindication or self-love. If Joseph has been self-focused, he could have easily attempted to seize this situation for his own personal gain.
3. But Joseph was **humble** in spirit – "it is not in me" and focused on the glory of His God – "God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." What a contrast Joseph was to the conniving, self-serving magicians of Egypt.
 - a. "Joseph exhibited by this answer a great growth in spiritual maturity since the time of his own dreams back in Canaan. His years of slavery and imprisonment had indeed taught him humility and patience. Instead of calling attention to the failures of the other wise men and stressing his own powers, he acted with utmost courtesy and restraint, and directed all praise to God alone." (Morris)
 - b. "Six traits stand out which constitute him (Joseph) one of the models for all time: integrity, conscientiousness, diligence, nobility, courage, humility. He is one of the all-round, symmetrical characters of the Bible, always ready, ever

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conscientious, never sacrificing principle, faithful and fearless at every crisis.” (Thomas)

4. Joseph was **bold** and **unashamed** to speak of his God before this powerful man. It made no difference to Joseph whether it was a prisoner in the dungeon or the king on the throne, he would speak boldly of his God. There was a risk for Joseph doing this as Pharaoh was a pagan who worshipped the false gods of Egypt. Note how Joseph’s interpretation was laced with references to God (Vs. 25, 28, 32). Some believers are very willing to witness to people of low status but then hold back in the presence of people of power and prestige (e.g., the manager at work, the wealthy business man, the University professor). Psalm 119:46 “I will speak of thy testimonies also **before kings**, and will not be ashamed.”
5. **Joseph Pictures Jesus:** Joseph came to Pharaoh with a word of peace (“an answer of peace”). The Lord Jesus Christ is the “prince of peace” (Is. 9:6), “preached peace” (Eph. 2:17) and paid the price of peace in his own blood – “And, **having made peace** through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven.” (Col. 1:20)

C. The Meaning from the Interpreter (Vs. 17-32)

1. Pharaoh recounts his dreams (Vs. 17-24)
 - a. The cow dream (Vs. 17-21). Pharaoh adds a couple of further impressions from the dream.
 - i. The thin, unhealthy cows in his dream were worse than anything he had ever seen before in Egypt.
 - ii. They did not look any better after they had eaten up the 7 fat cows.
 - b. The corn dream (Vs. 22-24). Pharaoh emphasizes again the fact the magicians could not interpret the dreams.
2. Joseph reveals the dreams (Vs. 25-32)

Joseph now interprets the Divine message God had given through these dreams. He exercises his God-given gift. Joseph explains:

 - a. The dreams contained a unified theme. Joseph repeats this fact twice (Vs. 25 & 26). The same message had simply been communicated twice.
 - b. The seven good cows and the seven good ears represented seven years and the seven thin cows and the seven empty ears represented seven years.
 - c. There would be seven years of great plenty in Egypt (Vs. 29). These would be followed by seven years of very grievous famine (Vs. 30-31).
 - d. The reason God had given Pharaoh the double dream was because:

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- i. The thing was established by God. If God says something once, we should sit up and listen as it will surely come to pass. If God says something twice, it is for our benefit to impress upon our hearts and minds the certainty of what He has said. Repetition equals importance.
- ii. God was going to shortly bring it to pass.
- iii. Note: Joseph had also received 2 dreams back when he was a young 17-year-old. We get a window into Joseph's faith and spiritual understanding here. Even though up until this point in his life, his own dreams had not been fulfilled, he believed God would fulfill His promises.

III. THE EXALTATION AFTER PHARAOH'S DREAM (VS. 33-52)

A. Joseph's Recommendations (Vs. 33-36)

1. Joseph's second major gift now comes to the fore; his gift of administration. God enabled Joseph not only to interpret the meaning of the dream but also gave him the wisdom and foresight to know how to best prepare for what was coming.
2. Remember the big picture. God was going to use Joseph and the nation of Egypt to preserve the Jewish people through this time of famine and fulfill His prophecy to Abraham (Gen. 15:13). God was doing marvellous things in Joseph's life as an individual but his purposes went way beyond just Joseph. God was working for the good of Joseph and thereby, the good of others as well.
3. Joseph recommends the following:
 - a. That a man be sought to oversee the task of preparing. He would need to be a man who was 'discreet' and 'wise'. The word 'discreet' means discerning, "Prudent; wise in avoiding errors or evil, and in selecting the best means to accomplish a purpose; circumspect; cautious; wary; not rash." (Webster 1828) There would be many men who would be needed for this great work but it first needed **a man** who could lead it. God's way is to raise up a man who can lead His work and then provide others to support and follow. "And I sought **for a man** among them" (Ez. 22:30).
 - b. That officers be appointed to collect and store a fifth (20%) of the produce of the land during the seven years of plenty so they would have food for the seven years of famine.
 - c. Note: We don't get the slightest hint that Joseph was suggesting he was the man for the job or that he gave these recommendations with an ulterior motive. He was guileless, honest and unassuming. No doubt Pharaoh was impressed with Joseph's humility, simplicity and integrity.

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B. Joseph's Rewards (Vs. 37-52)

The time had now come where God would abundantly reward Joseph for his steadfastness. We are reminded of the truth of 1 Sam. 2:30 "...but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for **them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed.**" Joseph's reward was threefold. He received:

1. The reward of honour (Vs. 37-44)

Leupold writes, "Only a man like Joseph, schooled by adversity and sorrow, could meet a sudden elevation like this without pride and self-exaltation. His rigorous training enabled him to encounter success without succumbing to its blandishments (allurements)."

a. The presence of God in Joseph's life was recognized (Vs. 37-39). This is a remarkable testimony from the lips of a heathen king. So impressed was he with Joseph's godly life, he

considered Joseph to be a man possessed of the Spirit of God – "Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?" When others see your life, do they see any difference? Do they see Christ in your life?

b. The promotion of God in Joseph's life was realized (Vs. 40-45a)

i. The scope of his rulership – Pharaoh elevated Joseph to the position of second ruler over the entire nation. The level of authority he gave Joseph is highlighted in verse 40, 43b & 44.

ii. The symbols of his rulership. Joseph is given:

1. A royal ring – Pharaoh gives his own signet ring to Joseph. This would give Joseph the authority and ability to make decrees and authorize official documents. Joseph was also given a gold chain to symbolize his position of authority. Apparently, this was a practice in the ancient world as we see the same thing with Daniel (Dan. 5:7, 29).

2. A royal robe – Joseph gets a new coat to symbolise his high position. Joseph's coats make interesting food for thought. He lost his first two coats but now God gives him a royal coat that would not be taken away.

3. A royal ride – Joseph is made to ride in Pharaoh's second chariot in a royal procession of state. Criers when before calling the people to bow the knee to this new ruler of the land. I wonder if Potiphar and his wife were in the crowd that day as Joseph rode past in the royal chariot?!

c. **Joseph pictures Jesus:** Many Bible students again see in this event a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph goes from

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humiliation to exaltation. In like manner, the Lord Jesus Christ “made himself of no reputation”, went through the suffering and humiliation of the cross and then was raised up and exalted by the Father (Phil. 2:5-11 “Let this mind be in you”). To Christ every knee shall bow!

2. The reward of a helpmeet (Vs. 45)
 - a. Pharaoh gives Joseph a new Egyptian name ‘Zaphnathpaaneah’ which is believed to mean “revealer of secrets”. Some say it means “savior of the world”.
 - b. Pharaoh gives Joseph a wife named Asenath. She was the daughter of one of the Egyptian priests named Potipherah (interestingly it is essentially the same name as ‘Potiphar’. The name Potiphar is the abbreviated form).
 - c. You can’t but see the hand of God here. Joseph refused Potiphar’s wife and God rewards him a few years later with the daughter of another Potiphar! There are so many wonderful patterns of God’s Providence in Joseph’s life.
 - d. The timing was of God. Joseph would need a helpmeet as his main life’s work opened before him. There is a certain sweetness that only a lady can bring into a man’s life and no doubt this dear woman was a great comfort to Joseph with all the pain he had endured to date.
 - e. Note: I have no doubt that Joseph led this dear lady to be a worshipper of the One True God of Israel. We have seen from Joseph’s testimony to date that he was willing to refuse the wrong thing even if he paid a heavy price for it and if this lady had been a wicked woman, I am sure Joseph would have said no to her as well.
 - f. **Joseph Pictures Jesus:** We see an interesting picture of Christ here. Joseph takes a Gentile bride. In like manner, the bride of Christ (the church), is largely a Gentile bride.
3. The reward of a heritage (Vs. 50-51)

God gave Joseph two precious sons during the seven years of plenty. The names Joseph gave them provide another window into his heart and his faith in God.

 - a. Manasseh – mean’s “forgetting”. We know this doesn’t mean he mentally forgot what had happened in the past. It means forgetting in connection to the sufferings he had endured. The blessings and joys of God he was experiencing in his life caused the past sorrows to shrink in size and fade in the memory.
 - b. Ephraim – means “fruitful”. God had made Joseph fruitful in the midst of affliction in trial. In fact, it was those very afflictions that made Joseph useable. What a testament to what God can do in such a grievous trial.

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- c. "If the birth of the first son reminded him of the negative side of his life's experiences, enabling him to blot out the memory of the past, the birth of the second son suggested the positive side of his life in the abundant blessing that God had vouchsafed to him. **How beautiful it is when life is interpreted in the light of God's dealings, and when everything, dark or light, has its own Divine significance. Everything in Joseph's experience was illuminated by light from heaven.**" (Thomas)

Conclusion:

1. Joseph suffered much but not nearly as much as the Lord Jesus who died on the cross for your sins. Have you received God's free gift of salvation through Christ?
2. Is there a prominent person in your life you haven't witnessed to yet? Does your manager know you are a Christian or are you more fearful of the potential consequences of telling him/her than being loyal to your Saviour?
3. Are you going through a trial? Trust God for the outcome. 1 Peter 5:6-7
"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."
4. There was a lot at stake in Joseph's life. Imagine the far-reaching consequences if he had not remained steadfast and faithful to God. There is much at stake in your life also! Never underestimate the ripple effect of your decisions for good or evil.

Joseph's Dreams Come True

Text: Genesis 41:53-42:38

Introduction:

1. In this section, the 7-year famine begins and Joseph's 10 older brothers come to Egypt to buy food.
2. At this juncture, it is helpful to remind ourselves of some of the key time markers in Joseph's life.
 - Joseph is 17 when he is sold into slavery by his brothers (Gen. 37:2).
 - Joseph is elevated to ruler of Egypt at the age of 30 (Gen. 41:16).
 - The seven years of plenty have ended and the seven years of drought have commenced (Gen. Gen. 41:53).
 - Joseph reconciles with his brothers during their second visit to Egypt which was at the end of the 2nd year of the 7-year period (Gen. 45:6).
 - Therefore, Joseph would have been approx. 38 when he first saw his brothers (21 years since he was sold) and 39 when reconciliation finally took place (22 years since he was sold).
3. Finally, after over 2 decades of waiting, the time had come for what God had revealed to Joseph through his dreams to be fulfilled. The wheels of Divine justice may turn slowly but they turn surely! In this section we will see God fulfilling His Word and using Joseph to stir his brothers' consciences.
4. We will divide the account before us into **five sections** for our expository study as we follow Joseph's brothers' journey into Egypt and the key events that take place.

I. THE CATALYST FOR THE EGYPT JOURNEY (VS. 41:53-42:5)

The famine was Providentially used of God to set events in motion that would see His Word fulfilled in Joseph's life and ultimately, His chosen people preserved through Joseph in Egypt.

A. The Start of the Famine (Vs. 53-54a)

1. Joseph's prophecy was 100% accurate "according as Joseph had said" (Vs. 54). The seven years of plenty terminated right on time and the seven years of dearth commenced exactly on time. The world may try and guess the future but only the Word of God can predict it with 100% accuracy.
2. **Joseph pictures Jesus:** Joseph predicted a seven-year period of tribulation that would come upon the world in his day. In like manner, Jesus Christ prophesied concerning the future, seven-year period of Great Tribulation that will come upon the whole world in His Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24; Luke 17; Mark 13).

B. The Scope of the Famine (Vs. 54, 56a, 57)

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1. The drought impacted Egypt specifically.
2. The drought impacted the world generally.
 - a. “and the dearth was in all lands” (Vs. 54)
 - b. “And the famine was over all the face of the earth” (Vs. 56)
 - c. “And all countries came into Egypt...to buy corn” (Vs. 57)

C. The Solution to the Famine (Vs. 54b-57)

1. The cry of the people for bread (Vs. 55)
 - a. The people were ‘famished’ because of the famine and cried to Pharaoh for bread.
 - b. Note the emphasis on “bread” in these verses.
 - i. “but in all the land of Egypt there was bread” (Vs. 54)
 - ii. “the people cried to Pharaoh for bread” (Vs. 55)
2. The counsel to the people for bread (Vs. 55b)
 - a. Pharaoh counsel to the famished, needy people was clear, “God unto Joseph”.
 - b. They came and Joseph opened the storehouses and provided what the Egyptians needed. Not only was Joseph the dispenser of life giving, life sustaining grain to Egypt but also to the whole world (Vs. 57).
3. **Joseph pictures Jesus:** Joseph was the only source of life-giving bread for the world at that time. The great need for a drought stricken, needy people was for bread to sustain physical life. They came to Joseph and he satisfied their hunger out of the vast storehouses of grain under his control. What a picture of Christ! Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life and He is the only source of life for sin sick, hungry souls. John 6:35 “And Jesus said unto them, **I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.**” Again, in verse 48 Jesus states, “**I am that bread of life.**” And again, in verse 51, “**I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.**”
4. Challenge: The solution for physical needs that day was “Go to Joseph”. Our message to you today is “**Go to Jesus!**” Only the Lord Jesus can satisfy your hungering heart. Have you been to Christ who has the solution for all your needs, especially the needs of your eternal soul?

D. The Sending because of the Famine (Vs. 1-5)

1. The scene now switches from Joseph in Egypt to Joseph’s family back in Canaan where they too are now feeling the effects of this widespread famine.
2. Jacob hears that corn is available in Egypt and exhorts his sons to go and purchase some for their survival. Jacob’s question “Why do ye look one upon another” seems to indicate there was some

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reluctance on the part of his sons to go to Egypt. Could it be their guilt was stirred when they heard the name “Egypt” and they remembered what they had done to Joseph all those years ago?

