

Dickson
Teacher's Bible

GENESIS



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Genesis

WRITER

Moses is given credit for being guided by the Holy Spirit to write this first book of the Bible (Lk 24:44; Jn 7:19-23). He was born in Egypt (Ex 2:1,2) to the Hebrew slave parents of Amram and Jochebed (Ex 6:20). His brother was Aaron and his sister was Miriam. Soon after his birth, he was placed in a basket in the Nile River by his mother in order to save his life from Pharaoh's efforts to kill the Hebrews' newborn male babies. He was found by Pharaoh's daughter, and subsequently adopted and brought up in Pharaoh's house (Ex 2:3-10). As he grew up, he was instructed in the wisdom and culture of the Egyptians (At 7:22).

After killing an Egyptian in defense of a fellow Hebrew, Moses fled to Midian. He spent forty years in Midian (Ex 2:15; 7:30), where he married Zipporah, the daughter of Jethro, priest of Midian (Ex 2:21; 18:2). When he was eighty years old, God called him on Mount Sinai in order to give him a mandate to lead the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage and to the promised land of Canaan (Ex 12:29-51; 14:1-31).

Once the Hebrews were safely out of Egypt and at the foot of Mount Sinai, Moses received the ten commandment law from God on the mountain (Ex 20:1-20; 21). Afterward, he led Israel through forty years of wilderness wanderings. During this time he was directed by God to write the Pentateuch, the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy (See Ps 90).

After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, and at the time Israel was about to go into the land of promise, God informed Moses that he would not be allowed to enter the land. He was not allowed because of an act of disobedience in the wilderness (See Nm 20:10-13; 27:12-14). Before Israel crossed the Jordan into the promised land, Moses died at the age of 120, and was buried by God somewhere in the land of Moab (Dt 34:5-8; see Jd 9).

BOOK

The Jews entitled this book according to the first word of the book. In this case, the book was named, "In the beginning." It was later called the "Book of the Creation of the World" by those who were influenced by the writings of the Talmud. The name "Genesis" comes from the Septuagint in the translation of the Greek word *geneseos* in Genesis 2:4, "This is the book of the *geneseos* of heaven and earth" (See 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1,9; 37:2). Genesis means "origin," "source," "generations" or "beginnings."

Genesis was written somewhere between 1400 and 1440 B.C. The book was part of what the Jews called the Torah. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Old

Testament, the Septuagint, referred to the first five books of the Bible as the Pentateuch.

Genesis covers at least 2,500 years of the major events of human history. The book was not meant to be chronicles of all human history. It was written to be a record of specific events and personalities that played a special role in God's eternal plan to redeem man. Genesis reveals the beginning of human history, and then it gives us a historical background of origins and the initial work of God to preserve a culture of people, the children of Israel, for the eventual revelation of the Son of God. The book concludes with the dwelling of the children of Israel in Egypt.

The Generations Of The Creation

(1:1 - 2:3)

Outline: (1) Creation of light (1:3-5), (2) Creation of the firmament (1:6-8), (3) Creation of land,

vegetation and light (1:9-13), (4) Creation of heavenly bodies (1:14-19), (5) Creation of birds and fish (1:20-23), (6) Creation of animals and man (1:24-31), Rest on the seventh day (2:1-3)

CHAPTER 1

CREATION OF LIGHT

Though we do not understand how creation can take place, we are informed in Hebrews 11:3 that creation took place by bringing something into existence that previously did not exist. The integrity of Jesus stands on the fact of His confirmation that He was part of the Godhead who created man and woman (1:26; see Mt 19:4; Cl 1:16).

1:1-3 In the beginning: The incarnate Word was in the beginning when all things were created because He was the one who did the creating (Jn 1:1; Cl 1:16; see Ps 104; Pv 3:19). **God:** This is the strong and Almighty One, the eternal existence of the One who is to be feared. The word here is from *Elohim*, which is plural and used approximately 2,000 times in the Old Testament. **Created:** The word here is *bara* that is used exclusively by God in calling something into existence out of nothing. *Yatzar* (formed)

(2:7,19; Ps 33:15; Is 44:9,10) and *asah* (made) (8:6; Ex 5:16; Dt 4:16) refer to the reconstruction of that which is already created. **Heavens and earth:** Heavens refer to the galaxies of all suns, moons and stars. Earth refers to that on which man resides (2:1; 14:19,22; Jr 23:24). **Was:** This should not be understood to mean "had become." Reference is to a state of being or existence. **Without form and void:** The earth was created a wasteland of soil mixed with water (See Is 34:11; Jr 4:23 where the words are used in reference to desolation.) **Let there be ... and there was ...:** What else would we expect from God (See Ps 33:9). Since God is defined by what He can do in creation, then certainly He has no need to rely on some supposed evolutionary process to bring the present forms of life into existence.

1:4 It was good: The sovereign Creator is magnified at least six times in the

creation account with the statement, "It was good." The creating *Elohim* (God) spoke the word, and it came into existence. The galaxies were spoken into existence by Him who only is eternal. This sober fact of history thus becomes the foundation of our belief that we are the result of a creative God of all things. In our interpretation of these things we must keep in mind that Moses did not commence here with a book on science. However, when he speaks of those things that are scientific, there is no contradiction between true science and the speculations of men who have allowed themselves to be misguided by the false postulations of false science. That men somehow evolved from slime to the sublime is totally foreign to the Genesis account of beginnings.

1:5 Day: It must be pointed out that the word *yom* (day) with a numeral adjective signifies a 24-hour day. Of the 1,284 times this word is used in the Old Testament there are only a few exceptions when it does not signify a 24-hour day when the numerical adjective is not used. The plural form *yamin* always refers to a 24-hour day (See Ex 20:11). If God is who the Bible describes Him to be, then certainly He has the power to create and the power to create in a single moment.

CREATION OF THE FIRMAMENT

1:6-8 Expanse: The KJV used the word "firmament." The expanse stood between the canopy of waters that was above the earth and the waters of the earth that had been separated from the soil, but

retained in the "fountains of the deep" (7:11). The consequence was a greenhouse effect that caused the global warmth of a tropical environment for the development of lush vegetation over the face of the earth. Because of this global warmth, we must assume that the nature of the environment of the world before the flood of Noah's day, the time when the waters above the expanse ("firmament") were brought down to the surface of the earth through forty days of rain, was much different than the first days after the creation.

CREATION OF LAND, VEGETATION AND LIGHT

1:9-19 Lights: Light was created on the first day. However, the heavenly bodies that generate light were created on day four. Light does not depend on the existence of a material substance such as the sun. On this fourth day God created the lights (sun, moon, stars) in order to divide day and night for the sake of man.

CREATION OF BIRDS & FISH

1:20-23 Creatures that have life: The Hebrew text reads "souls that have life." It is not that they have souls as man, but that the birds are living creatures. **Fly:** The realm of their flight defines the firmament. This is the sky which existed before the flood. It existed between the canopy of water above the sky and the earth below. In our world today, the canopy of waters above the sky no longer exists because it was brought down to the earth during the flood of

Noah's day. The sky still exists wherein the birds fly, but there is no canopy of waters between the sky and outer space.

Great creatures: From this statement we must assume that all life that was created for the sea came into existence. This would include sea life that no longer exists, but has been preserved in fossils throughout the world. God created more life in the sea than the life that now exists. From His work of creation, all dinosaurs were created, both those that walked on the land and those that lived in the sea. The fossils of dinosaurs is evidence of the tremendous work of God in creation.

CREATION OF ANIMALS & MAN

1:24-31 Image of God: Man is thus created after the spiritual image of God

(1:26). The nature of God is beyond the definitions of the words of our dictionary, which words are defined by human relationships, experiences and physical appearances. Throughout the Bible, therefore, the Holy Spirit used many anthropomorphisms (physical features of man) to explain metaphorically the actions and being of God. It is stated that God "sees" and "breathes." But God is spirit (Jn 4:24), and thus is not confined to human actions and appearances. Creation in the image of God does not refer to a physical appearance. Reference is to the spiritual image of God that dwells within every person through the God-created spirit of man. Being in the image of God refers to the spiritual inclinations of man that make him a spiritual being who seeks to worship a higher power than himself.

CHAPTER 1

REST ON THE SEVENTH DAY

2:1-3 Rested: God "rested" on the seventh day (2:2). But God does not become tired as man. The meaning is that He ceased (rested) from His work of creation. This must be kept in mind when understanding the concept that we are created after the image of God. Reference is not to a physical image, but a spiritual image, otherwise, the Son of God would not have experienced the incarnation (Jn 1:14). We are created after the image of the Creator who is spirit. Because we are so created, all men have a natural yearning to that which is beyond the spiritual (See comments At 17:22-31). **Sanctified it:** It is not that He made it a day of worship. He simply

set it apart as a day of rest. Men were to work six days and rest on the seventh (Ex 20:11; see 23:12; Dt 5:12-14). Many physical things were sanctified throughout the Old Testament. In the sanctification, they were not meant to be objects of worship, but were set apart for spiritual purposes.