3. It is noted that ten of Joseph’s brothers go to Egypt. Jacob keeps Benjamin home with him fearing that something might happen to him if he accompanies his older brothers.
4. Little did the ten brothers know what God had in store for them as they journeyed to the land of Egypt.

II. THE CONFRONTATION IN THE EGYPT JOURNEY (VS. 6-17)

Joseph’s brothers arrive in Egypt and make their way along with others to the place where grain is being sold to people from other countries. The brothers come face to face with their brother Joseph, the now Governor of Egypt, albeit, they do not recognize him. Observe what takes place in this confrontation:

A. The Dreams that were Fulfilled (Vs. 6-9a)

1. Joseph’s brothers come and bow down before him with their faces to the ground, not knowing that they were bowing before their brother Joseph and fulfilling what God had revealed through his dreams over 20 years earlier. They had mocked Joseph as “the Dreamer” but now the dreamers dreams were coming true. That’s because they were not dreams of his own making but were Divine, prophetic Revelation from God Almighty.
2. Why did Joseph’s brothers not recognize him? Joseph was only 17 when they sold him into slavery. He had now developed into a mature man of about 38 years. He was also clean shaven, dressed in the attire of a high ranking Egyptian official and spoke the Egyptian language.
3. Note: Joseph’s second dream specifically highlights that his 11 brothers would bow before him. This would be fulfilled during the second trip to Egypt when Benjamin accompanied his brothers.
4. Can you imagine what must have been going through Joseph’s heart and mind when he saw his ten estranged brothers bowed before him. The Bible gives us a window into what Joseph was thinking at this time – “And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed of them”.

B. The Dialogue that Followed (Vs. 9b-17)

1. Joseph was given wisdom from the Lord not to reveal his identity at this time and to react prudently in the situation. Some accuse Joseph of being revengeful in his actions but that is not correct. The testimony of Joseph’s life disproves such accusations. We do not get a hint of hatred, bitterness or desire for revenge in Joseph. He was possessed of a sweet, forgiving and humble spirit. If Joseph

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was truly revengeful, he could have had them slain with one command. Practically speaking, Joseph had absolute authority over the land of Egypt.

2. In reality, Joseph understood the connection between **repentance and reconciliation**. Joseph wanted to see a change of mind and heart in his brothers before revealed his identity. God was going to use this unique situation to do a work in Joseph's rough, tough brothers. We would do well to remember this principle in a day that advocates for a cheap form of reconciliation that sweeps serious sin under the rug with fake smiles all round! Absalom reconciliation doesn't work in the long term. The wrongs must be made right!
3. Henry Morris writes, "He (Joseph) wanted first of all to determine their true attitudes and then to set events in motion which would finally bring them to a true attitude of repentance and unity toward God and among themselves. Therefore, he acted harshly and as though he were very suspicious of their motives in coming into Egypt."
4. Joseph's actions also revealed **patience** on his part. He had already waited over 20 years and it would have been human to rush at this point but God enabled him to wait a bit longer. It is an old saying that "the longest way round is the shortest way home," and we have a striking example of this in Joseph's treatment of his brethren.
5. Note: Christ paid the price on the cross to make reconciliation between you and God Almighty possible but you must be willing to repent and receive it! Acts 20:21 "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."
6. Joseph puts his brothers through a similar experience to what they had put him through. F.B. Meyer writes, "I believe he (Joseph) repeated exactly the scene at the pit's mouth; and indeed, we may perhaps see what really happened there, reflected in the mirror of this scene."
 - a. He accused them (Vs. 9-16).
 - i. "And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and **spake roughly unto them**" (Vs. 7)
 - ii. "Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come" (Vs. 9, 12, 14, 16b).
 - iii. Very likely, Joseph's brothers had accused Joseph of coming to spy on them when he came to check on them at his father's bidding (Genesis 37). We know for a fact that they called him the "dreamer" (Gen. 37:19).
 - b. He imprisoned them (Vs. 17).

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- i. Joseph's brothers had thrown him into a pit; Joseph throws his brothers into prison for three days.
 - ii. Joseph's original proposal was that they all remain in prison and one be sent back to fetch the youngest brother (Benjamin). Like his brothers had done to him, he moved from a harsher to a lighter sentence.
7. **Joseph Pictures Jesus:** Joseph put his brethren through a period of testing to bring them to repentance. In like manner, Christ will put Israel through the Great Tribulation to bring her to repentance.

III. THE CONVICTION IN THE EGYPT JOURNEY (VS. 17-24)

God uses these events in the lives of Joseph's brothers to awaken their consciences.

A. The Confinement that Prompted Conviction (Vs. 17-20)

1. Joseph's brothers had three days confinement to think and reflect on things. Sometimes we bury the promptings of conscience with the busyness of life and God has to put us in a quiet, solitary place to do a deeper work in us. This is why extended seasons in God's Word and prayer are so beneficial (e.g., camps, conferences, all nights of prayer). As we are still, the Spirit of God convicts us about areas in our lives we are brushing aside or ignoring that require repentance.
2. The significance of what was happening was not lost on these brothers. Here they were in Egypt, the very place to which they had sold Joseph as a slave, and all these things were happening to them. For over 20 years they had maintained the lie about Joseph and tried to push it to the back of their minds but God would not allow them to get away with it any longer.
3. The word 'conscience' literally means "joint-knowledge; to know together". It has to do with the consciousness of the distinction between right and wrong with approval or disapproval.
 - a. Romans 2:14-15 says, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, **their conscience also bearing witness**, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)"
 - b. We get a sense for the meaning of the Word from its first occurrence in the Bible where Jesus challenged the Pharisees in relation to the woman taken in adultery, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John 8:7) Verse 9 says, "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even

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unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.”

- c. Conscience is a function of the spirit of man and is one of the key things that makes us different from the animal kingdom. When a lion tears apart an innocent lamb and devours it, it has no remorse or guilt. However, when a human being commits sin, he will usually have feelings of guilt, at least initially.
- d. “Conscience is the “knowing” part of us, that which “knows together” with God, and agrees with the revelation of right which comes from Him.” (W.H. Griffith Thomas)
- e. Note: Remember, the conscience is not an infallible guide as it can be “seared” (1 Tim. 4:2) and “defiled” (Titus 1:15). To follow the popular saying “Let conscience be your guide” is dangerous. Let the Word of God guide your conscience! The conscience functions best when it is shaped, molded and informed by the Word of God. The Word of God (particularly the law) can awaken the conscience (Rom. 3:19, Heb. 4:12). Proverbs 20:27 “The spirit of man *is* the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.”

B. The Confession that Revealed Conviction (Vs. 21-24)

This conversation amongst the brothers is one of the most striking examples in the Scriptures of the power of conscience. It reveals that their consciences were being awakened by the events in their lives at this time that had been orchestrated by the Providence of God.

1. The conversation of their confession (Vs. 21-22)
 - a. They admitted their guilt over their mistreatment of Joseph – “We are verily guilty concerning our brother”. The word ‘verily’ means ‘truly’. This was a sincere admission of guilt.
 - b. They acknowledged they were reaping what they had sown – “therefore is this distress come upon us”.
 - c. Note: In order to be saved we must come to the place where we are willing to sincerely and humbly admit our guilt before God – “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee” (Lk. 15:18, 21). 1 John 1:9 “If we **confess our sins**, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” God will justify the man who comes to him in the spirit of the repentant publican – “And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, **God be merciful to me a sinner**. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other...” (Lk. 8:13-14). You cannot come to God with a “not guilty” plea (Rom. 3:10, 23; 5:12). Salvation from sin and eternal life in heaven is only for repentant sinners.
2. The reaction to their confession (Vs. 23-24)

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- a. These verses reveal an important detail. Joseph was communicating to them through an interpreter to conceal his identity. If he was to speak to them in Hebrew, it would give him away. Joseph's brothers are conversing in their native tongue, not knowing that Joseph quietly was understanding every word.
- b. Joseph, overcome with emotion at hearing their confession of guilt, leaves the room and cries his eyes out. This is the first of six times when Joseph weeps. He also wept when he saw his brother Benjamin (43:29-30), when he revealed himself to his brothers (45:2), when he met his father in Egypt (46:29), when his father died (50:1) and when he assured his brothers they were truly forgiven (50:17). Joseph's life was a tear-stained life but a life mightily used of God.
- c. Joseph's tears reveal more of his heart. They revealed the depth of the pain he had been through as well as his heart of love for the ones who had wronged him so greatly.
- d. Note: It is not un-Christian or unmanly to cry at times. Ecc. 7:3 "Sorrow *is* better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better."
- e. **Joseph Pictures Jesus:** Joseph wept over his estranged, guilty brothers. Jesus Christ wept over Jerusalem and his brethren according to the flesh, the Jewish people. "And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it" (Lk. 19:41). Christ wept in the garden of Gethsemane as he was faced with the shadow of the cross and being made sin for us who knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21). Jesus Christ wept for you, me and the world that night and in love went to the cross to pay the price for our redemption (Compare Heb. 5:7 & Lk. 22:44).
- f. Question: Why was Simeon selected to remain in prison? Simeon is noted in Scripture for his cruelty (Gen. 34:25, 49:5). It is quite possible that he had been the main one calling for Joseph's murder in Dothan.

IV. THE COMPASSION IN THE EGYPT JOURNEY (VS. 25-28)

A. The Provisions of Joseph's Compassion (Vs. 25-26)

1. While Joseph was actively working towards his brother's repentance, he also showed mercy and grace towards them.
2. We see evidence of this in Joseph's actions of love:
 - a. Joseph allowed 9 of the 10 brothers to return in order to feed the hungry families waiting back in Canaan – "go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses" (Vs. 19).
 - b. Joseph provided corn for his brothers – "Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn" (Vs. 25a).

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- c. Joseph restored their money – “and to restore every man’s money into his sack” (Vs. 25b)
- d. Joseph gave them provisions for the journey – “and to give them provision for the way” (Vs. 25c).
- e. “Joseph’s command to restore every man’s money into his sack and to give them provision for the way is another indication of his true feelings towards them. There is nothing more striking in the character of Joseph than the utter absence of revengeful feeling...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.”
(Thomas)

3. **Joseph Pictures Jesus:** Joseph’s brothers were totally undeserving of Joseph’s compassion and love but that is the definition of grace. Grace is showing kindness and favour to one who does not deserve it. We are totally undeserving of God’s love and salvation. That is why salvation is by grace alone through faith alone to the glory of God alone (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5).

B. The Proving from Joseph’s Compassion (Vs. 27-28)

1. Joseph’s action in returning the money was not only an act of compassion. It was calculated to be another test. He is being used of God to both chasten and care for his wayward brothers. What a picture of our God who both chastens us and compassionately cares for us at the same time.
2. One of the brothers opened a sack of grain at the inn on the way home to feed his ass and discovered the money. The brothers again recognize the hand of God is upon them – “What is this that God hath done unto us?” Their consciences are getting increasingly softer through these difficult experiences.

V. THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE EGYPT JOURNEY (VS. 29-38)

These verses record the aftermath of the Egypt trip upon the brother’s arrival back home to Jacob and Benjamin. Note the responses:

A. The Family – A Fearful Response (Vs. 29-35)

1. The report upon their return (Vs. 29-34)
 - a. The brothers recount their experiences in Egypt to their father Jacob.

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- b. Notice that they repeat the line that Joseph was dead. By this stage they probably believed that Joseph had probably died as a slave in Egypt given the historical treatment of slaves at that time.
2. The discovery upon their return (Vs. 35)
 - a. As the they open the remaining sacks of grain, they discover that the money had been returned to each sack, not just the one that had been opened back at the inn on their journey home (Vs. 27-28).
 - b. It was particularly the discovery of the returned money that made both Jacob and his sons to be afraid. In the context of how the problems they had encountered with Egypt's governor, they no doubt feared that they could be accused of stealing and punished severely if they returned.

B. The Father – A Faithless Response (Vs. 36-38)

1. Jacob was seeing the situation from the human standpoint alone at this point when he exclaims, “all these things are against me.” In reality, God was actually for Jacob and was working all things together for his good. Jacob could not see how God's hand was at work in these circumstances. His perspective was that of sight, not faith.
2. We so often repeat the same mistake as Jacob. We feel at times like everything is against us when in reality God is working all things together for our ultimate good and His own glory.
3. Romans 8:28 “And we know that **all things work together for good** to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.”

C. The Firstborn – A Foolish Response (Vs. 37)

Reuben's instability again highlighted in his rash suggestion. His suggestion was both foolish and unjust:

1. Foolish in that it is inconceivable that a man like Jacob would derive any satisfaction from losing two of his grandsons in the event of losing his youngest son.
2. Unjust in that it would be totally wrong to punish two innocent boys for something that had nothing to do with them.
3. Despite Reuben's instability, we do discern an honourable heart motive beneath it all. He obviously cared deeply about his father's distress and was trying to impress upon his father how seriously he would take the responsibility of caring for Benjamin.

Conclusion: Have you been reconciled to God? Will you repent and receive God's gift of salvation? How are you viewing your trials (for you or against you)?

Repentance to Reconciliation

Text: Genesis 43-44

Introduction:

1. In these two chapters we reach the climax in the drama between Joseph and his estranged brothers. In chapter 42 we saw the awakening of conscience in Joseph's brothers (See 42:21, 28). In these chapters we see a deepening of the work of conviction in their hearts through the tests Joseph wisely orchestrated.
2. Before Joseph attempted reconciliation with his brothers, he clearly wanted to see evidence of a change of mind (repentance) in his brothers' lives. Through this account we are reminded that conviction of sin and confession of sin (a spirit of repentance) are necessary pre-requisites for genuine reconciliation not only in human relationships but most importantly, in the sinner's relationship to God Almighty.
3. Of particular interest in these chapters is the prominence of Judah. Besides Joseph, he is the main character in this part of the narrative. The significance of this should not be missed when we consider that the Messianic line was through the tribe of Judah. Judah shows up in much better light here than he did back in chapter 38 and the Tamar affair.
4. There are three main scenes in these chapters that lead up to the reconciliation that takes place in Genesis 45.
 - Scene 1 – Jacob and his sons in Canaan discussing the need to go back to Egypt to buy more food because of the famine.
 - Scene 2 – Joseph's brothers return to Egypt and invitation to dine at Joseph's house.
 - Scene 3 – Joseph's final test with the cup in Benjamin's sack.
5. We will follow these three scenes in the text with a simple three-point outline.

I. JACOB'S TRUST (43:1-14)

A. The Difficulty of the Famine (Vs. 1-2)

1. The famine was severe and it wasn't long before the food stores they had purchased in Egypt ran out.
2. Jacob then speaks to his sons and request that they return to Egypt to buy more food. Jacob had clearly delayed this decision on account of what had happened during their last trip.
3. Jacob had misinterpreted the events through the eyes of unbelief and exclaimed "All these things are against me" (42:36). In reality, God was sovereignly and providentially working all things for Jacob's good and His own glory! We so often make the same mistake and think that everything is against us in our trials when in actual fact the truth of Romans 8:28 applies – "And we know **that**

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all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.”

B. The Dialogue in the Family (Vs. 3-10)

1. Judah **reminds** his father of the requirement to take Benjamin as stipulated by “the man” (Joseph) in Egypt (Vs. 3-5)
2. Jacob **reprimands** his sons for telling the Egyptian ruler about Benjamin (Vs. 6-7). Their answer was to point out that they were simply answering the direct questions put to them by the ruler and had no way of knowing he would make such a demand. This was all mysterious and confusing for Jacob and his sons on account of the fact they did not know that “the man” they were dealing with in Egypt was none other than Joseph himself.
3. Judah **replies** that he would be surety for Benjamin (Vs. 9-10). This was no empty promise as we will see later in the story. Judah had changed a lot from the time 22 years earlier when he had been instrumental in Joseph being sold into slavery (37:26-28).

C. The Decision of Faith (Vs. 11-14)

1. Jacob **recommends** they return with a gift for the Egyptian ruler (Joseph) (Vs. 11) as well as double money (Vs. 12). The gift of the “best fruits of the land” represented an act of real sacrifice in the midst of a famine. Double money would have been 20 bags of money. Think of it in light of the fact they sold Joseph for 20 pieces of silver.
2. Jacob **returns** to a position of trust in God for the situation (Vs. 13-14). Circumstances were such that he was left with no other choice than to place the whole situation into the hands of God. This is just where God wants us in our lives and often, He uses circumstances to bring us to the end of our own wisdom and resources that we might learn to trust.
3. Note: Jacob is called Israel again in this chapter for the first time since Genesis 37:13. He is living the Israel life rather than the Jacob life. In the previous chapter he is called “Jacob” and is viewing things from the fleshly perspective (Vs. 29-36). Now in this chapter he is called Israel as he returns to the perspective of faith. We are constantly presented with a choice between the Israel life (new nature in Christ) and the Jacob life (old nature in Adam). The one is characterised by faith, the other by fleshly doubt.

II. JOSEPH’S TESTS (VS. 15-44:15)

Joseph’s brothers return to Egypt and Joseph puts them through some further tests in order to see if his brothers’ hearts had changed. Ultimately, God was working through Joseph’s actions to bring Jacob’s sons to repentance and restoration. When circumstances seem against us and out

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of our control, we find out much about where our hearts are truly at. The tests Joseph orchestrated for his brothers centred on Benjamin. Joseph wanted to see if they would respond to Benjamin in a similar way as they had to him or if there had been a change of mind and attitude (repentance). Note the two main tests.

A. Benjamin was Favoured by Joseph (43:15-34)

1. The invitation to Joseph's brothers (Vs. 15-17). It was particularly the presence of Benjamin that prompted this invitation. We get a glimpse of the longing in Joseph's heart to see his full blood brother.
2. The confusion of Joseph's brothers (Vs. 18-23).
 - a. Given their experience with this powerful Egyptian ruler during their last trip, we can well understand the fear of Joseph's brothers. They assumed they were going to be punished for the money that had been returned in their sacks.
 - b. They approach Joseph's steward and discuss the problem of the money that had been mysteriously returned into their sacks. The steward's reply must have added to the mystery of the whole affair. His reply also reveals that Joseph had been a good testimony to this Egyptian man and had imparted a knowledge of the One True God of Israel to him. Joseph was a man full of the Lord; a light shining in a dark place.
3. The interaction with Joseph's brothers (Vs. 24-34)
 - a. Joseph's honour (Vs. 24-28)
 - i. The brothers bow to Joseph and present the gift they had brought to him upon his arrival back at the house.
 - ii. Joseph inquires concerning their father's well-being. They reply that he is still alive and in good health and then bow a second time to Joseph.
 - b. Joseph's heartache (Vs. 29-31).
 - i. This was a tear-soaked time in Joseph's life. Seeing his younger brother Benjamin for the first time in 22 years deeply moved Joseph to the very depth of his being. Benjamin would have only been a baby or toddler when Joseph last saw him (Joseph was 17 when he was sold into slavery. He is now 39 years old). Joseph's tears reflect well on him. They demonstrate that by God's grace his heart had not become hardened, dry and brittle through his trial. Joseph wept, Jesus wept (John 11:35) and so can you in the trials you face!
 - ii. "Can't you picture the scene? All of a sudden, the handsome, bronzed leader of millions has rushed to his bedroom and collapsed in sobs. All those years passed in review. All the loneliness. All the loss. All the seasons

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and birthdays and significant occasions without the family. It was too much to contain, like a rushing river, pouring into a lake, his tears ran and he heaved with great sobs.” (Denis Lyle)

- c. Joseph’s hospitality (Vs. 32-34)
 - i. The feast commences at Joseph’s command. Joseph adds a further touch of mystery by seating his brothers in birth order. Henry Morris comments, “One can easily show (merely by multiplying together all the numbers from one through eleven) that there are no less than 39,917,000 different orders in which eleven individuals could have been seated! Thus, for the servants to select the one correct order by chance was almost impossible. The odds were 40 million to one against it.”
 - ii. Joseph honours Benjamin above the others by giving him five serves of the royal food instead of one. No doubt this was in part due to his great affection for his full blood brother but more importantly as a further test of his brothers to see if they would react to this with envy and hate the same way they had towards him over 22 years earlier.

B. Benjamin was Framed by Joseph (44:1-15)

1. Joseph put his brothers through one final test. He had his steward return the money to each sack like before and also plant his special silver cup in Benjamin’s sack (Vs. 1-2).
2. The brothers are then sent on their way in the early morning light. The brothers travel only a short distance outside the city walls and Joseph commands his steward to pursue after them and accuse them (Vs. 3-11).
3. This would be the ultimate test to see if the brothers had had a change of heart. If they still had the same kind of bitter envy in their hearts, they would think nothing of letting Benjamin be taken prisoner by this powerful man. After all, 22 years earlier, they had even considered murdering Joseph.
4. The immediate reaction of the brothers was a positive sign – they all rent their clothes, indicating they all felt a deep sense of grief over what was happening.

III. JUDAH’S TEARS (VS. 16-34)

Judah takes the position of spokesman on behalf of the brothers – “And **Judah** and his brethren came to Joseph’s house” (Vs. 14) and makes a powerful appeal on Benjamin’s behalf before Joseph. His speech is one of

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the most moving in the Bible with its pathos and passion. Most importantly, it reveals the repentant attitude that Joseph was looking for in his brothers.

A. The Confession in Judah's Appeal (Vs. 14-16)

Judah's first words reveal the attitude of repentance before God.

1. He had a sense of speechlessness – “What shall we say unto my lord? What shall we speak?” They felt speechless in the face of the incriminating evidence against them. Part of repentance is being so convinced of your guilt your mouth is stopped. Romans 3:19 “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: **that every mouth may be stopped**, and all the world may become **guilty** before God.”
2. He had a sense of guiltiness – “or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants”. There is a clear admission of their guilt before God for their sin. Their sin had “found them out” (Num 32:23). When God exposes our sin, it is because He loves us. Sin stands in the way of reconciliation with God and must be dealt with. God was using this whole occasion in Joseph's brothers' lives to bring them face to face with their sin, particularly in reference to what they had done to Joseph. Genesis 42:21 “And they said one to another, We are verily **guilty** concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.”
3. He had a sense of humbleness – “behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found.” Judah's attitude was that they deserved justice because of their guilt. This is the attitude of genuine repentance.
4. Would you be willing to humble yourself before God in repentance today and confess that you are a guilty sinner deserving of hell? To be saved you must be willing to:
 - a. Confess your sin (1 John 1:9)
 - b. Confess the Saviour (Rom. 10:9-10, 13)

B. The Passion of Judah's Appeal (Vs. 17-32)

Judah's passionate speech before Joseph further highlights how much he had changed by the grace of God. There is one dominant theme in this speech – concern for his father Jacob. What a contrast to his and his brother's previous callous attitude towards their fathers suffering at the loss of Joseph (Gen. 37:34). God is dealing with the big family secret in these men's lives!

1. Judah appeals to Joseph with an overview of the situation including the details of his discussion with their father Jacob (Israel) before they had come to Egypt (Vs. 17-29).
2. Judah appeals to Joseph that if they were to return without Benjamin, their father would die from the grief. He also informs Joseph that he had promised his father to be surety for Benjamin

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(Vs. 30-32). No doubt this must have touched Joseph as he saw further evidence of Judah's change of heart.

C. The Proposition of Judah's Appeal (Vs. 33-34)

1. Judah crowns his speech with an appeal to take Benjamin's place. Judah was willing to become a bondman in Egypt so that Benjamin could go free to his father.
2. Judah's name means "praise". In the earlier part of his life, he had not lived up to the meaning of his name. His conduct had been anything but praiseworthy. He had been a willing participant in the selling of Joseph into slavery and the subsequent cover up. He had been immoral with his daughter in law Tamar, thinking she was a harlot (Genesis 38). Now we see evidence of a different man.
 - a. He had sold Joseph into slavery 22 years ago, now he was willing to become a slave to save Benjamin.
 - b. He had lied to his father about what happened to Joseph, now he can't bear the thought of his father's grief should Benjamin not return.
 - c. Judah was now in the right place to take on the Messianic line. Interestingly it would be he, not Joseph who would be given that high privilege. What a testament Judah's life is to the power of God's grace to restore and repair a broken, sinful life.
3. **Judah as a type of Christ.** Judah is the first man in the Bible who offers his own life to save another. Judah was willing to take Benjamin's place and be separated from his father. Christ, of the tribe of Judah, actually took our place on the cross and was separated from the Heavenly Father so we could go free. The Gospel is that "Christ died **for** our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3), "Christ died **for** us" (Rom. 5:8). 2 Cor. 5:21 "For he hath made him *to be* sin **for** us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Gal. 1:4 "Who gave himself **for** our sins..." 1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, **the just for the unjust**, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:"

D. The Reconciliation after Judah's Appeal (45:1-8)

We will study this chapter in greater detail in our next lesson but note the floodtides in this chapter.

1. Floodtides of Tears (Vs. 1-4) Imagine the scene. All of a sudden, this strange Egyptian official barks a sharp order in Egyptian they don't understand and all his servants scurry hurriedly out of the room. Can you see the perplexed looks on the brothers faces? Can you see them weighed down under their guilt and shame? Can you see the fear in their eyes? They are now alone with this powerful ruler. What is going to happen? They watch on in stunned amazement as big tears begin to roll down the man's cheeks and

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his body shakes with audible sobs, so loud and heart rending the Egyptian servants outside can hear it. All of a sudden, they hear the words in their own Hebrew language “Aney Yosef” (I am Joseph). The words go through them like a lightning bolt and they stand in stunned, shocked silence. Joseph calls them closer and says “I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt”

2. Floodtides of Forgiveness (Vs. 5-8)
 - a. Joseph’s words are full of his faith in God and his forgiveness towards his brothers. He has been enabled by the grace of God to see his trial from the Divine perspective.
 - b. Note that the floodgates of forgiveness were opened in response to the brother’s repentance. Repentance led to reconciliation. In like manner, we can experience the floodtides of God’s forgiveness offered to us through Christ if we will repent and turn to Christ in faith.
 - c. That day Joseph’s brothers heard the word “I am Joseph” and it was a life changing experience. Hundreds of years later Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus heard the life changing words “I am Jesus” (Acts 9:5). Will you come to Christ today with contrition and confession and received His forgiveness?

Conclusion: Have you been reconciled to God? Will you repent and receive God’s gift of salvation? How are you viewing your trials (for you or against you)?

I Am Joseph

Joseph is reconciled with his brothers

Text: Genesis 45:1-28

Introduction:

1. In this chapter we reach the climax of the drama that has been unfolding between Joseph and his brothers. Joseph finally reveals his identity in a flood of tears and reconciliation takes place in a most wonderful way. Without a doubt, this passage is one of the most moving in all of Scripture. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "It is scarcely possible to comment on this passage without robbing it of its charm and power."
2. Joseph is powerful example of a man who chose forgiveness over bitterness and reconciliation over revenge.
3. We will study this heart stirring chapter using **5 words** for an outline.

I. REVELATION (VS. 1-4)

Joseph finally reveals himself to his estranged brothers:

A. The Encouragement of the Revelation (Vs. 1a)

1. Note the first word 'then'. When was then? It was after Judah's moving appeal (44:16-34) that Joseph revealed who he was. Judah's speech clearly revealed the change of heart Joseph was looking for.
2. Joseph was not able to "refrain himself" any longer. Joseph had demonstrated real discipline up till this point in concealing his identity. Joseph was clearly conscious that the timing needed to be right and his actions demonstrate that he was looking for clear evidence of a change of heart in his brothers before doing so.

B. The Exclusiveness of the Revelation (Vs. 1b)

1. Joseph commands his Egyptian servants to leave the room. What was about to transpire was for him and his brothers **alone**. It would be a very personal revelation of himself to his brothers. In like manner, when Christ reveals Himself to the repentant soul, it is a very personal and powerful thing.
2. Imagine how confused and fearful the brothers must have been. They probably were expecting that some sort of punishment was about to meted out to them.

C. The Emotion of the Revelation (Vs. 2)

1. Joseph wept passionately. Think of all the background to those tears. It had been 22 long years. Think of all the thoughts Joseph must have had of his family over that time period. The secret struggles with the memories of the hurt inflicted upon him by his

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brothers when they stripped him of his coat of many colours, threw him into a pit, discussed murdering him and then sold him as a slave. Think of the secret struggles he must have had with bitterness and the desires for revenge that naturally arise out of experiences of injustice. Think of how he had missed his beloved father and his little brother Benjamin. Think of all he had been through since coming to Egypt working as a slave, being falsely accused and eventually exalted as Governor over the whole nation.