Generations Of The Heavens

And The Earth

(2:4 - 4:26)

Outline: (1) Beginning of mankind (2:4-25), (2) Beginning of sin (3:1-7), (3) Beginning of the seedline promise (3:8-24), (4) Beginning of the families of mankind (4:1-15), (5) Beginning of the fall of man (4:16-26)

BEGINNING OF MANKIND

2:4-25 History: The word “generations” in the context of Genesis refers to what is begotten or generated. In this book it is the generations of key people through whom the seedline promise of redemption would come. Since it is the purpose of the writer to give an account of origins, the book is conveniently divided into sections by an introduction that alerts us to the beginning of a new section by mentioning the beginning of a new posterity. Eleven times the writer introduces a section with the statement, “These are the generations ...” (See 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10,27; 25:12,19; 36:1; 37:2). Beginning with this section, man is the offspring who came from the creation of the heavens and the earth, since from the dust of the earth the body of man was formed. Beginning with 2:4, Moses does not present a second account of creation, but focuses on the created heavens and earth giving birth to the human race. For this reason, chapter 2 is not chronological in reference to chapter 1. It is topical in presenting the fall of man in chapter 3. We must not, therefore, read any contradictions between the narratives of chapters 1 and 2. The creation of chapter 1 climaxed with the creation of man. Chapter 2 prepares the reader with added details in the creation of man in preparation for the fall of man into sin in chapter 3. **The Lord God made:** We must not make the error of assuming that the record of the early beginnings of all things is either myth or legend. Though a speaking snake is somewhat unusual, we must remember

that God is working in this event before the fall of man. Since the record is not written as either myth or legend, then we must accept it as the revelation of God concerning our beginnings. It is reasonable to believe that if God exists, and He does, then certainly He would reveal to us how we and all creation came into existence. We must also assume, that if there is a God, then the very nature of God is that He can create. Creation, therefore, is the proof that there is a God. Every phenomenon of the creation is a witness to the fact that God exists and that He has the power to create. **Lord God:** In contrast to the names that were given to pagan gods, this new name in reference to the Eternal Creator is *Jehovah Elohim*. Jehovah, which is translated from various forms of the original Hebrew word, has long since lost its correct pronunciation. The original word used here could have been from either *Jahveh*, *Yahweh* or *Yeheveh*. It is commonly translated “Jehovah.” But because of the variation in spelling, many translations have simply translated with the word “LORD,” with the letters in all capitals. When Moses asked who sent him to Israel in Egypt, God told him to identify Him to Israel as, “I AM THAT I AM” (Ex 3:14). Only with man would God carry a true name among so many idolatrous gods that have been created after the imagination of man.

2:5,6 Rain: These statements must be understood in reference to a different environment than that which we experience today. There was an “expanse” (firmament) created between the waters of

the earth and the canopy of waters above the earth (1:6). The canopy of waters above the earth produced a greenhouse effect that created a warm temperature throughout the world, and thus lush vegetation grew over all the surface of the earth before the flood of Noah's day. It is probable that rain did not occur before the flood of Noah's day, and thus some had a difficult time believing the prophecy of Noah that a great destruction by water was coming. In this context we learn that vegetation throughout the world was watered by a mist that came up from the earth. The lush global vegetation made it possible for animal life throughout the world to exist in great abundance.

2:7 *Breath of Life:* This was not a time when man supposedly changed from being an evolved animal to being a *homo sapien*. Man was created instantly. He immediately became a "living soul," and thus is different from the nature of animals. Man is similar to animals only in the sense that he was created with a body that could exist in the same physical environment as animals. Animals were commanded into existence by the infinite power of Deity, whereas the body of man was made from that which was already created (dust). Man was brought to life by the personal act of God breathing life into him. Thus man is not an advanced form of any animal.

2:8,9 *Garden:* See Dn 13:10; 1 Kg 21:2; Is 51:3. ***Eastward in Eden:*** The garden was in the eastward part of Eden. It was the "garden of Eden" only in that it was in Eden, the paradise of God. Eden

was more than the garden wherein God located man. ***Tree of life:*** Eating from this tree would somehow give eternal life to man (See Gn 3:22-24). ***Tree of the knowledge of good and evil:*** Eating from this tree would bring the curse of death, both spiritually and physically (vs 17; see comments Rm 5:12; 1 Co 15:20-22). It would be spiritual death in that man would be separated from his Creator, who only is eternal. It would be physical death in that man would not have an opportunity to eat of the tree of life, for man was driven from the garden after eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

2:10-14 *Pishon ... Gihon ... Tigris ... Euphrates:* The names of these rivers are given in order to identify the location of the part of Eden in which man dwelt. The Tigris would be identified as the Hiddekel. We do not know the location of the Pishon and Gihon. But according to our present understanding of where both the Tigris and Euphrates are located, we would assume that the Genesis writer wants us to understand that the area about which he is discussing is somewhere in the upper Mesopotamian area.

2:15-17 With every opportunity for good, there comes an opportunity for sin. Since man was created a free-moral agent with the ability to choose, he could be truly free only if he was placed in an environment wherein he could make choices. Thus the garden of Eden offered man the opportunity to choose between good and evil. Some might question why God placed the opportunity for sin in the presence of Adam and Eve. The answer

is in the fact that God is love. God says to man that He loves him. But only a truly free-moral agent can sincerely respond with the statement, "I love you, too." Neither robots, nor free-moral agents who do not have the opportunity to rebel, can respond to a loving God with a sincere statement as, "I love you, too." The tree of the knowledge of good and evil had to exist within the environment of man in order for man to be identified as a true moral being with the ability to choose sin.

2:18-25 *Suitable helper:* The woman was to be a helper in answer to the loneliness of man, and thus a partner and companion in life. Man had a social need that could not be satisfied by any animal. For this reason God created woman to fill his need for companion-

ship. The fact that man is not as animals is thus illustrated in the fact that Adam found no true companionship among the animals. For companionship that was equal with man, God had to create a helper who was suitable for him. And in order for man to find true companionship in woman, she had to be created with the same nature and intellect as man. True companionship could never have existed if woman were in any way created inferior to man. **Names:** Adam was given authority to name the animals. Adam did not evolve from animals, but was given dominion over all animals. His superiority over animals was manifested in the fact that his spiritual and intellectual nature after the image of God allowed him the ability to give names to the animals.

CHAPTER 3

BEGINNING OF SIN

3:1-5 *You will not surely die:* This is the first recorded lie of human history, and thus Satan identifies his deceiving nature (Jn 8:44). By appealing to the command of God that man be dominant over all the animals, Satan tempts man with being a god who is dominant over all things. "*Your eyes will then be opened*" is Satan's temptation that they would attain a higher degree of perception or awareness that is typical of the gods that men create after their own imagination (See 21:19; Is 35:5). It was not that they would be gods, but that they would have a greater awareness of their relationship with God.

3:6,7 Satan appealed to Eve's lust

of the flesh ("*the tree was good for food*"), lust of the eyes ("*pleasant to the eyes*"), and pride of life ("*desired to make one wise*") (1 Jn 2:16). The temptation resulted in her action to commit the sin (Js 1:15). The free moral agents were placed in an environment wherein they could be tempted because there was an opportunity to sin. Eve leaves her submission to her husband and made the fatal choice without the initial advice of her head (1 Tm 2:14). However, Adam is guilty because he yielded to the example of his wife to sin (Rm 5:12; 1 Cor 15:21,22). He did not take the moral initiative to do that which was right. As a result of their sin, their eyes were opened to understand that they were no longer

innocent, but were standing naked before one another (See Ex 32:25; Ez 16:22; Rv 3:17). Their one act of sin introduced sin into the world. As the representative for humanity, Adam brought sin into the world (Rm 5:12). All men personally sin and are separated from God because of the sin of each person (Rm 3:9,10,23; 6:23). Sin has passed to all men because all men personally sin against God.

BEGINNING OF THE SEEDLINE PROMISE

3:8-10 Because of guilt, Adam and Eve hid themselves from a visual presentation of God. God called to Adam, not because He did not know where Adam was, but to bring forth a confession of what he had done. Adam's fear when God approached manifested that separation had now come between God and man as a result of sin (Is 59:1,2).

3:11-13 Adam had known the command not to eat of the tree (2:15-17), and thus he was without excuse. However, he would not take ownership of his own sin. He shifted the responsibility to his wife. And in stating that it was God who created the woman, he was seeking to shift responsibility back to God. Then Eve also sought to shift responsibility to the serpent, making it seem that the serpent played her for a fool. The fact is that the soul that sins will spiritually die (Ez 18:20).