2. Joseph wept loudly. The Bible says he “wept aloud”. Joseph was not weeping silently. He was so overcome with emotion he cried aloud with audible sobs. Joseph was sobbing and crying so loudly that those whom he had dismissed from the room could not help but overhear, and they in turn soon carried the news to Pharaoh’s house (Vs. 2, 16).
3. **Joseph pictures Jesus:** Just as Joseph wept over his wayward brothers, so the Lord Jesus wept over wayward Israel when he wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-42) and when he wept for the world of lost sinners in the Garden of Gethsemane as he was faced with being made sin for us who knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21) Hebrews 5:7 “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;” It was for me he died, for me he cried, for me he shed his blood upon the tree.

D. The Expression of the Revelation (Vs. 3-4)

1. The Declaration of Joseph’s Person – “I am Joseph”. Joseph’s words went through them like a lightening bolt. They were speechless and troubled. The word ‘troubled’ means “to tremble inwardly”.
2. The Invitation into Joseph’s Presence – “Come near to me, I pray you”. Noting their shock and hesitation, Joseph lovingly invites them to draw near.
3. In like manner, if you come to Christ in repentance and faith, He will draw you into His embrace, forgive you and reconcile you. In the New Testament, Saul of Tarsus was on the road to Damascus to persecute Christians when he was confronted by a light from heaven. When Saul asked “Who art thou, Lord?” he heard the answer, “I am Jesus” (Acts 9:5). Joseph’s brothers had to come to terms with the reality of who he was and in like manner, each person must come face to face with the reality of who Jesus Christ is. As sovereign over Egypt, Joseph has the power to pardon or punish his brothers. Their repentance meant they received pardon. As Absolute Sovereign of the universe, Jesus Christ likewise has the power and authority to pardon or punish sinners. Come to Christ

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in repentance and you will receive an abundant pardon. Reject him and you will be punished eternally.

II. RECONCILIATION (VS. 5-8, 14-15)

The wayward brothers are now reconciled to Joseph. Take note of:

A. The Forgiveness in the Reconciliation (Vs. 5)

1. The grace of Joseph's forgiveness – Joseph's brothers were totally underserving of Joseph's forgiveness. Think of all they had done to him! And yet, God gave Joseph the grace to forgive. Grace is giving us what we don't deserve. Do we deserve God's forgiveness? Our sins nailed Christ to the cross! And yet, God is willing to forgive us for Christ's sake. What grace!
2. The greatness of Joseph's forgiveness – Joseph's heart was full to overflowing with forgiveness. It was abundant. The depth of Joseph's forgiveness is highlighted in the fact he was concerned to alleviate the tremendous weight of guilt his brothers were feeling. "The comfort which he addresses to their penitence would have been dangerous, if spoken to men blind to the enormity of their past. But it will not make a truly repentant conscience less sensitive, though it may alleviate the aching of the wound, to think that God has used even its sin for His own purposes. It will not take away the sense of the wickedness of the motive to know that a wonderful providence has rectified the consequences. It will rather deepen the sense of evil, and give new cause of adoration of the love that pardons the wrong, and the providence that neutralises the harm." (Maclaren)
3. In like manner, God's forgiveness flows like a mighty river into the heart of the sinner when he comes in humble repentance and faith to Christ for salvation. In the words of the beautiful hymn, "Here is love vast as the ocean, loving kindness like the flood, When the Prince of Life, our Ransom Shed for us His precious blood...On the mount of crucifixion, Fountains opened deep and wide, through the floodgates of God's mercy flowed a vast and gracious tide. Grace and love, like mighty rivers poured incessant from above, and Heaven's peace and perfect justice kissed a guilty world in love...Of thy fullness thou art pouring, thy great love and power on me, without measure, full and boundless, drawing out my heart to Thee."
4. Note: We need to remember that this forgiveness was given because of their repentance. Jesus said, "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." (Lk. 17:3) While we should always maintain a spirit of forgiveness towards

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those who have wronged us,¹ true reconciliation can only take place when the sin has been dealt with.

5. Note: Joseph's grace filled response to his brothers would not produce a light view of sin. As Griffith Thomas wisely observes, "It is often the case that the consciousness of sin becomes more acute after the revelation of God's mercy in Christ than it ever did before. The consciousness of God's longsuffering love breaks down the soul, deepens our penitence, and enables the heart to see things as it could not see them before conversion."

B. The Faith of the Reconciliation (Vs. 5b-8)

Joseph's words further reveal the depth of his faith in God and his relationship with God. He bears testimony to God as he had done so frequently before. Joseph is mentioned in the great hall of faith in Hebrews 11 (Vs. 22). The grace of God had given Joseph at least two things in his trial:

1. Preservation in his trial – God's grace had miraculously preserved Joseph from bitterness. There is not a hint of bitterness in Joseph's life. Hebrews 12:15 "Looking diligently lest any man **fail of the grace of God**; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled;" If failing of the grace of God is the cause of bitterness, availing oneself of the grace of God is the preventative and the cure for bitterness.
2. Perspective on his trial – God's grace had enabled Joseph to see his trial with the eyes of faith. Over time and through faith he was able to see the hand of God and the grand purpose of God in it all. "Joseph saw God as the First Cause in his trial." (Butler) Look at Joseph's repeated emphasis on this point:
 - a. Vs. 5 "...for **God did send** me before you **to** preserve life."
 - b. Vs. 7 "And **God sent me** before you **to** preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."
 - c. Vs. 8 "So now it was **not you** that sent me hither, **but God**..."
 - d. God's purposes went way beyond Joseph as an individual. God was working to preserve his chosen people. We need to be reminded in this me-centred generation that its isn't all about us! God works in our lives because he does love us as individuals but He is also working to a greater purpose, namely, His own glory and the good of others.
 - e. God's Divine purposes had overruled man's evil purposes. Over 17 years later, Joseph would say to his brothers "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Gen.

¹ Luke 23:24 ("Father forgive them; for they know not what they do"); Matthew 5:44 ("Love your enemies").

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50:20). This verse is the Romans 8:28 verse of the Old Testament.

C. The Fervency of the Reconciliation (Vs. 14-15)

The tears continue to flow in these verses as Joseph personally embraces each of his brothers and weeps over them.

1. Joseph embraces Benjamin and weeps (Vs. 14). Words can hardly describe the emotion of this moment for Joseph and Benjamin. How long they cried on each other's shoulder we don't know but their tears tell us more about what was going on in their hearts at that moment than any words could describe. Sometimes tears say more than words.²
2. Joseph embraces each of his other ten half brothers (Vs. 15). They are all drawn into his gracious, forgiving embrace. Can you see the picture? Reuben³, Simeon⁴, Levi, Judah⁵, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher were all embraced in love, grace and forgiveness by Joseph. What a wonderful experience this must have been to be drawn into this embrace of forgiveness by Joseph and feel the guilt and shame melt away.
3. There is nothing more wonderful in all the world than to experience Christ's embrace of forgiveness. Will you come to Christ today with your sin, guilt and shame and receive His forgiveness?
4. Note: What a day it will be when Israel finally realizes that Jesus Christ is their Messiah. What tears will flow on that day! Zec 12:10 "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only *son*, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn."

III. COMMISSION (VS. 9-13)

A. The Mission they were to Perform (Vs. 9)

1. Reconciliation led quickly to responsibilities. They were to return to their father in Canaan, proclaim the good news to him that Joseph was alive and then bring him back to Egypt without delay.
2. In like manner, we have been saved to a life of obedience. We have been bought with a price and are to "therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Cor. 6:20)

B. The Message they were to Proclaim (Vs. 9b-13)

² Personal illustration of getting right with God as a 16-year-old (NBF meetings).

³ The eldest of the brothers and the one who had helped spare Joseph from murder (Gen. 37:22).

⁴ Simeon, the cruel and callous brother who along with Levi had slain the Shechemites (Gen. 34). It was probably Simeon who had suggested Joseph be murdered.

⁵ Judah, the one who had suggested Joseph be sold into slavery but who had just pleaded passionately on Benjamin's behalf, revealing his change of heart.

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1. Joseph is alive! (Vs. 9b, 26)
 - a. The urgency of the message – “Haste ye, and go up to my father”. Joseph knew that his father may not have long to live and he wanted to see him before he died.
 - b. The authority of the message – “Thus saith thy son Joseph”. They were to tell Jacob that Joseph was exalted over all the land of Egypt! They were to tell him of “all his glory” (Vs. 13).
 - c. Application: Now that we are saved, we have been commissioned to tell the world that Christ is alive, the highly exalted Ruler over all (Phil. 2:5-11), and altogether glorious.
2. Joseph will provide! (Vs. 10-13)

Note some touching promises Joseph gave his family.

 - a. The promise of his presence – “and thou shalt be near unto me” (Vs. 10). Having been reconciled to Joseph, they would now know nearness to Joseph. Joseph would settle the family in Goshen, a fertile region of about 900 square miles (1450 square km) in northeastern Egypt (Morris).
 - b. The promise of his provision – “And there will I nourish thee” (Vs. 11). Joseph would sustain them throughout the remainder of the drought. He had more than enough resources at his disposal to meet their every need.

IV. PROVISION (VS. 16-24)

To bring back Jacob and the whole family clan would be no small feat at a time of drought/famine.

A. The Order for the Provisions (Vs. 16-20)

1. The report to Pharaoh (Vs. 16). The news of Joseph’s family began to spread like wildfire. Remember, Joseph was much loved and respected throughout Egypt so this news of his family’s arrival in Egypt would have been met with much interest.
2. The response of Pharaoh (Vs. 17-20). Joseph had already invited his family to come to Egypt and had promised to sustain them but now Pharaoh, the highest ruler in the land, adds his own royal command to make provision for this to happen.
 - a. Pharaoh promises them they will be given the good of the land and the fat of the land (Vs. 18, 20)
 - b. Pharaoh also provides a state of the art, Egyptian mode of travel – wooden wagons! (Vs. 19) “The wagons were essentially carts, usually on two wooden wheels, drawn by oxen or horses. This is the first mention of wagons in the Bible and suggests that they were essentially unique to Egypt at that time.” (Morris)

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3. God's hand is again evident. He is working in the heart of this heathen king to cooperate with His Divine will for the children of Israel.

B. The Organization of the Provisions (Vs. 21-24)

1. Joseph's provisions for his family (Vs. 21)
 - a. Joseph gave them the wagons in accordance with Pharaoh's command. It appears this was a very special thing in those days as it is mentioned three times (Vs. 19, 21 & 27).
 - b. Joseph gave them 'provisions' for the journey. God was providing the resources necessary to fulfill this part of his will for his chosen people. We are reminded that God is not limited by seemingly impossible circumstances. The same God who Provided for His people in the midst of a 7-year famine is still able to provide the needs of His people as they seek to serve Him.
2. Joseph's gifts to his family (Vs. 22-23)
 - a. He gave changes of raiment to his ten brothers (Vs. 22a).
 - b. He gave 300 pieces of silver and 5 changes of raiment to his full blood brother Benjamin.
 - c. He sent ten asses with good things from Egypt for his father and ten female asses with food supplies to help sustain his father for the trip to Egypt.
 - d. All of these actions further demonstrate the magnitude of Joseph's forgiveness and grace in the situation.
3. Joseph's counsel to his family (Vs. 24)
 - a. Joseph sends them on their journey but adds an insightful piece of instruction before they leave – "See that ye fall not out by the way".
 - b. We see the wisdom in this counsel. Given all that had taken place, it would be easy for the brothers to descend into disunity and accusation with each other. Joseph urges them to avoid this.

V. REACTION (VS. 25-28)

The brothers arrive back home in Canaan and share the heart stopping news with their elderly father that Joseph was not only alive but Governor of all of Egypt! How did Jacob react?

A. Denial (Vs. 25-26)

1. Jacob's heart fainted at the news and he didn't believe them at first. He was in shock! As far as he knew, his son had been torn apart by wild beasts and that was the story that had been maintained all those years by his deceitful sons. Now they were telling him that his

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son Joseph was not only still alive but the Governor of the most powerful nation on earth!

2. Jacob was again in the position where he would need to exercise faith in God and step out in trustful obedience.

B. Revival (Vs. 27-28)

1. Jacob's sons relay all the words that Joseph had given them to pass on.
2. It was particularly the sight of the wagons that sealed it for Jacob. His spirit revived and he is again filled with hope and faith, believing he will see Joseph before he dies.
3. Why did the wagons have such an impression on Jacob? "It is more than probably that in the quiet ordinary pastoral life of Jacob wagons were unknown, and it may also be that they formed part of the royal equipage of Pharaoh, and thus their very strangeness impressed the patriarch with the assurance that something out of the ordinary must have happened to bring these wagons to his home." (Thomas)
4. Note that Jacob is again called Israel in verse 28 in connection with his spirit of faith. He is called Jacob when in unbelief (Vs. 26) but Israel when he is exercising faith (Vs. 28).
5. We see the goodness and kindness of God to Israel (Jacob). He was 130 years of age when he went to Egypt (57:9) and died at 147 so he had seventeen years in which to enjoy his family, especially Joseph.

Conclusion:

1. Will you turn from your sin and come to Christ today and experience his forgiving love?
2. How are you responding to your trial? Are you allowing God's grace to make you better or are you allowing your heart to grow bitter?

Reunion and Reward

Joseph and Jacob are Reunited

Text: Genesis 46:1 – 47:12

Introduction:

1. This section of Genesis deals with the journey of Jacob and his family to Egypt and his reunion with his beloved son Joseph.
2. These are the glory years for Joseph. The pain of the past is behind him, he is reconciled with his brothers and reunited with his beloved father Jacob.
3. There are more faith lessons to learn from this account as we follow Jacob's journey to Egypt to meet Joseph and as we see Joseph take wise steps to ensure his family would be preserved physically and spiritually in Egypt.
4. We will study this section under **four headings**.

I. THE REASSURANCE OF JACOB'S FAITH (46:1-7)

Jacob begins the journey to Egypt but pauses on the way to seek the Lord before leaving the land of Canaan.

A. The Seeking of Faith (Vs. 1)

1. The place of Jacob's seeking – Beersheba. Beersheba was at the southern end of the land of Canaan. Beersheba was a very special place to Jacob, for there Abraham had dug a well (Gen. 21:30) and there Abraham lived after offering Isaac on Mt. Moriah (22:19). Isaac had also lived at Beersheba (26:23, 32-33), and it was from the home in Beersheba that Jacob left for Laban's house to find a wife. At Beersheba, God had appeared to Hagar (21:17) and to Isaac (26:23-24), and now He would appear to Jacob.
2. The principle of Jacob's seeking. Even though the Providential workings of God had made it clear Jacob was to move to Egypt, he still sought the Lord for reassurance a short distance into the journey.
 - a. Prov. 3:5-6 "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."
 - b. Prov. 16:3 "Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established."

B. The Sure Promises of Faith (Vs. 2-4)

God rewards Jacob's seeking of Him with a personal visitation and revelation of Himself in a vision for the eighth and last time, so far as the record goes (Gen. 28:13; 31:3; 31:11; 32:1; 32:30; 35:1, 9; 46:2).

1. The Call of God (Vs. 2)

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- a. God speaks – “And God spake unto Israel” (Vs. 2a). The walk of faith is guided by Revelation. Jacob had the spoken Word of God to guide him. We have the written Word to guide us!
 - b. Jacob surrenders – “Here am I” (Vs. 2b). This is the appropriate response when God calls us. Jacob was willing to be guided by God.
2. The Character of God (Vs. 3a)
- a. “I am God” = the reality of who God is gives infinite value to what God says. The value of a promise is connected to the character of the person giving it. The Hebrew word for God here is ‘El’ which emphasises strength (i.e., “the mighty one”).
 - b. “the God of thy father” = Jacob was dealing with the same God who had dealt faithfully with his father Isaac. Here the Hebrew word for God is “Elohim” which emphasises God’s power as Creator and Master.
3. The Comfort of God (Vs. 3b)
- a. Evidently Jacob felt conflicted about leaving the land of Canaan. To hear “fear not” from God at this critical time in his life must have been very comforting for Jacob as he took such a huge step in his sunset years. This was the last major move in Jacob’s walk of faith. It was the home stretch of his earthly journey.
 - b. Jacob had Joseph’s word of assurance to encourage him to come to Egypt but now he had God’s word of assurance which was even more valuable.
4. The Covenants of God (Vs. 4)
- God now gives Jacob 4 promises to undergird and strengthen his faith. The first three commence with “I will” and the fourth includes the word “shall”; a reminder of the certainty and trustworthiness of God’s promises.
- a. The promise of God’s power – “I will there make of thee a great nation”. This was one of the primary purposes of God in taking Israel and his seed into Egypt at this time. God had promised Abraham that he would make of him a great nation (Gen. 12:2) God had also prophesied to Abraham that his descendants would spend 400 years in a strange land. Genesis 15:13 “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.”
 - b. The promise of God’s presence – “I will go down with thee into Egypt”. What a comfort for Jacob to know God would be with

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him. The Personal Presence of God in the lives of His people is a great comfort.

- c. The promise of God's preservation – "I will also surely bring thee up again". God would preserve His people in Egypt for over 400 years and then bring them back to the promised land. Praise God He not only saves but also preserves His people.
- d. The promise of Joseph's personal touch – "Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes". Israel would not only live to see Joseph again. Joseph would be there personally at his side when he died to lovingly close his eyes in death.

C. The Step of Faith (Vs. 5-7)

1. Jacob continues in his journey to Egypt, undergirded and reassured by the promises of God. Faith involves hearing (Rom. 10:17) and acting upon God's Word (James 2:26).
2. It is noted that Jacob's sons used the wagons provided by Pharaoh to transport their elderly father, their little ones and their wives.
3. The children of Israel journey to Egypt with their cattle, goods and families. None of Jacob's seed is left behind. He comes with his sons, grandsons, daughters and granddaughters.

II. THE RECORDS OF JACOB'S FAMILY (VS. 8-27)

At this critical juncture in the development of Israel as a nation, we have a record of Israel's seed. The genealogy starts with the children of Leah and her maid Zilpah then the children of Rachel and her maid Bilhah.

A. The Sons & Grandsons of Jacob by Leah (Vs. 8-15)

1. The sons of Reuben (Vs. 8-9)
2. The sons of Simeon (Vs. 10)
3. The sons of Levi (Vs. 11)
4. The sons of Judah (Vs. 12). Hezron, the son of Pharez would be a part of the lineage of Christ.
5. The sons of Issachar (Vs. 13)
6. The sons of Zebulun (Vs. 14)
7. Total (Vs. 15): 33 souls

B. The Sons & Grandsons of Jacob by Zilpah (Vs. 16-18)

1. The sons of Gad (Vs. 16)
2. The sons of Asher (Vs. 17). It is of interest that Serah, Asher's daughter is mentioned. She is the only granddaughter mentioned by name in this lineage of Jacob.
3. Total (Vs. 18): 16 souls

C. The Sons & Grandsons of Jacob by Rachel (Vs. 19-22)

Interestingly Rachel is mentioned at the start of this section, not the end like the other wives.

1. The sons of Joseph (Vs. 19-20)

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2. The sons of Benjamin (Vs. 21)
3. Total (Vs. 22): 14 souls

D. The Sons & Grandsons of Jacob by Bilhah (Vs. 23-25)

1. The sons of Dan (Vs. 23). Only one son is mentioned.
2. The sons of Naphtali (Vs. 24)
3. Total (Vs. 25): 7 souls

E. The Sum of the Sons and Grandsons (Vs. 26-27)

1. Number of those who came with Jacob into Egypt (Vs.26) It was 66 excluding Jacob's son's wives.
2. Number of those who were born to Joseph in Egypt (Vs. 27a).
3. Total number of Jacob's seed in Egypt: 70 souls (Vs. 27b)
 - a. The number 70 must include Jacob.
 - b. The number 70 became a significant figure in the nation of Israel. Henry Morris elaborates, "The number 70 seems to have been associated in a particular way with the nation of Israel ever since the time when these seventy apparently became its official founders. There were seventy elders (Num. 11:16), seventy years of captivity (2 Chr. 36:21), seventy "weeks" determined on the people of Israel (Dan. 9:24), seventy members of the Sanhedrin in the days of Christ and seventy "witnesses" to Israel sent by Christ (Lk. 10:1)."

III. THE REUNION WITH JACOB'S FAVOURED SON (VS. 28-30)

A. The Direction for the Reunion (Vs. 28)

1. Jacob puts Judah in charge of leading them to Joseph. What an amazing change! Judah had been instrumental in Jacob's separation from Joseph (he suggested the idea of selling Joseph). Now he was instrumental in seeing Jacob and Joseph reunited.
2. They come to the land of Goshen which Joseph had already promised them in Gen. 45:10. Goshen was in the northern, Nile delta region of Egypt and was prime pasture land. It was in the Lower Egypt region.¹

B. The Presentation of the Reunion (Vs. 29a)

1. The word 'presented' according to Keil is a translation of a Hebrew word "generally used only of the appearance of God" and was "selected here to indicate the glory in which Joseph came to meet his father."
2. Can you see Joseph? The news arrives at Joseph's royal mansion that his father has arrived in Goshen. Quick, sharp orders are given and his servants hurriedly prepare his royal chariot and horses. Joseph puts on his finest robes of state. It is hard to describe the

¹ On the map it is up the top and therefore seems to be "higher" but topographically, it was lower, in the downstream area of the Nile River.

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emotions that are surging within him as he climbs into his chariot and gives the order to his driver to go forward. The chariot lurches forward as it quickly picks up speed. They are on their way. Joseph is about to see his beloved father for the first time in 22 long years. Jacob arrives in Goshen after the long trip. He climbs out of the wagon, his staff in hand. Judah informs him that Joseph is on his way. There he stands waiting. One hundred and thirty years of age. His weather-beaten face reveals some of the hardship and sorrows he has endured and yet at the same time the sweet holiness of a man who has learnt to walk with God for many years. Perhaps his eyes are a little dim at this age. He leans on his staff as he waits. Judah nudges him gently. "Father, I see a chariot coming in the distance. It's Joseph." Israel straightens. His eyes strain to see into the distance. As Joseph nears, he hears the clatter of horses' hooves and the rattle of chariot wheels. He can feel the ground beneath his feet vibrate somewhat as it draws near. As Joseph enters his field of vision, tears begin to well up in his eyes. There can be no mistaking it. That's Joseph! Even after 22 years apart, the loving eyes of the aged father had no difficulty recognising his beloved son, even dressed in all his Egyptian finery. He would recognize that face anywhere. It reminded him so much of Rachel. Joseph had the same handsome features and form. Flashbacks pass through the old man's mind. Joseph as a baby, cradled in his mother's arms. Joseph as a young boy, playing happily around his tent. The days of his youth as he grew strong and developed in looks and talent. The days of teaching the young lad how to care for sheep and livestock. The fateful day when he sent Joseph on an errand to check on his brothers, not knowing it would be the last day he saw his beloved son for 22 years. His brothers return with the blood-soaked coat and the heart-breaking story that Joseph was dead. The days where he felt so overcome with pain, he thought the grief might kill him. The gnawing hole in his heart that had been there all those years with such a loss. His thoughts are interrupted. The chariot comes to a halt near Jacob in a little cloud of dust. Joseph leaps to the ground. A few quick paces and he is in his father's arms. Neither can speak to begin with. The rivers of tears say it all. Tears over the pain of the past burst forth like a dam opening its floodgates and intermingle with the tears of the joy in the present reunion. "Father", Joseph croaks eventually. "Joseph my son, you're alive"!

C. The Emotion of the Reunion (Vs. 29b-30)

1. They weep on each other's shoulders for a long time (Vs. 29b).
2. Finally, Jacob expresses his joy by stating his readiness to die now that he has seen Joseph (Vs. 30)

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D. The Application of the Reunion

1. Imagine the splendour and glory of Joseph's coming that day. How much more glorious will be the coming of the glorified Jesus when he descends from heaven on a white horse, accompanied by the armies of heaven, clothed in glorious white garments with the words "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" emblazoned on his robe.
2. Imagine the reunion we will one day experience with the saints who have gone on before us. What a day that will be!

IV. THE RELOCATION OF JACOB TO FERTILE LAND (VS. 31-47:12)

A. The Aim of living in Goshen (Vs. 31-34)

1. On a material level, Goshen would keep the children of Israel **sustained**.
 - a. As previously mentioned, Goshen was a well-watered, fertile region that would be ideal for the Israelites with their flocks and herds. Goshen was "the best of the land" (Vs. 6 & 11). "This region seems to have been bordered on the west by the Nile, since the Israelites "did eat fish freely in Egypt" (Num. 11:5). According to Psalm 78:12, their property must have included "the field of Zoan", which was on one of the outlet channels of the Nile fairly near the sea. In general, it was close to Egypt's northeast corner, more or less isolated from the bulk of the Egyptian population, which tended to concentrate more to the south and west." (Henry Morris)
 - b. The Israelites would also be under the loving watch care of Joseph. He would ensure their needs were met.
 - c. Joseph provided them an abundant place. We are reminded that when we get saved, we are saved to an abundant life (John 10:10). The Israelites were blessed to have a relationship with Joseph. We are so blessed to have a relationship with the Lord Jesus!
2. On a spiritual level, Goshen would keep the children of Israel **separated**.
 - a. This is the most important aspect. Joseph wanted the fact they were shepherds to be particularly emphasized to Pharaoh as he knew that would ensure they were settled in Goshen, separate from the main Egyptian population centres.
 - b. Joseph was no doubt concerned about **the danger of assimilation**. If God's chosen people assimilated with the Egyptians, it would not be long before they were influenced by Egypt's paganism and their purity would be lost. In fact, they

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could easily have ceased to be a distinct people group if they were absorbed into mainstream Egyptian culture. As a godly man who had by God's grace and power had lived victoriously in sensual, idolatrous Egypt, isolated from the fellowship of other believers, Joseph knew better than anyone the spiritual dangers and perils that abounded there.

- c. As the people of God, they were going to dwell in Egypt for over 400 years. However, it was vital that while they were in Egypt they not be of Egypt (in the world but not of the world principle).
- d. Interestingly, God would use the Egyptians disdain for the humble, shepherd lifestyle of the Hebrew people to help keep them separated. The Egyptians despised shepherds and their sheep and would therefore seek to keep the Israelites separated from their company.
- e. Sometimes in our day, we lament the fact the world is increasingly hostile to the humble, holy lifestyle of the born again, blood washed, Bible believing Christian. But it's probably a good thing as it may help keep the church pure! Better to have the world spit at the church than to have it attempt to lure it into its seductive embrace.

B. The Appeal to live in Goshen (47:1-10)

1. Joseph's audience with Pharaoh (Vs. 1). Even though Joseph was second ruler of Egypt, he still needed Pharaoh's approval to settle his family in the land.
2. The brother's audience with Pharaoh (Vs. 2-6).
 - a. Joseph brings 5 of his brothers as representatives of the family to see Pharaoh. Pharaoh asks them of their occupation and the brothers answer him as previously instructed by Joseph (Vs. 2-3).
 - b. Pharaoh grants the request to dwell in Goshen and also offers positions of leadership over his cattle to Joseph's brothers (Vs. 5-6)
3. The father's audience with Pharaoh (Vs. 7-10)

Look at this fascinating encounter between the elderly patriarch and the powerful Pharaoh of the most powerful nation on earth at that time:

 1. The Blessing – Jacob blessed Pharaoh twice; once at the beginning and once at the end of their audience (Vs. 7, 10). The “less is blessed of the better” (Heb. 7:7). The godly, separated man of faith towers in spiritual stature above the man seated on the throne.
 2. The Discourse – Pharaoh asks Jacob his age. Jacob's response is instructive and a window into his perspective on his own walk of faith. Jacob speaks of:

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- a. The period of his life (Vs. 9a)
 - i. He had lived for 130 years at this time. He would live a further 17 years in Egypt bringing him to a total of 147 years.
 - ii. Jacob viewed the days of the years of his life as being “few” in number in comparison to his fathers. Both Abraham and Isaac lived longer than Jacob. Abraham (175 years) and Isaac (180 years).
 - iii. Jacob’s words are true. Our days on earth are few when compared to life after death in eternity. Make sure you are saved and ready to die! Make sure you make the few days you have here on earth count for Christ!
- b. The pain of his life (Vs. 9b). Bad things had happened in Jacob’s life and yet through it all, God had been faithful and God had blessed.
- c. The perspective of his life (Vs. 9c). Notice how Jacob refers to his life as a ‘pilgrimage’. Jacob had the pilgrim mindset and this is the mindset we should all have as believers.
 - i. Hebrews 11:13 “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”
 - ii. 1 Peter 2:11 “Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”
 - iii. “This is the true perspective for every believer. He should regard the present life as a pilgrimage, not as a place in which he is to live permanently, but one through which he is to hasten, looking off from self and circumstances to Him who has gone before us as the Captain of our Salvation to bring many sons to glory. The thought of life as a pilgrimage will inspire and cheer the heart under the storm and stress of earthly discipline, for amidst all troubles and trials, shadows and sorrows, the heart will ever be darting forward in hope and expectation of “the rest that remaineth to the people of God.” (W.H. Griffith Thomas)

Conclusion: Are you being guided by God in your life? Are you resting on his promises?