3:14 The extent of the sin is here revealed by the intensity of the punishments that were issued by God. The fact that the serpent's curse was more than the rest of the animals assumes that all

animals were in some way cursed as a result of the sin. But the curse of the serpent was humiliating, for he was given the lowest status of life among all creatures (See Ps 72:9; Is 49:23; Mc 7:17).

3:15 Paul's reference to the crushing of Satan surely refers to this first prophecy of the future work of Jesus to rectify what was here lost in the garden in Eden (Rm 16:20). From the time of this first sin, the curse was that there would be hostility (enmity) between the offspring of Satan (see Mt 13:38,39; Jn 8:44), and the eventual offspring of woman, the Redeemer. Nevertheless, the Seed of woman (Jesus) would eventually crush the head of Satan by His death on the cross, thus freeing man from the control that Satan has over man through sin. In crushing the head of Satan on the cross, Jesus would bruise His heel by His own death. However, His heel would only be bruised because He would be raised from the dead. The Bible student must keep in mind that beginning with the seed of woman in this context, to the time of the cross of Jesus, Satan launched an attack to destroy the seed of woman that would eventually lead to the Seed who would give His life for the sins of all men (See comments Gl 3:16). Satan would make every effort to destroy that which would eventually lead to his own destruction (Mt 25:41). The seedline war of Satan against the seed of women would become so intense that at one time in human history, almost all humanity was wiped from the face of the earth in the days of Noah. Nevertheless, the seedline from Eve would prevail. From the seed of woman would

eventually come the Seed of woman into the world for the salvation of man.

3:16 Eve, as the mother of womanhood, brought upon herself and her posterity quite the opposite of what she sought in verse 6. Her disobedience brought sorrow in childbearing. For her presumptuous act without following the headship of her husband, her desire would always be to the man who would rule over her.

3:17,18 Man had been given the responsibility to work the soil (2:5), but now after the curse, the work would no longer be a joy. By cursing the earth, the fruit of the soil would come forth only as a result of the intense labor of man. Thorns and thistles would be his enemy in receiving the fruit of his labors.

3:19 Though not immediate at the time of the sin, physical death would be the second greatest problem of mankind after his spiritual separation from God by sin. For his sin, Adam immediately suffered the guilt of his sin, for he was spiritually separated from God (Is 59:1,2; Rm 5:12). For his sin, he would also suffer the consequence of physical death, since he would be driven from the tree of life (3:22; 1 Co 15:20-22). Because he could not eat of the tree of life, the natural processes of his body growing old

would continue until he physically died.

3:20,21 There was hope of a posterity through Eve ("life"), since she, through childbearing, would be the one through whom humanity would be preserved. The coats of skins meant that some animal had to die in order to rectify the nakedness of man. And from this time on we would assume that animals were commissioned to die in sacrifices for the sins of men until the final death for all sin on the cross of calvary (Rm 3:25; compare Hb 10:1-4).

3:22-24 *Has become like one of Us:* It was not that man became in nature and character as God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It was only that man learned the guilt and consequence of rebellion against divine law that only God can establish. Unless men have the opportunity to live perpetually in rebellion against God, his opportunity for eternal life on earth had to be taken from him. He was thus driven from Eden in order to be responsible for his own existence through the cultivation of the ground. Angelic beings (cherubim) were set in place in order to guarantee that no man would have the opportunity of partaking of the tree of life. All men, therefore, must now physically die because they cannot eat of the tree of life (Hb 9:27).

CHAPTER 4

BEGINNING OF THE FAMILIES OF MANKIND

4:1,2 We do not know if Eve believed that she fulfilled the promise of 3:15 by giving birth to her firstborn, Cain. It was with the "help of the Lord" that

she affirmed the continuation of humanity, regardless of the sin in Eden. Cain and Abel were quite different in their temperaments. Cain liked farming. Abel liked shepherding the animals.

4:3-5 Both sons were religious, and

thus brought forth to the Lord the fruit of their labors. It was not that firstlings of the flock were superior to the offering of the fields. Abel's sacrifice was more excellent in that it had been commanded by the Lord, which command is not here stated in the text, but assumed from the statement of Hebrews 11:4. The offerings thus manifested the character of the two sons. Abel's was out of faith because he did what God commanded, whereas Cain's was out of selfish ambition and rebellion, which is subsequently manifested in what follows in the text.

4:6-8 Cain's countenance had fallen in his anger because he knew that he had not acted according to the will of God. His knowledge of his sin assumes his knowledge of what God had originally commanded concerning acceptable sacrifices. Sin was in the heart of Cain, and thus he could not keep the door of sin shut. He allowed it to open, and in doing so, the opportunity presented itself to act in a murderous manner toward his brother. His action was deliberate and without provocation. It was murder in the first degree.

4:9-12 The brotherhood of civilization can exist only in the fact that we are our brother's keeper. By his murderous act of terrorism against his brother, Cain denied the very foundation upon which civilized men can cohabit in the world. His privileges of bringing forth fruit from the ground are thus taken away. He would become a fugitive from society and a vagabond in restlessly wandering from place to place. The word "fugitive," and the phrase "whoever finds me" (vs

14), here indicate that Adam and Eve were bearing other children before and at the time of this tragedy. We do not know how long it was after their birth when Cain killed Abel. But judging from the age of Adam and Eve, it could have been hundreds of years. During this time Adam and Eve gave birth to many sons and daughters, who also gave birth to countless children who were populating the earth. We must not assume by the time of this act of murder, therefore, that only Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel existed on the face of the earth. Because the narrative mentions only these personalities does not mean that they only lived on the earth at the time the events took place.

4:13-15 When faced with accountability, hate will always turn to fear and self-pity. God's mercy is shown in the fact that their sudden death did not take place as a result of Cain's murderous act. Cain's punishment was merciful in the fact that he was not immediately struck dead. It was serious, however, in the fact that he was allowed to live out his punishment as an aimless wanderer among humanity. The "land of Nod" was not a specific location, but a general area east of Eden where Cain wandered among other descendants of Adam and Eve.

BEGINNING OF THE FALL OF MAN

4:16-24 By implication, the wife of Cain was a near relative with the other "sons and daughters" of Adam and Eve (5:4). From this genealogy the wickedness of men developed upon the face of

the earth. Through polygamous marriages men began to multiply rapidly. They learned skills for the development of society. However, an apostasy from God developed as the center of reference for moral behavior in society turned from the laws of God to men. Man started doing that which pleased the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and what manifested pride in life. This moral degradation is illustrated in the act of Lamech who killed simply because someone wounded him (vs 23). Though mankind reached heights in achieving great things, he sunk into the depths of sin. Economic development never assumes moral allegiance to the will of God.

4:25,26 The word “again” does not indicate that this was only the third time

Adam had either laid with his wife, or the third time she conceived. It simply means that he had sexual intercourse with his wife again in order to conceive a son to carry on the righteousness that was characteristic of Abel. The name “Seth” means “appointed” or “placed.” Since Abel was the child who was appointed to bring into the world a posterity of faith among men, Seth was to be his successor. The posterity of Cain was evil. But the posterity of Seth was that faith in God would continue among men throughout the history of the world.

The Generations Of Adam

(5:1 - 6:8)

Outline: (1) Righteous descendants from Seth (5:1-32), (2) Moral degradation of humanity (6:1-8)

CHAPTER 5

RIGHTEOUS DESCENDANTS FROM SETH

5:1-32 The first two verses of this chapter are a review of 1:27,28. After the history of the genealogy of Cain, wherein men digressed into habitual sin, the Genesis writer wants us to understand that God originally intended that men live after the spiritual image of God. This image would move man to focus on the spiritual, not the physical. Moses in this context brings to the forefront the behavior of Enoch who walked with God (24) as opposed to those who rebelled against God.

There are interpretative principles that must be kept in mind when studying the genealogies of the Old and New Testaments. The genealogies are usually se-

lective in the sense that every person of the ancestry is not necessarily mentioned. The words “father” and “son” apply to any ancestor of a particular lineage, and thus at times a person of a genealogy is left out. For this reason, the genealogies are not meant to be strict chronologies of an ancestry, but to give the general lineage of the individual’s descendants.

Since the genealogical records of Genesis 5 and 11, in comparison with Matthew 1 and Luke 3, leave out some generations, we would assume that we cannot use the genealogies as chronologies to determine the time of creation in reference to the birth of Jesus. We would assume that since generations were left out of the genealogies, that the creation took place further in the past than the

years that are listed in the chronologies of Genesis. How many years in the past cannot be determined by the years of the generations that are listed in the Genesis chronologies.

What is revealed in a comparison between the genealogy of Cain and Seth is that the descendants of Cain moved their ancestors into wickedness, whereas the genealogy of Seth eventually descended to Enoch who walked with God and Noah who was righteous before God (29). It was through righteous Noah that God would begin the existence of man anew after the flood with a genealogy of men of faith.

The length of the lives of those mentioned in this chapter have often been questioned. However, we must keep in mind that before the flood of Noah's day, the atmosphere and physical environment

of the world was very different than what we experience today. It is believed by most biblical scientists that the earth was encompassed by a water vapor that protected man from the damaging ultra violet rays of the sun, thus giving the earth a universal warm climate.

One of the negative aspects of the longevity of mankind was that the wickedness of particularly evil men had a long lasting impact on society. As a result, every imagination of man became continually evil (6:5). This is the lesson that Moses wants us to understand as we move into the narrative concerning the flood of Noah's era. Moses wants us to understand the lesson of the digression of mankind into wickedness in order that we guard ourselves from such in our own societies.

CHAPTER 6

MORAL DEGRADATION OF HUMANITY

Studies in the general rate of population growth, figuring in wars and famines, indicate that the present population of the world began about 3,000 to 4,000 B.C. We would place the time of the beginning of the population of the world from Noah to at least 5,000 to 6,000 years ago. Some have suggested a time from 7,000 to 8,000 years ago according to present population growth figures. This would place the creation of the world further back in history to possibly beyond 8,000 years ago, depending on the amount of time we would calculate that transpired between Adam and Noah.

6:1-4 We cannot interpret that the "sons of God" were fallen heavenly beings who were incarnate in order to corrupt humanity by marrying women of this world. We must keep in mind that angels are without sexual orientation (Mt 22:30). As in Psalm 73:15 ("the generation of your children") and Deuteronomy 32:5 ("his children"), the reference is to the spiritual "sons of the living God" (Hs 1:10). These were those who were obedient to God. They joined themselves to those who were not of faith (the daughters of men), and thus allowed themselves to be led away into degradation. ***My Spirit will not always contend:*** God thus established a deadline that would end His

contending (strife) with those who would totally corrupt the world, knowing that a seedline of faith had to be preserved for the coming Seed of woman (Gl 3:16). ***Nephilim***: The word “giants” in some translations is from the Hebrew word *nephilim*. Reference is not to men of stature, but to those who are either “fallen ones” or those who fall upon others. They were a vicious and dominant people who subjugated civilizations by populating the earth through the “daughters of men,” and thus bringing wickedness upon the earth. The result of their wicked culture led to the digression of mankind.

6:5-8 Humanity had reached the point of no return. Degradation was the norm of social behavior, and thus, society was beyond repentance and in a state of self-destruction. God’s “repentance” (“sorrow”) was not as men who would repent of evil deeds. God does not repent as men (Nm 23:19; 1 Sm 15:29). When man turns from the path that God intended that he should go down, then God changes His relationship with man. As repentance means to change one’s course of behavior, so God changes His course from a loving protector of man to a God of rebuke and judgment. In this context God sorrowed over the creation of man because He now had to change His relationship with man to one of destruction in the flood that was to come. The result of God’s love, the creation of man, must now reap the consequences of His judgment. The purpose for which man was created, that is, to populate heaven, had now failed in humanity. However, Noah found favor with God

because of his obedient faith.

Generations Of Noah

(6:9 - 9:28)

Outline: (1) Noah commissioned to build ark (6:9-22), (2) God’s judgment by the global flood (7:1-24), (3) Noah’s deliverance from the flood (8:1-19), (4) Noah coming out of the ark (8:20,22), (5) God’s covenant with humanity (9:1-17), (6) The sin and curse of Ham and Canaan (9:18-29)

NOAH COMMISSIONED TO BUILD ARK

This section of Scripture is written to give an account of what God did in human history to preserve mankind in view of what had happened to society as a whole. His preservation of humanity came through His salvation of Noah and his generations. Since man had moved into a behavior of self-destruction (vs 5), God changed His preserving relationship of love to an appointed time of destruction. Because of his righteousness, Noah was chosen, not only to preserve mankind, the creation of God, but also to preserve the seedline through which the Savior of the world would redeem those as Noah who continued to walk by faith.

6:9,10 Noah was just in that he lived according to the standard of God’s law. He was blameless in his uncompromising loyalty to God. As with Enoch (5:24), he enjoyed a close fellowship with God because of his obedience to the will of God.

6:11,12 In contrast to the character and behavior of Noah who had a genuine faith and obedient behavior, the rest of society had given up moral guidance.

Society lived in a state of violence of one man against another. It was thus a state of social self-destruction. As God “looked on” this situation (compare 30:1,9; 50:15), action had to be taken, lest righteous Noah be consumed in the degradation of mankind, and the fore-ordained plan of God to save the righteous be cancelled by the total destruction of humanity.

6:13 The “end of all flesh” had come. This judgment in time would typify the judgment of God on the Jewish State in A.D. 70 (Jd 14,15) and the final judgment at the end of time (See 2 Pt 3). We must not conclude that this was to be a local flood in the region of Noah’s dwelling. Phrases as “all flesh” strongly indicate that this flood would be universal, for man had universally become corrupt and violent. If it were only a local flood, then the corrupt and violent nature of a neighboring society would eventually overtake Noah’s generations, and thus another man as Noah would have to be called to preserve again a generation of faith. If it were only a local flood, then certainly God would have instructed Noah to simply migrate to another area.

6:14-16 It is not known for sure what gopher wood was, but some translators assume it was acacia wood. With asphalt (tarmac) as a sealant, the boxlike shape of the ark would be perfect as a floating barn. It would be the ideal floating habitat for every kind of animal with genes that would populate the world with every species now known to man. With eighteen inches being the assumed length of a cubit, the ark would have been 450

feet long (about 139 meters), 75 feet wide (about 23 meters), and 45 feet high (about 14 meters). For ventilation and light, there was a window that may have encompassed the top edge of the ark. A door was on the side of the ark, though no information is given concerning the relationship of the door to the three levels of the ark.

6:17,18 The interpretation of the words that are used to describe the flood clearly indicate that the flood was a global catastrophe. It was to be such in order to guarantee the total annihilation of humanity, except for Noah and his immediate family. A covenant is thus established with Noah as a promise of God that he would not be destroyed (9:9-17). This is the first time the word “covenant” is used in Scripture. It here means a promise that God extends to Noah and his family that is based on the condition that Noah build the ark.

6:19-22 The word “kind” in the classification of animals has no equivalent in modern science (See 1:21,24,25). It would be erroneous to associate the “kinds” of the account here with the modern scientific classification of species, since it would not be reasonable that ancient civilizations would use modern definitions to identify animals. “Male and female” of every kind were to be taken for the purpose of starting the repopulating of the animal kingdom after the flood. Because of his faith, Noah moved with fear to be obedient to everything that God had commanded (Hb 11:7). And while carrying out what he had been commanded to do, he preached

to his generation in order that God's opportunity for salvation be extended to others (2 Pt 2:5). Noah built in hope that possibly others would join him in the ark in order to be preserved from the impending flood judgment to come. Regardless

of his almost one hundred years in preaching while the ark was under construction, he had not one convert other than his wife, sons and their wives (Compare 1 Pt 3:18-22).

CHAPTER 7

GOD'S JUDGMENT BY THE GLOBAL FLOOD

7:1 We must keep in mind that the coming of the Lord to speak again to Noah to enter the ark is about one hundred years after the initial commandment to build the ark. Throughout this time, Noah preached the righteousness of God while building on the ark (1 Pt 3:18-20; compare Jd 14,15). We often wonder what mocking he had to endure as he spoke of a global flood that would come and destroy the face of the earth. His faith is exemplified in the fact that he preached something that had never before happened in the history of the world.

7:2-5 It was now time to enter the ark, and thus God reminded Noah concerning the animals that were to be taken into the ark. The "clean" animals were to come in by sevens in order to reproduce after the flood in greater numbers. These were the animals that were to be used for animal sacrifices. Of the unclean animals, only pairs were to be taken. Noah was given seven days to complete the task of bringing the animals into the ark.

7:6-10 In order to expedite the work of bringing all the animals into the ark, God brought the animals to Noah and his three sons. At the end of the seven days,

it started to rain. The first drop of rain marked the time for the waters to be upon the face of the earth, and thus change the history of mankind and the surface of the world.

7:11,12 The subterranean waters of the earth were unleashed upon the face of the earth. The watery canopy above the firmament was brought down upon the earth in a torrential rain. This cataclysmic activity produced tectonic activity that changed the entire face of the earth. Because few statements are made about what geologically happened, some assume that the flood was a local wash-out. But we must remember that the Bible was not written as a textbook on geology. Because of the present geological phenomena we see throughout the world today, we can conclude that the global geological upheaval that took place during the the flood was truly catastrophic. The world that existed was overthrown by water (2 Pt 3:5,6).

7:13-16 To emphasize the preservation that existed inside the ark, Genesis again records the entrance of all those who would be saved from the global destruction that would take place outside the ark. Emphasis is on the fact that the Lord shut them in, and thus those who would be preserved were sealed in by the

Lord. Those who were destroyed were shut out by the Lord.