Bread of Life from Joseph

Text: Genesis 47:12-26

Introduction:

1. This section details Joseph's provision of life-giving bread to the inhabitants of Egypt as the famine continued for approx. another 5 years (See Gen. 45:6).
2. In this message we will survey the details of the account and then make application.
3. We will study this section under **three headings**.

I. THE PROVISION OF THE BREAD (VS. 12-24)

The famine conditions worsened as time passed and the people come to Joseph to purchase bread to stay alive. These verses document the three types of commodities the people used to purchase bread.

A. They purchased Bread with their Lucre (Vs. 13-14)

1. The famine conditions (Vs. 13)
 - a. The scarcity in the famine (Vs. 13a). No bread was available in all the land. There was only one source of bread and that was Joseph. Joseph's vast storehouses of grain were more than sufficient to meet the needs.
 - b. The severity of the famine (Vs. 13b). The word 'sore' means "heavy, severe". The famine was so severe that the land of Canaan and Egypt 'fainted'. The word 'fainted' literally means "to burn", "that is, the inhabitants of both countries, their spirits sunk, as well as their flesh failed for want of food." (Gill)
2. The famine commerce (Vs. 14)
 - a. The people purchased grain until their money was all gone. The land of Canaan and Egypt are specifically mentioned.
 - b. Joseph receives the money and brings it into Pharaoh's treasury.

B. They Purchased Bread with their Livestock (Vs. 15-17)

1. The plea (Vs. 15). When the money run out, the people came and plead for mercy from Joseph.
2. The proposal (Vs. 16). Joseph proposes that they exchange their cattle for grain.
3. The period (Vs. 17). The verse states that this situation lasted for a year.

C. They Purchased Bread with their Lands (Vs. 18-22)

1. Another year of the famine ended. Now the cattle had run out the people return to Joseph with a fresh plea for mercy.
2. They offer all they had left, their lives and their lands in exchange for bread.

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3. Joseph purchases all the land of Egypt with the exception of the priests' land (Vs. 22).

D. They Purchased Bread with their Lives (Vs. 23-26)

1. Joseph as the master organizer now proposes a plan of reward for work. The people would be given seed to sow the land. They would keep four parts of the produce and give the fifth part to Pharaoh. "They would keep 80 percent of what was produced with 20 percent going to Pharaoh. In effect, this amounted to a permanent annual income tax of 20 percent of gross income." (Henry Morris)
2. This became a law in Egypt that was still current at the time Genesis was being written by Moses. The only exception was the land of the priests (Vs. 26).

II. THE PICTURE OF THE BREAD (VS. 25; JOHN. 6:35, 48)

In this account, we see a powerful picture of Christ as the Bread of Life who provides salvation. Note the parallels between Joseph and the Lord Jesus:

A. The Problem of the People

1. The people were living under the threat of death. Without bread from Joseph, they would perish.
2. Because of our sin, we are destined for death unless we come to Christ.
 - a. Rom. 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and **death** by sin; and so **death** passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"
 - b. Rom. 6:23 "For the wages of sin *is* **death**; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
 - c. Rev. 20:14-15 "And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second **death**. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

B. The Person for the People

1. Deliverance from death was only available in Joseph. No one else had the power and the provisions to rescue them from the impending death. Joseph was the only source of life-giving bread. His vast storehouses of grain were more than sufficient to meet the needs of all the people if they would but come to him.
2. Salvation from sin and hell is only available through Christ. He is the only Saviour! Any other way will end in death (Prov. 14:12; 16:25).
 - a. John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, **the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**"

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- b. Acts 4:12 “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”

C. The Principle for the People

1. Each time the people came to Joseph, they had to come:
 - a. Admitting their need (Vs. 15, 18-19). They had to admit the insufficiency of their own resources and their inability to save themselves. Ultimately, they were cast upon the grace and mercy of Joseph to save them.
 - b. Believing in Joseph. They clearly believed Joseph had the position, the power and the provisions to save them from the famine.
2. In like manner, you must come to Christ:
 - a. Admitting your need (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:5). We are saved by grace alone. We have nothing and can do nothing to merit salvation.
 - b. Confessing your sin (Rom. 3:10, 23; 1 Jn. 3:4, 1 Jn. 1:9).
 - c. Believing in the Saviour (Rom. 10:9-10, 13).

D. The Provision for the People

1. The great need of the people was for bread to save them from death in the famine. Joseph was the only one who could dispense the grain they needed to make bread to satisfy their physical hunger.
2. Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life and he alone can satisfy the spiritual hunger of our hearts.
 - a. Mankind was created to have fellowship with God his Creator. Sin brought spiritual death and separation from God. We are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). This means there IS something missing in our lives. Or to be more accurate we should say there is SOMEONE missing from our lives because we are born dead in sins. People try to fill the void with all sorts of things but find themselves still empty at the end of it all and not truly satisfied.
 - i. Many try to fill the void with the pleasures of the world (e.g., money, materialism, sport, drugs, alcohol, media, human relationships...).
 - ii. Many try to fill the void with religion but ultimately the gnawing emptiness is still there inside.
 - b. Only a relationship with God through Jesus Christ will bring true satisfaction to the hunger and thirst of sin sick hearts. Jesus is the Bread of Life and those who receive Him as their Saviour will find He truly satisfies. Listen to the claims of Christ:
 - i. John 6:35 “And Jesus said unto them, **I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that**

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believeth on me shall never thirst.” You must come to Christ and believe on him. If you do that, you will never hunger or thirst again!

- ii. John 6:47-51 “**Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. (48) I am that bread of life. (49) Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. (50) This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. (51) I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.**” Jesus Christ is the living bread from heaven. He gave his body on the cross for the world so that all who will receive Him by faith might have everlasting life. If you eat this living bread you will “not die” and you will “live for ever”.

III. THE PRINCIPLES FROM THE BREAD (VS. 25, John 6:57)

A. The Principle of Dependence

1. Through the ministry of Joseph, the lives of the people were sustained. He had all they needed to sustain physical life during the 7-year famine. They had to depend on him to meet their day-to-day needs.
2. How much more is Christ sufficient for every need of our Christian lives. Having received Christ, we are to go on living a life of day-by-day dependence upon Christ. John 6:57 “**As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.**” We live by the life of Christ working in us and through us. Christ saves us, keeps us and sustains us.

B. The Principle of Ownership (Vs. 18-19, 23)

1. The people were purchased by Joseph; they were no longer their own – “Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day and your land for Pharaoh”.
2. We are no longer our own as Christians having been purchased at the highest price that could be paid, the blood of God’s own Son. 1 Cor. 6:19-20 “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”

C. The Principle of Service (Vs. 25)

1. The people’s attitude was “Thou hast saved our lives...we will be servants”. Clearly their hearts were filled with gratitude for what Joseph had done to rescue them from the famine.

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2. In like manner, our attitude should be one of overwhelming gratitude to God for saving us from sin and hell and for giving us eternal life in heaven. Our attitude should be "Thou hast saved us, we will serve thee!" How can we do anything less in light of our Great Salvation?!

Conclusion:

1. Have you received Christ the Bread of Life?
2. Are you walking in daily dependence upon Christ, not just for your physical needs ("give us this day our daily bread") but more importantly, for your spiritual needs?
3. What is your attitude now that you are saved? Are you willing to serve your Saviour?

Standing at Dad's Deathbed Part 1

Jacob blesses his sons before he dies

Text: Genesis 47:27-49:12

Introduction:

1. Death draws near for Jacob in this section of Genesis and he calls his sons to give them a final Patriarchal prophecy and blessing. Jacob first has an audience with Joseph and his two sons (Chap. 48), then he summons all his sons to his deathbed for his final words (Chap. 49).
2. Jacob's prophecy makes a fascinating study. It contains shrewd insight into the individual character of each of his sons who would form the heads of Israel's twelve tribes as well as prophetic insights for their futures. "Jacob's words were a revelation of human character and conduct as well as of divine purposes." (Wiersbe)
3. We will consider Jacob's final words over two messages with a simple two-point outline:
 - The Prophecy concerning Joseph's Sons (Gen. 48)
 - The Prophecy concerning Jacob's Sons (Gen. 49)

I. THE PROPHECY CONCERNING JOSEPH'S SONS (47:27-48:22)

A. The Context of Jacob's Final Words (47:27-31)

Take note of:

1. The Summary of Jacob's Life in Egypt (Vs. 27-28)
 - a. Jacob and his family flourished in Goshen under Joseph's watch care (Vs. 27).
 - b. God gave Jacob 17 years in Egypt and a total of 147 years in his life (Vs. 28).
2. The Season of Jacob's Death in Egypt (Vs. 29-31)
 - a. The time of Jacob's death was drawing near (Vs. 29a). Note the words "must die". This was God's appointed time for Jacob. God is the one who sets our appointment with death (Heb. 9:27). There is "a time to die" (Ecc. 3:2). Are you ready to die? Death holds no fear for the born again, blood washed believer.
 - b. Jacob summons Joseph and asks him to make a solemn oath that he would bury him in Canaan, not Egypt (Vs. 29b-31). Jacob's heart was in Canaan, the promised land. Jacob's desire to be buried there demonstrated faith in God's promises concerning the land. Jacob knew that while his seed would sojourn in Egypt for a time, God would eventually take them back to the land He had promised them.

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B. The Content of Jacob's Final Words (48:1-22)

It is interesting to note what was on Jacob's heart during his final moments on earth. Jacob spoke of:

1. The promises of God (Vs. 1-6)
 - a. Jacob refers right back to his first Personal encounter with God Almighty at Luz (Bethel) (Gen. 28) which had marked the beginning of his walk of faith.
 - b. Jacob recalls that God's promises about the seed and the soil. God would multiply Jacob's seed and give the promised land to his seed for "an everlasting possession". The land of Israel is Israel's forever!
 - c. God had been faithful to his promise and had multiplied Jacob's seed, including through Joseph (Vs. 5-6).
2. The pain of the past (Vs. 7). Jacob recalls Rachel's death and burial.
3. The prophecy for the future (Vs. 8-22)
 - a. The priority of the prophecy (Vs. 13-14, 17-19). Here we have another example of the younger being put before the elder. It is worth noting again how often God bypassed the oldest son in favour of a younger: Isaac instead of Ishmael, Jacob instead of Esau, Joseph instead of Reuben and now Esphraim instead of Manasseh. The point is that God's choice is for spiritual reasons, not chronological.
 - b. The Person of the prophecy (Vs. 15-16a). Jacob evokes the blessing of Almighty God over Joseph's sons. The character of Jacob's God gave the blessing its value. Jacob's God was:
 - i. The unchangeable God (Vs. 15a). He was the God of Abraham and Isaac his father.
 - ii. The faithful God (Vs. 15b-16a). Jacob had experienced the faithfulness of God in his life. God had sustained and preserved Jacob throughout his earthly pilgrimage. Jacob was confident that such a good and gracious God would not fail to bless his children and grandchildren.
 - iii. Note: The word 'Angel' means "messenger" and is capitalized in this context. It appears to be a reference to the Christophany. "The word 'redeem' (Heb. *goel*) is used here for the first time in the Bible, and it is significant that it occurs as a description of the work of the great Angel of Jehovah, none other than the preincarnate Christ. The God of his fathers had surely provided for Jacob and protected him marvellously through the years, just as He had promised when he first spoke to him (Gen. 28:15)." (Morris)
 - c. The particulars of the prophecy (Vs. 16b, 20-21)

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- i. The blessing of reputation (Vs. 16b)
 - ii. The blessing of multiplication (Vs. 16c)
 - iii. The blessing of abundance (Vs. 20-21)
 - iv. Note: Joseph's faithful, godly life brought a multitude of blessings into the lives of his sons. Imagine how different things would have been if Joseph had given up in the walk of faith. Prov. 20:7 "The just *man* walketh in his integrity: his children *are* blessed after him."
- d. The postlude to the prophecy (Vs. 22). Jacob bequeaths an extra portion of land to Joseph. In light of all that Joseph had been through at the hands of his brothers, this was more than fair!

II. THE PROPHECY CONCERNING JACOB'S SONS (49:1-12)

Having pronounced a special blessing on Joseph and his sons, Jacob now summons the rest of his sons to his bedside to deliver his final message before he passes through the door of death. There is a poetic and prophetic tone in Jacob's words.

A. Reuben (Vs. 3-4)

1. Reuben was Jacob's firstborn, "the beginning of his strength". Normally this meant a position of responsibility and privilege within the family in the patriarchal system.
2. Sadly, however, Reuben forfeited his birthright for a moment of unclean pleasure with his father's concubine Bilhah (Gen. 35:22). How sin robs us of true and lasting blessings! Don't sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate. Don't exchange lasting blessings for temporary lusts!
3. Jacob prophesied that the tribe of Reuben would not excel. This was literally fulfilled in Israel's history. The tribe of Reuben never produced any great leaders in the nation and is little spoken of in the record of Scripture. In the later journeys to the promised land, the Reubenites were the first tribe to ask for a place to settle, not waiting to cross the Jordan with the others (Num. 32). Dathan and Abiram were Reubenites who gave leadership in the rebellion of Korah (Num. 16:1), which led to the deaths of thousands of people.

B. Simeon and Levi (Vs. 5-7)

1. Simeon and Levi are grouped together because they were of the same character – "Simeon and Levi are brethren". Sadly, these two brothers were united for evil rather than good.
2. Simeon and Levi are noted for their anger and cruelty. Jacob is clearly referring back to Simeon and Levi's leading role in the unjust slaughter of the Shechemites (Gen. 34). Beware of where anger

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can take you! In the case of Simeon and Levi, their diabolical rage led them to murder.

3. Jacob makes it clear that he had no part in their wicked deed (Vs. 6).
4. As a consequence, Simeon and Levi would be divided as tribes (Vs. 7). God would see to it that their evil alliance was broken. This was literally fulfilled in Israel's history:
 - a. Simeon had his territory within Judah's (Josh. 19:1, 9).
 - b. The Levites were not assigned a particular territory but were given 48 cities to dwell in throughout the land (Josh. 21). Levi was scattered throughout Israel.
 - c. Thankfully the Levites would go on to take the priestly function for the nation. Moses, a giant of the faith, was a descendant of Levi.

C. Judah (Vs. 8-12)

Jacob had a lot more to say about Judah than the first three sons!