7:17-20 The increasing of the waters meant that the event was cataclysmic for forty days and nights. The waters “prevailed” exceedingly upon the earth in that they worked to change the appearance of the face of the earth. The word “prevailed” signifies that the waters took control over the soil, and thus moved the soil to and fro in order to re-surface the earth. In order to affirm that the waters prevailed upon and over all the earth, we are informed that the waters rose to over twenty-two feet (about 6.8 meters) above the highest mountain.

7:21-24 In order to emphasize the universality of the flood, the Holy Spirit uses the word “all” in reference to both animals and mankind. Every animal and every man of all the earth was destroyed by the global waters. The resurfacing of the earth carried on for 150 days. It was during this time that the face of the earth was changed to be as it is today. It is significant to understand what the Holy Spirit said of this event in 2 Peter 3:5,6. *“For this they willfully forget, that by the word of God the heavens were of old and the earth standing out of the water and in the water; through which the world that then existed was destroyed, being overflowed with water.”* In the context of 2 Peter 3, Peter compares the heavens and earth of old with the *“heavens and the earth that are now”* (2 Pt 3:7). Though we do not know all the details, we do know that we now live in a different physical world than the world that existed before the flood. Therefore, we can

assume many things in reference to how the Genesis flood changed the physical and biological environment of the world. Some of the changes that took place would be the formation of the frozen north and south poles after the flood, since before the flood the watery canopy above the firmament would have produced a greenhouse effect that brought warmth throughout the world. The world before the flood was lush with vegetation and animal life. During the flood, all animals and vegetation were compacted into enormous subterranean pockets that were compressed into the coal beds and oil cavities of the present earth. After the flood, the phenomenon of rain appeared, for the subterranean waters of the earth no longer came up from the ground as a mist to water the earth as in the days of the garden of Eden. After the flood humanity would have to suffer the results of direct sunlight, and thus the beginning of the rainbow phenomenon of light being separated into colors through falling water droplets. The age of men thus decreased in this new environment where the direct sunlight of the sun brought its damaging ultra violet rays into direct contact with the flesh of men. The standards of measurement of modern-day methods of dating fossils would certainly be out of alignment in comparing the age of fossilized plants and animals that lived after the flood with the fossils of plants and animals that lived before the flood or died during the flood. This is especially critical in reference to the Carbon 14 method of dating. Carbon 14 (C-14) is produced in the atmosphere by the

bombardment of the atmosphere by sunlight. This C-14 is then ingested into living plant and animal life. When the animal or plant dies, no more C-14 is ingested. Scientists thus measure the amount of C-14 in the fossils of plants and animals, comparing their results with the known degeneration of C-14 over a period of time in the present. The problem in measuring all fossils, however, is in the fact that before the flood of Noah's day there would be less C-14 in the atmosphere because the atmosphere was shielded from direct sunlight by the watery canopy. This means that less C-14 would be ingested into all plant and ani-

mal life. Therefore, according to the present known degeneration of C-14, any plant or animal that died before the flood would be measured much older than any plant or animal that lived after the flood because the plant and animal that died before the flood would have ingested less C-14. These and many other things must be considered when comparing our present world with the world that existed before the flood. We live in a different world than that which existed before the days of the flood. Peter said that that world was overthrown by the water of a great flood.

CHAPTER 8

NOAH'S DELIVERANCE FROM THE FLOOD

In 6:13,14 & 7:6 God gave the command to build the ark. Noah was 600 years old. In 7:7-10 Noah was given seven days to gather the animals into the ark. After the seven days, and in the 17th day, 2nd month of Noah's year (600), the rains began (7:10,11). After 40 days, the rain stopped (7:12,17). The flood was upon the earth for 150 days (7:24; 8:3). After 150 days from the beginning of the rainfall, the ark rested on Ararat in the 17th day, 7th month of Noah (8:4). In 73 days the water receded, and in the 1st day, of the 10th month of Noah's 101st year, the tops of the mountains appeared. After 40 more days, a raven was released that flew back and forth great distances from the ark (8:7). Noah then sent out a dove (8:8,9). After seven days a second dove was released and returned with a

leaf (8:10,11). After another seven days a dove was released and did not return (8:12). Noah waited for 36 more days. In the 1st day, 1st month, of Noah's 601st year, the waters receded from the face of the earth to form the present oceans. After another 57 days the earth was settled into its present form and Noah left the ark on the 27th day, 2nd month, and 601st year of Noah (8:14). From the beginning of the flood to its end was one year and 10 days. Throughout this time, the waters went to and fro on the surface of the earth.

8:1-5 Everyone in the ark was remembered with a heart of compassion by the One who cleansed the earth of human corruption. It seems that the "wind" now becomes a part of the physical environment in which humanity would live. Oceans are now formed as the waters receded from the face of the earth. In

the process, great canyons and valleys were formed by water moving the unsettled and muddy soil of the earth. This process took place over a period of about 183 days from the time the rain stopped and the tops of the mountains appeared. During this time the hydrodynamic force of the water molded a new surface on the earth as enormous pressures moved great segments of the yet unsettled soil when the waters moved into forming oceans. One can only imagine the enormous forces that produced continual tsunamic movement of the waters that reshaped the face of the earth. The hydrodynamic re-surfacing of the earth is now observed in the present geological formations of our world.

8:6-19 Noah sent out a raven and two doves in order to determine if land had yet appeared. **Raven:** The raven went to and from the ark until the day that the waters had dried. It was not until the third mission of a dove that did not return, however, that he knew the waters were gathering into their present locations. After the last dove did not re-

turn, he waited another 57 days. The change in the Hebrew word *harevu* (dry) in verse 13 to another word, *yavesah* (dry) in verse 14 emphasizes a more complete drying of the face of the earth.

NOAH COMING OUT OF THE ARK

8:20-22 Some of the clean animals that were taken into the ark were sacrificed (See 7:2-9). God “smelled a sweet aroma” in that He received the contrite act of a righteous soul. **The imagination of man's heart is evil:** It was not that God had made man evil, or cursed him with a sinful nature, or any original sin had come from the sin of Adam. From youth, the time when one can make a free-moral decision to obey God, one is inclined by his sinful environment to choose rebellion. The emphasis is on what one chooses to do, not on the nature of the one who makes the choices. It is in this context, however, that God will never again destroy the world by water, though an impending destruction by fire is yet in the future (2 Pt 3:10-13).

CHAPTER 9

GOD'S COVENANT WITH HUMANITY

9:1-4 Noah and his sons were to replenish the earth with humankind. In reference to food, mankind was now given permission to eat meat as he ate of the plants of the earth. The limitation is not to eat meat in which blood remained, for blood was the substance of life. Man was now made dominant over every animal. For this reason, God instilled the

fear of man in the animals for their self-preservation.

9:6,7 Man was given the right of capital punishment in order to protect society from those who give up their right to cohabit in society, as well as to instill fear in the hearts of those who would take the life of others. This right is given in the midst of the command to produce life in order to populate the world.

9:8-12 God made a covenant, not

only with Noah, but with his descendants, which would include all mankind, and also all the animal life of the world. The covenant (promise) was that He would never again destroy the earth with flood waters.

9:13-17 The rainbow appeared to all men since environmental conditions were made for weather development to exist throughout the world. The falling rain that produces a rainbow was a sign that never again would rain remain in the atmosphere to the extent that forty days of rain could occur. The rainbow, therefore, signaled the fact that God would not allow a flood to happen as it did in the days of Noah. The rainbow was a reminder to God not to cause another flood.

THE SIN & CURSE OF HAM & CANAAN

9:18-23 Noah was a farmer as Adam's son Cain. This is the first time wine is mentioned in the Bible, and in the context it is referred to in a negative sense in that Noah became drunk. Since this new fruit of the vine was probably unknown to Noah and his family, in his innocence his consumption of too much led to some unfortunate consequences. In his senseless condition he remained naked and exposed for the opportunity of Canaan to be cursed (See Lv 18:5-19; 20:17-21; 1 Sm 20:30). Both Shem and

Japheth were discrete enough to guard themselves from the opportunity to look on their father's nakedness. But Ham, whether by accident or intention, discovered the nakedness of Noah, and thus Canaan bore the burden of his curse.

9:24-29 Noah was not so drunk that he did not realize that his nakedness had been witnessed by Ham. As a result of seeing his father's nakedness, Ham, the father of Canaan, was left without a blessing, but Canaan was specifically cursed to be the servant of his brethren. The character of Canaan is revealed in the nature of his descendants. They became an immoral and base people who eventually became a curse to the Israelites. The Canaanites and their gods became the symbol of moral degradation and rebellion against God. God blessed Shem and his descendants who established a moral lineage throughout history. The blessing of Japheth resulted in their becoming a superior people in the political world that was expressed by their descendants in the Persians, Greeks, Romans and other dominant civilizations of the ancient world.

Generations Of The Sons Of Noah

(10:1 - 11:9)

Outline: (1) The sons of Japheth (10:1-5), (2) The sons of Ham (10:6-20), (3) The sons of Shem (10:21-32), (4) The tower of Babel (11:1-9)

CHAPTER 10

THE SONS OF JAPHETH

10:1-5 From the names that are given in this chapter, some of the places of the settlement of the fathers is known, though

many places are unknown. The sons of Japheth were determined by nationalistic and linguistic boundaries. These descendants occupied the regions that

stretched from modern-day Turkey, the islands of the Mediterranean, and into southern Europe. The descendants of Gomer have been identified in the records of Assyria as the Cimmerians. Magog is a term that probably referred to all northerners, particularly those of eastern Turkey (See Ez 38:2; 39:1,6). Madai would be the Median nation. Javan would be the Ionian Greeks. Tubal would be the Aegean Island inhabitants or the Etruscans. Ashkenaz would be the residents of the Caucasian mountains near the Black and Caspian Sea (See Jr 51:27). Riphath possibly lived in Anatolia or Turkey. Togarmah possibly lived near Carchemish. Elishah lived in Cyprus, Tarshish in the southern coast of Spain, Kittim in Cyprus, and Dodanim possibly resided on Rhodes of the Aegean Sea. For the Israelites, the listing of all these peoples made the written word of God a textbook on the origin of people throughout the world.

THE SONS OF HAM

10:6-12 The Cushites established Kish in the Mesopotamian valley. They later became the Kassites, some of whom possibly migrated to southern Arabia. They then moved into Abyssinia of east Africa (Ethiopia). Nimrod became the honored leader of the Cushites. He built a great city and kingdom that was composed of the city states of Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh. In contrast to a shepherd who has the people at heart, Nimrod was a "hunter." Reference is probably here to the meaning that he subdued people, rather than being a hunter of animals.

10:13,14 Mizraim is the Hebrew name for Egypt. West of Egypt is Ludim, or Libya. Pathrusim were the people of Pathros in upper Egypt and Casluhim is the Philistines, and Caphtorim the people of Crete.

10:15-20 The Canaanites were known as Phoenicians by the Greeks. Their principal cities were the coastal cities of Sidon and Tyre that still exist in Lebanon. They were the dominant group of Palestine from as far north as Sidon to as far south as Gaza and into parts of Egypt. From Heth came the Hittites who became established in Palestine and who built the city of Hebron (23). From Heth came the Jebusites who dwelt in the area of Jerusalem (2 Sm 5:6-10). The Amorites dwelt in the highlands of Palestine and the territory east of the Jordan River.

THE SONS OF SHEM

10:21-32 The children of Eber came to be referred to as the Hebrew people. They were a Semitic-speaking nomadic people who settled around the Arabian Desert. The Elamites dwelt east of the Mesopotamian valley, whereas Asshur became the people of Assyria. The descendants of Arphaxad possibly settled northeast of the Assyrians. The descendants of Aram became the Syrian people. Their language, Aramaic, became the international language of communication during the Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian empires. The sons of Uz established a city state east of the Jordan in the Arabian Desert where Job lived (Jb 1:1). The descendants of Sheba established the area

south of Egypt from which the queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon (1 Kg 10:1-13).

CHAPTER 11

THE TOWER OF BABEL

11:1,2 Immediately after the flood, the descendants of Noah were bound together by a common language. The building of the tower of Babel took place before the migration of the people who are described in chapter 10. With their common language, they migrated to Shinar, that is the Mesopotamian valley, through which runs the Tigris and Euphrates rivers.

11:3,4 Their decision was against the will of God to multiply and repopulate the entire world. Lest they be dispersed throughout the world, they sought to make a common name for themselves with the building of a tower to reach as far as possible into the sky. This tower could possibly have been as the Babylonian ziggurats that were built similar to the pyramids of Egypt. They were made of burned brick, some structures reaching as high as 300 feet (about 90 meters). These were often constructed in the middle of cities with a pagan god honored on the top.

11:5,6 God was evidently left out of the plan to build the tower and city. What is revealed in verse 6 is the ability that was instilled within man upon his creation. If men have a common language and goal, they have the ability to work together in order to accomplish that which they imagine. This is the nature of man that God created after His image (1:26). The problem was that men here

use the gift of God in rebellion against His will.

11:7-9 The best way to stop misguided men was to confuse their speech. Being unable to communicate instructions and dreams to one another, the inhabitants immediately gave up their common goal and set out across the world in obedience to the original plan of God to populate the world. From that time the city was called "Babel," a word that means "confusion." The reason God wanted man to scatter throughout the world was to prevent another total degradation of the human race. If pockets of humanity lived separate from one another, their separation would spiritually insulate their evils from one another.

Generations Of Shem

(11:10-25)

Outline: (1) The genealogy of Shem (11:10-25)

THE GENEALOGY OF SHEM

This section of Genesis is Moses' account of the origin of the semitic nations that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would eventually encounter in their wanderings through Canaan.

11:10-25 This genealogy seems to begin where the genealogy of chapter 5 concluded. As Noah was the tenth listed person from Adam, Terah is here listed as the tenth descendant from Shem, though we understand that the genealogy is not here listed in order to give every

descendant in the chronology of each generation. Unlike the lineage of Shem that is given in 10:21-32, this lineage is traced through Arphaxad. The other sons of Shem are ignored in order to bring the genealogy to Abram. The purpose for this genealogy, therefore, is to bring the seedline directly from Noah to the father of our faith, Abram (Abraham). We are thus reminded that all genealogies before the birth of the Seed (Gl 3:16) were meant to bring our attention to the fulfillment of God's promise that from the seed of woman (3:15), Satan's head would be crushed by the Seed. Chapter 12 introduces us to God's effort to preserve the seedline promise to bring the Christ into the world. Satan almost had his victory in the destruction of all humanity. However, God preserved a posterity of man through Noah. In the building of Babel,

humanity was once again turning from God, and thus God turned to building a posterity of faith through Abraham, and eventually through a nation that would come from his descendants.

Generations Of Terah

(11:26 - 25:11)

Outline: (1) Generations of Terah (11:26-32), (2) Wanderings of Abraham (12:1 – 25:11)

GENERATIONS OF TERAH

11:26-32 Ur of the Chaldees was a wealthy city state of the ancient world. The city was destroyed around 2100 B.C. After its destruction, those people in the area who migrated to the west were known as the Amorites. The migration of Terah's family was initially to go to Canaan, but the family came to Haran and settled there where Terah eventually died.

CHAPTER 12

WANDERINGS OF ABRAHAM

12:1-3 Abraham was first called by God while he lived in Ur of the Chaldees (At 7:3; Hb 11:8). His call was to leave his home and extended family in order to go to a country that God would show him. This he did only after the entire clan migrated to Haran. From Abraham God promised that He would (1) make of him a great nation, (2) give him a great name, (3) give him a land, and (4) from his seed, bless all the earth.

12:4-7 Abraham did not argue with God when the commission was given, and thus he set out to an unknown land. Since he was called in Ur, it could be assumed that his call was what prompted

Terah to set out with the entire extended family to move to Canaan. In their journey they first came to Sichem, or Shechem (Gn 33:18,19; Js 24:1) or Sychar (Jn 4:5). Because the Canaanites were already in the land, it seems that God needed to reaffirm to Abraham that this was the actual land that He would give to his descendants.

12:8,9 Abraham came to Hai, or "the ruins." Archaeological discoveries have indicated that this city was actually in ruins about 500 years before Abraham's arrival. It was a fortress city that had originally been built by the Egyptians around 2900 B.C. but was destroyed around 2500 B.C. It was here that Abraham built an-

other altar and worshiped God.

12:10-20 Because of the severity of the drought in Canaan, Abraham took his extended family into the delta regions of Egypt in order to find pasture land for his herds and food for his family. Because of the beauty of Sarah, Abraham conceived a plan to spare his own life in view of the lust of the Egyptians for beautiful women. He thus instructed Sarah to lie about her being his wife. Actually,

Sarah was his half sister. She was the daughter of one of the wives of Terah, but not of Abraham's mother (20:12). It was a half truth, but a deceptive statement. As a result of this lie, the house of Pharaoh was plagued. So instead of Abraham being a blessing to the house of Pharaoh, he was a curse on this occasion. Pharaoh subsequently reprimanded Abraham and expelled him from Egypt for his deception.

CHAPTER 13

13:1-4 The Negev is the south, which is the country of the Edomites south of Palestine (12:9). **Very rich:** Abraham was very rich with livestock, gold and silver (17:12,13,23). He returned to his camping area between Bethel and Hai. We assume that the famine of the land had now come to an end, and thus he and all who were with him, and their livestock, could again reside in the land of Canaan.