Judah would be:

1. A praiseworthy tribe (Vs. 8a)
 - a. The name 'Judah' means praise. In the early part of his life, Judah did not live up to the meaning of his name. There was little that was praiseworthy in Judah's life for a time. But through the restoring grace of God, Judah's life changed.
 - b. We still praise God today for the tribe of Judah because the Lord Jesus, our Saviour, came through the line of Judah.
2. A powerful tribe (Vs. 8b)
 - a. Judah would become a tribe known for its military might.
 - b. The picture is reinforced in verse 9 where Judah is described as a lion.
3. A princely tribe (Vs. 9-10)
 - a. The symbol of Judah (Vs. 9)
 - i. Judah is spoken of in terms of a lion. The lion is the king of the beasts and Judah would be the dominant, ruling tribe within Israel. "In physical strength Judah is compared to the lion, the king of beasts. At first, he is the lion's whelp, the young lion, giving promise of future vigour; then the full-grown lion, exulting in his irresistible force, seizing and overmastering the prey, and after reaping the fruits of his victory, ascending to his mountain lair and reposing in undisturbed security." (Barnes)
 - ii. Ultimately this was a prophecy of the coming King of Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ. Revelation 5:5 harks back to this ancient prophecy "And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, **the Lion of the tribe of Juda**, the

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Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.”

- iii. Note: Satan, the roaring lion, is no match for Christ, the lion of the tribe of Judah.
- b. The sceptre of Judah (Vs. 10a)
 - i. From the time of David, the sceptre did not depart from Judah. Israel's greatest kings were from Judah.
 - ii. A time frame is specified in Jacob's prophecy. This would continue until the arrival of the Messiah.
- c. The Saviour from Judah (Vs. 10b)
 - i. Messiah is called “Shiloh” in this verse. The word literally means “tranquil, peaceable”. The form of the word is related to the word for “peace” (shalom) and probably means “The One Who Brings Peace”. (Morris) Jesus Christ is “the Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6).
 - ii. The people would be “gathered” unto him. This was literally fulfilled in the multitudes of people who flocked to Christ during his earthly ministry.
 - iii. “Once the tribe of Judah, under King David, attained the leadership over the nation, the sceptre never departed from Judah until after Christ came. This fact, incidentally, confirms that the Messiah did come, and that He must have come sometime before A.D. 70, since the sceptre passed from Judah about that time.” (Henry Morris)
- 4. A prosperous tribe (Vs. 11-12)
 - a. The wine (pure grape juice) and milk speaks of fruitfulness, blessing and prosperity. Judah would be a prosperous tribe.
 - b. The figure seems to also anticipate the future kingdom age.

To be continued next message...

Conclusion: Are you ready to die? What kind of legacy will you leave behind to your children? Are you trading real, lasting blessings for temporary pleasures?

Standing at Dad's Deathbed Part 2

Jacob blesses his sons before he dies

Text: Genesis 49:13-33

Introduction:

1. Death draws near for Jacob in this section of Genesis and he calls his sons to give them a final Patriarchal prophecy and blessing. Jacob first has an audience with Joseph and his two sons (Chap. 48), then he summons all his sons to his deathbed for his final words (Chap. 49).
2. "Of Jacob's sons there are two over whom his heart seems especially to pour itself – Judah the ancestor of the royal tribe, and Joseph. The future fortunes of their descendants are painted in most glowing colours." (Maclaren)
3. We are considering Jacob's final words over two messages with a simple two-point outline:
 - The Prophecy concerning Joseph's Sons (Gen. 48)
 - The Prophecy concerning Jacob's Sons (Gen. 49)

I. THE PROPHECY CONCERNING JOSEPH'S SONS (47:27-48:22)

A. The Context of Jacob's Final Words (47:27-31)

B. The Content of Jacob's Final Words (48:1-22)

II. THE PROPHECY CONCERNING JACOB'S SONS (49:1-28)

Having pronounced a special blessing on Joseph and his sons, Jacob now summons the rest of his sons to his bedside to deliver his final message before he passes through the door of death. There is a poetic and prophetic tone in Jacob's words.

A. Reuben (Vs. 3-4)

B. Simeon and Levi (Vs. 5-7)

C. Judah (Vs. 8-12)

D. Zebulun (Vs. 13)

1. Little is said concerning Zebulun except for the fact they would be a coastal people who would be a haven for ships.
2. "While not directly on the Mediterranean coast, the tribe of Zebulun was assigned land close enough to the sea to make the transport of goods profitable for the people. Zebulun was located on an important route that carried merchandise from the coast to the Sea of Galilee and to Damascus. Elon, one of the judges, was from this tribe (12:11-12)." (Wiersbe)

E. Issachar (Vs. 14-15)

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1. Issachar was situated on the eastern end of the fertile Jezreel Valley (Josh. 19:17-22), sandwiched between Zebulun and the Jordan River. The judge Tola was from Issachar (Jud. 10:1-2). David had soldiers from that tribe who understood the times and knew what Israel should do (1 Chr. 12:32).
2. "Jacob compared Issachar to a strong ass "bowing down beneath a double burden". The meaning seems to be that Issachar was strong, but docile and lazy. He would enjoy the good land assigned him but would not strive for it. Historically, Issachar had rich lands and rich crops, which attracted marauders and captors." (Morris)

F. Dan (Vs. 16-18)

A couple of things are said about Dan:

1. Dan would judge his people. The name 'Dan' means "judge".
2. Dan would be characterized by stealth in military matters. Dan is compared to a venomous snake that would defeat a mounted soldier by striking the heel of his horse. Sadly, Dan also led the way in introducing idolatry to Israel.
3. Immediately after Jacob describes the picture of the serpent striking the heel, he says "I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD." It appears Jacob's mind goes to God's primeval promise of the coming Seed whose heel would be bitten by the serpent, but who would in turn finally crush his head and bring the long-awaited salvation (Gen. 3:15). It is fascinating to note that this is the first mention of the word 'salvation' in the Bible and it comes from the Hebrew word "Yeshuah" which is the name "Jesus" in Hebrew! Salvation is not found in a religious system but in a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

G. Gad (Vs. 19)

1. The name Gad means "troop". Jacob prophesied that though Gad might be overcome by a troop, as a troop himself, he would overcome them.
2. Because of the tribe's location on the east side of the Jordan, enemy troops could easily invade their territory, Jacob assured the Gadites that no conquest would be final, but that they would eventually conquer their enemies. The Gadites were great warriors (Josh. 22:1-6).

H. Asher (Vs. 20)

1. Gad's brother Asher was to have an enjoy rich food and royal delicacies. As it turned out, Asher's lot fell on the rich northern seacoast north of Mount Carmel, all the way to Tyre and Sidon (Josh. 19:24-31). However, they failed to take possession of the Tyre-Sidon region.
2. The name 'Asher' means "blessed" or "happy". They became an agricultural people, taking advantage of the fertile land God gave

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them (Josh. 19:24-30). Moses said that Asher was “most blessed” referring to its wealth olive oil and the security of its cities (Deut. 33:24-25).

I. Naphtali (Vs. 21)

1. Naphtali, Dan’s brother, is described as “a hind let loose”. His descendants would be known for swiftness, as warriors fleet of foot.
2. They would also be known as composers of eloquent speech and beautiful literature – “he giveth goodly words”.
3. The best known of Naphtali’s descendants was Barak, who, with Deborah, won a mighty victory over Jabin and Sisera of the Canaanites (Judges 4:6, 15) mainly with men from his own tribe and that of Zebulun (Judg. 4:10; 5:18). The prediction regarding “goodly words” was, no doubt, fulfilled in part by the victory song of Deborah and Barak (Judg. 5:1-31).

J. Joseph (Vs. 22-26)

Jacob had the most positive things to say about Judah and Joseph out of the 12 sons. What Jacob said of Joseph on this occasion was a miniature portrayal of Joseph’s life. Remember, all the other brothers are hearing this! Jacob speaks of:

1. The Fruitfulness of Joseph’s Life (Vs. 22)
 - a. The picture. Jacob employs a beautiful word picture to summarize Joseph’s life and character. Joseph is pictured as a flourishing, fruitful branch of a tree by a well. Joseph’s life was laden with spiritual fruits such as patience, longsuffering, faith, forgiveness, compassion and purity.
 - b. The principle. The secret to the fruitfulness and flourishing of the tree in the picture is the well of water. The tree was drawing from this life source. Joseph had flourished in dry and difficult circumstances because he had been nourished, sustained and refreshed through his close walk with God. He had drawn deeply on the wellsprings of God’s grace and power in his life. Joseph was located by the spiritual well of God and His Word. Joseph lived all his life in nearness to God.
 - i. “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against **God**? (Gen. 39:9)
 - ii. “Do not interpretations belong to **God**?” (40:8)
 - iii. “**God** shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace” (41:16)
 - iv. “**God** did send me before you to preserve life...And **God** sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth...So now it was not you that sent me hither, but **God**” (45:5, 7-8)
 - v. “**God** meant it unto good” (50:20)
 - vi. “**God** will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence” (50:25)

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- c. Illustration: The blessed man of Psalm 1:1-3 “Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” If you would be fruitful as a Christian, you must stay near the well of the Word – the written Word (the Bible) and the living Word (Christ).
 - d. Joseph was fruitful:
 - i. In a natural sense. God gave him two sons Ephraim and Manasseh who would become a great and numerous people (See Num. 1:33-35, Josh. 17:17, Deut. 33:17).
 - ii. In a spiritual sense. Joseph’s personal life flourished spiritually as he walked with God and whatever was under his charge flourished and prospered, whether it was in Potiphar’s house, the dungeon or Pharaoh’s court. Joseph’s life was a channel of blessing to others wherever he was, especially as he grew during his trials.
 - iii. Phil. 1:11 “Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”
2. The Fiery trials of Joseph’s Life (Vs. 23)
Jacob now employs a war picture of archers firing arrows to describe Joseph’s trial filled life. Joseph had experienced:
- a. Hurt – “The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot *at him*,”. The darts against Joseph had principally come from his bitter brothers. These darts came in the form of bitter words and actions. Potiphar’s wife also fired her darts of false accusation at Joseph. Joseph was wounded (“grieved”) by these experiences but he chose healing for those wounds through God’s grace rather than allowing them to fester with the infection of bitterness. Remember, the Christian life is not a life without hurts. Hurts WILL come, sometimes from those close to us. It is what we do with the hurts that count.
 - b. Hatred – “and hated him:” Joseph had been the object of his brother’s bitter envy and hatred (See Gen. 37:4, 8 & 11).
3. The Fortifying of Joseph’s Life (Vs. 24)
God had strengthened Joseph in the battles he faced. This is stated in two ways:
- a. His bow abode in strength. Note that there is no mention of arrows with Joseph. God strengthened him to withstand the attacks but he did not fire back in the flesh. His defence was

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spiritual rather than carnal. Joseph overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:21). Alexander Maclaren touchingly writes, “Look at the picture. – Here stands the solitary man, ringed all round by enemies full of bitter hate. Their arrows are on the string, their bows drawn to the ear. The shafts fly thick, and when they have whizzed past him, and he can be seen again, he stands unharmed, grasping his unbroken bow...He has been able to stand in the evil day – and look! a pair of great, gentle, strong hands are laid upon his hands and arms, and strength passes into his feebleness from the touch of “the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. By the side of the hunted man stands a mighty figure, and it is His strength, not the mortal’s impotence, that has overcome.” He further adds, “Remember he who fights for God never fights without God.”

- b. His arms were strengthened by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. Great strength is required to pull back the string of a bow, especially in a battle scenario where it must be done repeatedly. If Joseph’s only resource in his trials had been his own strength, he would have failed. Joseph was supernaturally strengthened and sustained in the battle by the All-Powerful God of Jacob. The invisible, powerful hands of Almighty God gripped Joseph’s arms in the battle and gave him the strength he didn’t have to endure and withstand the attacks against him. Maclaren writes, “That strong hand is laid on ours, and lends its weight to our feeble pull. The bow is often too heavy for us to bend, but we do not need to strain our strength in the vain attempt to do it alone...Can we not feel that large hand laid on ours; and does not power, more and other than our own, creep into our numb and relaxed fingers? Yes, if we will let Him. His strength is made perfect in our weakness; and every man and woman who will make life a noble struggle against evil, vanity, or sin, may be very sure that God will direct and strengthen their hands to war, and their fingers to fight.”
 - i. Isaiah 26:3-4 “Thou wilt keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose mind is stayed on thee*: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: **for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength.**”
 - ii. Colossians 1:11 “**Strengthened with all might**, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;”
 - iii. Eph. 6:10 “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and **in the power of his might.**”
- c. The Shepherd and Stone of Israel. The phrase “from thence” means “from that place” or “from there”.

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- i. The immediate reference is a continuation of the Names and character of the God who had strengthened Joseph. Joseph had been strengthened by “the mighty God of Jacob, the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel.” The Shepherd pictures watch care and guardianship; the stone a firm foundation.
 - ii. There also appears to be another Messianic reference here. From God Almighty the Shepherd and Stone of Israel would come. These are both titles of Jesus Christ the Messiah.
 - Jesus Christ is the good, great and chief Shepherd (John 10:11, 14; Heb. 13:20; 1 Pet. 5:4).
 - Jesus Christ is the living stone (1 Pet. 2:4) and the chief corner stone (Eph. 2:20, 1 Pet. 2:6-7).
4. The Favour upon Joseph’s Life (Vs. 25-26)
- Joseph was abundantly blessed by God for His steadfastness through suffering. Joseph’s descendants were mightily blessed because of his faithfulness and godliness. Proverbs 20:7 says, “The just man walketh in his integrity: his children are blessed after him.” Joseph and his descendants would be blessed with:
- a. Multifaceted blessings (Vs. 25-26)
 - i. The blessings of prosperity – “blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under”. A reference to rains from above and water streams and reservoirs from beneath. See Gen. 48:20 and the reference to Ephraim.
 - ii. The blessings of progeny – “blessings of the breasts, and of the womb”. Children are always viewed as blessings from God in the Bible (Psalm 127). This is quite a contrast to the world’s perspective that views them as curses to be aborted rather than blessings to be embraced.
 - iii. The blessings of the patriarch (Vs. 26). Jacob says that the he had been blessed of God above his progenitors (forefathers) and that these blessings would be on the head of Joseph who had been separate from his brethren. It is interesting to note the principle here of blessing through separation. The believer must practice separation if he/she would know God’s blessings.
 - b. Multitudes of blessings (Vs. 25-26) The word ‘blessings’ in the plural appears five times in these two verses and the word ‘bless’ once. How God delights to abundantly bless his children as they walk with him. Whatever you are going through, stay faithful to God, walk with Him, and in the long term you will see that it was the path of true blessing. God’s will and way is

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always best. Psalm 18:30 “As for God, **his way is perfect**: the word of the LORD is tried: he *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him.”