13:5-9 The land was still recovering from the drought, and thus unable to support the tremendous herds of both Abraham and Lot. **Strife between the herds-men:** Because they were brethren, Abraham desired that there be no strife between the two families. He thus gave his nephew, Lot, the choice as to which area he would take his herds.

13:10-13 Though the plain of Jordan was adequate for the herds of Lot,

the cities of the plain were corrupt with sin. He made a good decision for the herds, but a bad one for his family. The inhabitants of Sodom were even at this time exceedingly wicked. Since his family would initially dwell among the herds in the plain, it seems that Lot felt that he would be untouched by the wickedness of the cities. Lot was a country herdsman. Unfortunately, the unrighteousness of the cities eventually reached the country. When we meet Lot again, he is living in the city of Sodom in a culture of wickedness.

13:14-18 After the departure of Lot, the Lord again renewed His promise to Abraham to give him the land of the Canaanites. He also renewed His promise that his descendants would be as the dust of the earth. It was at this time that Abraham moved to the area of Hebron that was at the time known as Mamre.

CHAPTER 14

14:1-7 The alliance of the four kings from the Mesopotamian area and the

Hittites to the north was too strong for the defenses of the five kings of the south.

The kings of the south surrendered, and for twelve years served the foreigners.

Horites: The word “Horites” was probably a term that referred to the Edomites (36:20; Dt 2:12,22) in whose land there were rich deposits of copper ore in the southern part of the Arabah. It was undoubtedly this treasure for which the northern kings were looking.

14:8-12 The battle in the valley of Siddim went bad for the defending kings. They were routed in complete chaos, many of the people were taken as slaves, among whom was Lot.

14:13-16 *When Abraham heard:* In hearing of the capture of Lot and his family, the peaceful patriarch Abraham became the leader of an army of 318 soldiers to fight against an alliance of kings. After a journey of about 125 kilometers north to the area of Dan, through the cover of night, Abraham was strategically able to defeat the northern invaders and save Lot, his people, and the remainder

of his goods.

14:17-20 Upon his return from the slaughter of the kings, Abraham was met by the king of Sodom at the valley of Shaveh, which could possibly have been the Kidron valley near Jerusalem. **Melchizedek:** Melchizedek, king of Salem (Jerusalem), also met Abraham and his men. This Gentile priest and king of Salem blessed Abraham, to whom Abraham also gave a tithe of the goods that he had taken from the kings (See comments Hb 7).

14:21-24 Though the king of Sodom was being generous in not requesting the return of the goods that he had lost to the invading kings, Abraham reminded him that he had made an oath to God that he would not keep anything that belonged to the king of Sodom. Abraham knew that if he did not do this, this wicked king would later assert that it was he who made Abraham rich.

CHAPTER 15

15:1-6 *Shield ... reward:* God was aware of Abraham's anxiety concerning his lack of children to carry out the fulfillment of the promises of Genesis 12:1-3 (13:14-17). God thus promised Abraham protection. It is a reward for one to have the God of heaven as his God, which God is always gracious to aid in times of trial (1 Co 10:13). **No offspring:** Under the Hurrian law of the time, if a man and wife had no children to carry on their heritage or inherit their possessions, they could adopt a servant to be the heir of all that they had. It is possible that Abra-

ham had adopted Eliezer for this purpose.

Stars: God reassured Abraham that Eliezer was not the man or plan, but that there would be an heir from the fruit of his loins. His descendants would be as the stars of the heaven in number. Because of his faith, therefore, Abraham believed in the promise. His faith in the promise cancelled his previous doubt, and thus, his faith brought him righteous before God (See comments Rm 4 & Gl 3).

15:7-11 Covenants were common between individuals and nations at the

time of Abraham. In this context, God prepared Abraham for the establishment of a covenant with Him. In the making of a covenant, the promises of the covenant are first declared, and then sacrifices are made to seal the agreement. The Lord here directs Abraham to prepare for the sealing of the covenant that He is making with him.

15:12-16 God informed Abraham that the fulfillment of the land promise would not happen immediately. His descendants would first go into Egypt, and there become servants to the Egyptians. They would be residents in Egypt for 400 years as they grew into a great nation. ***Iniquity of the Amorites:*** Herein is revealed God's foreknowledge of the disintegration of a society into one that was similar to the degraded societies of Sodom and Gomorrah. Societies morally digress to the point of no return, to the point that every imagination is only evil continually (6:5). It is at this point of no moral return that God brings the judgment of destruction. This text thus reveals why God gave the command that when Israel would enter the promised land many years later that they were to destroy all the inhabitants of the land, lest the sin of the culture infect the children of Israel.

15:17-21 The covenant included the promise of the land wherein those listed in verses 19-21 would dwell at the time this covenant was to be fulfilled. It is significant to understand that the reason for a possession of land to be included in the promises of the covenant was that God's chosen culture of humanity (the nation of Israel) was to be separated from the corrupting cultures of the world that were bent on rebellion against God. In order to preserve Israel until the fulfillment of the promises, specifically the promise of the blessing (Christ) who would bless all nations, Israel was to dwell in the land. Once the Christ came, the promises were fulfilled, and thus Israel had no right to claim the land, for there was no more need for them to dwell in the land to keep themselves separated from the nations of the world. The nature of the new covenant about which Jeremiah wrote (Jr 31:31-34) was that all nations would be included in a covenant with God through obedience to the gospel. The world is now the "land" for those who are in a covenant relationship with God. But there is now no special section of land for Christians to dwell, as Palestine was given to Israel only until the coming of the Messiah.

CHAPTER 16

16:1-6 Since she was an old woman at this time, Sarah had given up hope that the promise of an heir would come through her childbearing. She thus proposed to Abraham a custom of their time. The custom was that if a wife could not

bear children, then she could select and present to her husband a servant girl who would be a surrogate mother for an heir to the husband. Thus Sarah, with Abraham's consent, sought to work out the fulfillment of the promise through

their own ingenuity (See comments Rm 9:6-13; compare Gl 4:21-31). **Despise her mistress:** When one seeks to legally fulfill the promises of God, only social chaos results. Hagar became arrogant toward Sarah and Sarah became bitter and abusive toward Hagar. **Dealt harshly:** The same law that said a wife could give her servant to her husband, also said that the wife could not send the pregnant servant away. Sarah's plan, therefore, was to deal harshly with Hagar in order to encourage Hagar under her own volition to flee from her presence.

16:7-14 Submit: Hagar's problem was her arrogance, and thus her lack of submission to Sarah. There probably would have been no problem in the relationship between Sarah and Hagar if Hagar had not become arrogant when she found herself with a child from Abraham.

Return to your mistress: If she followed the command of the Lord to return, then from her son to be, Ishmael, there would come forth a great nation. **Wild man:** Ishmael would not fit into the peaceful social structure of Abraham's family. In fact, he would not socially adapt to the social structures of "every man." It is not said that he would be a social outcast, but because of his nature, he would produce a nomadic culture of people who would be indigenous to themselves in the deserts of the south.

16:15,17 To Hagar's credit, she was brave enough to return to the house of Abraham and submit to her mistress, Sarah. Abraham was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born, but he had no children when he was ninety-nine (17:1). Thus Ishmael was thirteen years old when the events of chapter 17 begin.

CHAPTER 17

17:1-8 Walk before Me: As examples for walking with God, Abraham could refer to the lives of Enoch (5:24) and Noah (6:9). **Blameless:** As in the past, Abraham was exhorted to be totally dedicated to *El Shaddai*, the Almighty God of heaven. **Fell on his face:** This would be the natural reaction from one who realized that God was directly addressing him. Worship is something that is not commanded, but the natural response of one who feels the strong presence of God. **Abraham:** In this renewal of the covenant, there would be a name change, for Abraham would be the father of not only many people, but many nations and kings. As the father of many

nations, therefore, he would no longer be called Abram, but Abraham. **Throughout their generations:** The time limitation for the covenant was until the generations of Israel ended, which they did in Christ (Gl 3:26-29). We thus have a definition of the "everlasting covenant." It was "everlasting" only until its fulfillment. Once it was fulfilled, then the covenant was terminated. In this case, the word "everlasting" does not mean "without end." It refers to the time of existence until the intended point of completion. **Everlasting possession:** Israel's possession of the land would exist only until it had fulfilled its purpose for preserving a segment of society (Israel) for

the coming of the Messiah. As with the completion of the covenant, so is the completion of Israel's right to the land. Since the old covenant has now given way to the new (Hb 8), then the promises connected with the old covenant have also given way to the promises of the new covenant.

17:9-14 The rite of circumcision was to be the token (sign) of the covenant. Those who were circumcised shared in this covenant. Even the servants of Abraham's house were to partake of the promises of the covenant, and thus they had to be circumcised. If one refused circumcision, then he was cut off from the promises of the covenant.