K. Benjamin (Vs. 27)

1. Benjamin is likened to a ravening wolf, devouring the prey and dividing the spoil. It reveals the tribe of Benjamin would become a tribe skilled in warfare. Israel's first king was Saul and he was a man of war. Like a wolf, he pursued David and ruthlessly murdered everybody in the priestly city of Nob (1 Sam. 22). Other Benjamites known for their ferocity were Abner (2 Sam. 2:23), Sheba (chap. 20) and Shimei (16:5-14). Saul of Tarsus, a Benjamite (Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5) was like a wild animal who persecuted the church of God.
2. When you read Judges 19-20 you see the ravenous wolf in action. In Judges 20:16 the Bible reveals that in the tribe of Benjamin there were “seven hundred chosen men lefthanded; every one could sling stones at an hair breadth, and not miss.”

L. Summary (Vs. 28)

Conclusion: Are you allowing God's grace and power to work through you and make you fruitful for His glory even in the midst of trials and difficulties?

God Meant it for Good

Text: Genesis 50:1-26

Introduction:

1. In this final chapter of Genesis, the deaths and burials of two great heroes of the faith is recorded – Jacob and Joseph. It also contains Joseph’s final recorded words. Words of forgiveness to his brothers and words of faith for Israel’s future.
2. This last chapter of Genesis covers the last half of Joseph’s life. It covers 54 of the 110 years Joseph lived.
3. This chapter contains arguably the most powerful statement by Joseph recorded in the Bible, Genesis 50:20, which has been rightly called the Romans 8:28 verse of the Old Testament.
4. We will study this final record of Joseph’s life under three headings.

I. THE FUNERAL FOR JOSEPH’S FATHER (49:29-50:13)

This section records Jacob’s final words, death and burial.

A. The Planning for Jacob’s Burial (49:29-33)

1. The Faith Behind It (Vs. 29-30)
 - a. Jacob believed in life after death – “I am to be gathered unto my people” (See also Vs. 33).
 - b. Jacob believed in the promises of God. For Jacob, the promises of God were inseparably connected to the land of Canaan. His request to be buried there was an act of faith.
2. The Feelings Behind It (Vs. 31-32). The cave of Machpelah also held sentimental value for Jacob. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah and Leah were all buried there.
3. The Final Breath After It (Vs. 33)

Two simple facts about death can be noted here:

 - a. Death takes place when the spirit leaves the body – “and yielded up the ghost”.
 - b. Death is the doorway into the next life – “and was gathered unto his people”. For Jacob as an Old Testament saint, he would have gone to the Paradise section of Hades (Abraham’s bosom), a place of comfort and fellowship with the other departed believers.
 - c. Challenge: When you step through death’s door, where will you go? Will you step through the door of death into the everlasting flames of hell or the everlasting glories of heaven?

B. The Preparation for Jacob’s Burial (Vs. 1-3)

1. Mourning the Dead (Vs. 1, 3b)

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- a. The pain of the mourning (Vs. 1). As Jacob breathes his last, Joseph dramatically collapses on his father's lifeless body in a flood of tears and gives the lifeless face one final kiss goodbye. Weeping is an appropriate response to the death of a loved one. As believers we "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13) when a saved loved one leaves this life but we do experience sorrow nonetheless. Tears are God's gift to us in times of suffering. Research has found that crying releases oxytocin and endorphins. These feel-good chemicals can help ease both physical and emotional pain. Ecc. 7:3 reads, "Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better."
 - b. The period of the mourning (Vs. 3b). According to ancient historians, 72 days mourning were observed for an Egyptian Pharaoh so Jacob is given an honour almost equal to that of a king with the 70-day period of mourning.
 - c. Note: It is interesting to observe that Joseph had his first 17 years with Jacob and Jacob had his final 17 years with Joseph.
2. Mummifying the Dead (Vs. 2-3a)
 - a. The Egyptians were experts at embalming the dead to preserve the body for generations to come. So successful were they, says the Smithsonian Institute, that we can view the mummified body of an Egyptian and have a good idea of what he or she looked like in life, 3,000 years ago.¹
 - b. For the Egyptians, they went through this process believing that in time the spirit would return to the body. Joseph would not have believed in the Egyptian pagan ideas about burial but the body of his father would need to be preserved in order for it to be transported back to Canaan and buried. Burial is a Christian practice as we believe in the future resurrection of the body. In the Bible, believers were never cremated, always buried.
- C. The Procession of Jacob's Burial (Vs. 4-11)**
1. The Request to Pharaoh (Vs. 4-6)
 - a. Joseph makes a formal request to the house of Pharaoh to obtain permission to fulfill the promise made to his father before he died to bury him in the land of Canaan. Joseph includes a promise that he would return. Pharaoh grants the request.
 - b. It is interesting to note that Joseph does not apply directly to Pharaoh but through his representatives. It was probably because in Egyptian culture Joseph would have been viewed as ceremonially unclean on account of mourning the dead.
 2. The Retinue from Pharaoh (Vs. 7-11)

¹ <https://www.si.edu/spotlight/ancient-egypt/mummies> Viewed 27/10/23

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- a. The specialness of it (Vs. 7-9a). What a royal procession this was! Look at the dignitaries involved:
 - i. All Pharaoh's servants (Vs. 7a)
 - ii. The elders of Pharaoh's house (Vs. 7b)
 - iii. The elders of Egypt (Vs. 7c)
 - iv. The children of Israel (Vs. 8). Only their little ones, flocks and herd remained in Goshen.
 - v. Military personnel (chariots and horsemen) (Vs. 9a)
- b. The size of it (Vs. 9b). The Bible states that it was "a very great company".
- c. The sadness of it (Vs. 10-11)
 - i. The caravan pauses at "the threshing floor of Atad" east of Jordan and carries out a formal 7-day period of mourning.
 - ii. The mourning so impacted the local Canaanites that they named the place 'Abelmizraim' meaning "meadow of Egypt".

D. The Place of Jacob's Burial (Vs. 12-13)

1. Joseph and his brothers fulfill their promise and bury Jacob in the cave of the field of Machpelah.
2. It is again noted that this parcel of ground had been purchased by Abraham for a burying place from Ephron the Hittite.

II. THE FORGIVENESS OF JOSEPH'S FAMILY (Vs. 14-21)

The pain of Jacob's passing was over but now Joseph was to be confronted with the pain of his brothers doubting the sincerity of his forgiveness. Take note of:

A. Their Assumption about Joseph (Vs. 14-15)

1. The Context of their Doubts (Vs. 14) The funeral was over and life began to return to normal but the pain of their father's passing had reawakened guilt from the past and fears that Joseph would treat them differently now that Jacob was dead.
2. The Conversation about their Doubts (Vs. 15)
 - a. They assumed Joseph would hate them – "Joseph will peradventure hate us". Joseph had shown them nothing but love but they doubted the sincerity of his love.
 - b. They assumed Joseph would take revenge on them – "and will certainly requite us".
3. The Cause of their Doubts
 - a. They were struggling with a lingering sense of guilt over what they had done to Joseph in the past. They struggled to believe that Joseph had really forgiven them. In reality, Joseph had freely and fully forgiven them! Sometimes believers struggle with

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doubts about God's forgiveness of their sins. Remember! Forgiveness is granted on the basis of God's grace, not our own goodness (Eph. 2:8-9). If we were good, we would not need forgiveness!

- b. They were inclined to ascribe to Joseph thought patterns and motives that were in representative of their own natural inclinations. We have a tendency to suspect others will act as we would be inclined to act in a given situation. Their words of doubt said more about them and their character than it did about Joseph. Griffith Thomas writes, "They (the brothers) measured Joseph by themselves, and thought that he was harbouring resentment and only biding his time. What a revelation of their own nature they thus gave! In our suspicions of other people, we often reveal ourselves."

B. Their Appeal to Joseph (Vs. 16-18)

1. Their Proxy Appeal Vs. 16-17).
 - a. This highlights just how much they had believed their own false thinking. They didn't feel they could approach Joseph personally to begin with.
 - b. They send a message they claimed was from their father Jacob appealing to Joseph to forgive them for their wrongdoing. They didn't need to ask forgiveness for what had already been forgiven!
 - c. Joseph wept when he received the message. He was clearly broken hearted that they thought this way. They had totally misjudged him. His forgiveness of his brothers had been totally sincere and honourable.
2. Their Personal Appeal (Vs. 18). They come before Joseph, fall down before him and offer to be his slaves.

C. Their Assurance from Joseph (Vs. 19-21)

Joseph's reply is full of instruction and says so much about the maturity and depth of Joseph's faith in God.

1. Joseph's God-centred Response (Vs. 19-20)

As we have seen consistently with Joseph's life and testimony to date, his response to this situation God-centred.

 - a. He understood God's Place in his Trial (Vs. 19)
 - i. Joseph had the right view of himself and the right view of God. Even though he had been elevated to such a high position within Egypt, he was humble. He knew God's throne was far above his. He believed in the sovereignty of God in his trial. He didn't try and take God's role in the situation.

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- ii. Romans 12:19 “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”
- b. He understood God’s Purpose in his Trial (Vs. 20)
 - i. Joseph saw God’s hand in His trial. By faith he was able to discern God’s grand design and purpose in it all.
 - ii. Interestingly, the word ‘thought’ and ‘meant’ come from the same Hebrew word (‘chashab’) which literally means to plait (weave, braid), fabricate and therefore has the sense to plan, plot, devise.
 - iii. Do you see the picture? The brothers planned evil for Joseph but God planned good. God’s good plans overruled man’s evil plans. While Joseph’s brothers wicked hands were weaving a web of pain for Joseph, God’s invisible fingers were taking the evil threads of Joseph’s trial and weaving them together for good into a tapestry of His grace that would glorify Him. Psalm 18:30-32 “As for God, **his way is perfect**: the word of the LORD is tried: he *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him. For who *is* God save the LORD? or who *is* a rock save our God? *It is* God that girdeth me with strength, and **maketh my way perfect.**”
 - iv. Joseph discerned that God’s purposes went way beyond just himself as an individual. God was working things together for good for Joseph but it was a much bigger plan than that. God was working to save many people alive, most importantly, the fledgling nation of Israel.
 - v. Genesis 50:20 has been rightly called the Romans 8:28 verse of the Old Testament.
- 2. Joseph’s Grace-filled Response (Vs. 19a, 21)

Joseph could have responded with anger and resentment to this hurtful doubting of his forgiveness but instead he responds with grace and love. Joseph comforted them with:

 - a. Words of Peace – “fear not” (Vs. 19a, 21a). Joseph’s words of assurance asswaged their fears. When we are tempted to doubt God’s forgiveness, He speaks words of peace to our souls and says “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.” (Jer. 31:3) **“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”** (John 14:27)
 - b. Words of Promise – “I will nourish you and your little ones”. Joseph promises – to preserve them. Praise God that our God not only saves us but he preserves and keeps us.

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- i. 1 Peter 1:5 “**Who are kept by the power of God** through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”
- ii. Jude 1:1 “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and **preserved** in Jesus Christ, *and* called:”
- iii. John 10:27-28 “**My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.**”

III. THE FAITH OF JOSEPH FOR THE FUTURE (VS. 22-26)

These verses record a summation of Joseph’s life in Egypt, his final words and his death. They reveal more of Joseph’s steadfast and abiding faith in God. Joseph’s faith is demonstrated in:

A. His Conduct in Egypt (Vs. 22-23)

We could call this the reward of faith. Much of the first half of Joseph’s life had been filled with trials and troubles. Now he enjoys the blessings of faithfulness for the remainder of his life. He enjoyed the blessings of:

1. The Blessing of Peace – he dwelt in peace with his father’s house in Egypt.
2. The Blessing of Posterity – he enjoyed the blessings of seeing his grandchildren and great grandchildren. Family blessings are amongst God’s richest and most precious gifts to us as His children.
3. The Blessing of a Prolonged Life - Joseph was 56 years old when Jacob died (Gen. 41:46, 53; 45:6; 47:28). Joseph continued to live for another fifty-four years after that, finally dying at the age of 110.

B. His Confidence in God’s Promises (Vs. 24)

1. The foundation of his faith. Joseph’s faith for the future was founded on God’s promise to Abraham. Gen. 15:13 “And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land *that is* not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;”
2. The certainty of his faith. Joseph’s faith in God’s promises was certain. Twice Joseph sates, “God will surely visit you” (Vs. 24, 25).
3. The action of his faith. Because Joseph believed God, he commanded the children of Israel that they were to take his bones with them when they departed from Egypt and bury them in the promised land. This was fulfilled by their heirs (Ex. 13:19; Josh. 24:32).
4. “Joseph’s body was embalmed and put in a coffin (or wooden mummy case). In that way, it could be seen by his descendants and those of his brothers, serving as a perpetual reminder of God’s

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- promise to them – and therefore also as a reminder of God’s purpose – that they would all someday return to Canaan.” (Morris)
5. Out of all the acts of faith from Joseph’s life, it was this act of faith that was highlighted by the writer to the Hebrews. Heb. 11:22 “**By faith Joseph**, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones.”
 6. From Joseph’s example we see that faith is hearing God’s Word, believing it, and acting upon it (Rom. 10:17).
 7. Notice how Genesis starts and ends. It begins with the Eternal Creator God (Gen. 1:1) and ends with a coffin in Egypt (Gen. 50:26). What a reminder of the infiniteness of God and the finiteness of man! What a reminder that while the best of men pass off the scene from this earth, God remains forever and His work goes on. John Wesley said, “God buries His workman, but His work goes on.” G. Campbell Morgan wisely observed: “Commit your life to God, see vision, do the work that’s nearest, the work He appoints, truly and well and faithfully, and die knowing that you have started delicate influences, dynamic forces which will proceed through every succeeding generation until they gather up the harvest of glorious results about the throne of the Eternal. The man of God has not finished his work in the world when they put him in a coffin.”

Conclusion:

1. Are you ready to die? Where are you going to spend eternity? Have you trusted Christ as Saviour?
2. By God’s grace, Joseph finished his life well! Will you?
3. How are you responding in your trials? Are you growing better by God’s grace or bitter?