17:15-22 Sarah's earthly father had given her the name "Sarai," meaning, "princess." Now that she was soon to bring forth a son of the covenanted people, and thus be the mother of nations and kings, her heavenly Father changed the spelling of her name to Sarah. **Abraham ... laughed:** He questioned the possibility of childbirth simply because in human ability, such would be impossible for both he and Sarah since they were old. But this was the point. The promise was to be the work of God, not man (See comments Rm 9:6-13). It would have been impossible with man, but not with

God. In this event, therefore, both Abraham and Sarah would understand the grace of God as God worked directly in order to make it possible for Sarah to have a child. The child would be given through grace, not through the works of man. **Ishmael:** Because Abraham was thinking in human terms, he suggested that Ishmael would be the heir of the promise. **Isaac:** The name Isaac means "laughter," and thus Abraham would have a perpetual reminder of his doubt concerning the work of God to fulfill His promises. **Ishmael ... a great nation:** Though Abraham at first suggested that Ishmael be the heir of the promises, God reassured him that the promises would be fulfilled through his own son. Though Ishmael would not have a part in the covenant promises, he would be the father of twelve princes and a great nation.

17:23-27 Circumcised ... the very same day: When one realizes the command of God, there is no time for delay. It is a time to act, which Abraham did in circumcising everyone of his household. Every servant and those who had been bought with money were also circumcised. They were all circumcised, and thus brought into the covenant relationship that God established with Abraham.

CHAPTER 18

18:1-8 Bowed himself: Abraham immediately recognized that these were divine messengers. It is the Lord who appears to him. So in true middle eastern hospitality, Abraham washed their feet and prepared a feast.

18:9-15 There was something unique about one of the messengers, for in verse 13 he was designated as Lord (*Yahweh*). Both Abraham and Sarah sensed that they were in the presence of the Lord. **Where is Sarah:** It was the

custom of the day, and for security reasons, that the women did not show themselves to the visitors. Since it was the work of the host to provide the food, it was not the man's custom to eat with the visitors. ***Sarah laughed:*** As her husband in the previous encounter with the Lord in chapter 17, Sarah laughed on the basis that she was thinking in human terms of the impossibility of old women bearing children. But with God, nothing is impossible. When men come to the point of human impossibility, God's grace is manifested (Rm 9:6-13).

18:16-19 Now that the Lord had fulfilled the first reason for His appearance to Abraham—to reaffirm that he would have a son—it was now time to accomplish the second reason for coming, to deliver Lot from the cities that He was about to destroy. Because He had chosen Abraham and his descendants from the people of the world in order to bring the Messiah into the world, the Lord revealed the destruction of the cities to Abraham. Abraham's posterity would be righteous because he and his family conformed to the standards of God's will. Because Abraham was the father of this faith, he earned the right to the knowledge of what the Lord was about to do. The destruction of the cities of the plain also became an illustration of what God would do in the end to all those who would rebel against His will (See 2 Pt 2:6; Jd 7). The "in time" judgment of God on the cities of the plain illustrates what God will do at the end of time. When the world becomes unbearable for

the dwelling of the righteous, as Sodom had become for Lot, then we assume that the world has fulfilled the purpose for its existence to produce candidates for eternal dwelling.

18:20,21 It was not that the Lord through His omniscience did not know of the moral condition of the city. The very fact that He showed up for its destruction manifested that He already knew of the wickedness of the people. It was that the "in time" gravity of their judgment was to be immediate destruction that He came with a personal visit. Both Abraham and Lot recognized the presence of the Lord in the three visitors. But because of their total degradation into sin, the residents of Sodom and Gomorrah were blinded by their own sin to perceive the presence of the Lord.

18:22-33 Abraham reasoned from his lack of knowledge of the true moral condition of Sodom and Gomorrah. He assumed that there were at least ten righteous souls in the cities. And he assumed that the Lord would not destroy the innocent ten for the sake of punishing the ungodly. Since He would have spared the cities for the sake of ten, then we must assume that Lot's family was fewer than ten, for Abraham gave up pleading after the Lord agreed that He would not destroy the cities for the sake of ten. Thus the power of ten righteous people can stay the destructive hand of God. God will spare the unrighteous for the sake of the righteous. But when the unrighteous no longer provide a safe dwelling for the righteous, then God brings judgment.

CHAPTER 19

19:1-3 Angels: Two of the visitors are now referred to as angels. As was the custom, Lot was in the evening at the gate of the city. Through Lot's persistence, the men were taken into his house, though the men originally intended to stay in the streets to "see" the wickedness of the city. It was only after Lot strongly urged them that they finally came into his house for protection. Lot assumed that they did not know the evil of the city, and thus he knew that they would be abused in the streets since they were strangers. Sodom and Gomorrah were not only immoral, but they were cities of crime and violence.

19:4-11 This was truly a morally anarchistic society. Both young and old surrounded the house of Lot. The young had been taught the moral degradation of the fathers, and thus there was no hope for moral regeneration. **Relations with them:** The plea of the bestial residents was to engage in homosexual relations with the strangers. And thus for human posterity, Sodomy is defined as those who would engage themselves in all sorts of illicit sexual promiscuity. **I have two daughters:** We would assume by now that Lot realized that his visitors were from God, and thus the offer of his daughters was the least evil since having the messengers of God violated in his company would reap eternal consequences. Though Lot resided in the city, he was still considered an immigrant by the residents. Their scorn of his suggestion is based on their low regard for immigrants

who would make themselves a judge of their behavior. **Break the door:** Things were at this time out of Lot's control, and thus it was time for Deity to intervene. Blindness of the wicked caused confusion, and so the pronouncement of judgment was confirmed upon the city.

19:12-22 This was no time for argument, and thus, Lot obeyed the voice of the angels. **Sons-in-law:** Lot's pleas were rejected by those who had been caught up in the wickedness of the city. So after pleading with his relatives throughout the night, the angels commanded Lot to take only his wife and two daughters and flee as fast as possible from Sodom. But Lot still did not realize the urgency of the matter, for the angels had to drag him forcefully from the city. **Escape to the mountain:** A tremendous destructive force was about to be unleashed on the cities of the plain. The force was going to be so violent that Lot and his family were told to flee even to the mountains. When a society digresses to the moral lows that are characteristic with Sodom and Gomorrah, it is time to take one's family and flee. If one does not, then even his own family will fall victim to the culture of wickedness that has engulfed the society. It is better to live in the mountains than in the wickedness of Sodom. **This city:** Zoar was a small village. Fearing that some evil might befall him in the mountains, Lot requested that he take his family to this insignificant place of refuge. And for this reason, the residents of Zoar should be

grateful that they were spared the impending destruction because of the presence of a man on whom God had mercy. In this destruction, not only were Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed, but also other cities of the valley of Siddim including Zeboim and Admah (10:19 14:2,8; Dt 29:23; Hs 11:8).

19:23-26 Fire from the Lord: We do not question the fact that God can do this same thing in the future (See comments 2 Pt 3:10-13). This judgment of fire is certainly a small illustration of the power of God to destroy those who persist in their wickedness (See 2 Th 1:6-9). **His wife looked back:** There may be more to this than his wife taking a last look over her shoulder to home, friends and sons-in-law. It may be that she contemplated returning to Sodom, and subsequently, did turn to go back. Whatever the case, it was enough to reap the judgment of God that was poured out on the wicked cities. God placed a memorial before all who would afterward venture to the area and wonder at the pillar of salt that stood as a reminder to all concerning the fierce destruction of the Lord upon those who would live rebellious lives. We assume that the pillar was of salt in order to be weathered away in time as the memory of the cities of the plain would if it were not for these inspired words of Moses.

19:27-29 From Mamre where Abraham resided, to Sodom and Gomorrah, was a great distance. Abraham witnessed the smoke rise from the cities, not knowing if Lot had been delivered from the destruction. **Sent Lot out:** It was for the

sake of Abraham that Lot was delivered from the destruction.

19:30-35 It seems that Lot may have passed up Zoar, deciding that it was better to dwell in the mountains with his two daughters than in the wickedness of the village. He came to his senses that even Zoar was plagued with wickedness, and thus with the remainder of his family, he went to the mountains for the sake of his daughters. **We will lie with him:** The daughters were not unaffected by the wickedness of Sodom. Here they commit incest with their father for the sake of preserving their father's posterity. We must not assume that their sin was right for the sake of the good they wanted to accomplish. It could be that the daughters believed that they alone escaped, and thus there would be no male to carry on the lineage of their father. Lot was a victim of their scheme in that he was drunk when the incest took place. The two daughters had devised the scheme without discussion with their father, for surely he would have objected. So in his senseless state of mind, both daughters went in to their father, and both conceived from the seed of Lot.

19:36-38 The narrative of the actions of the daughters of Lot is recorded for the historical posterity of Israel. From the birth of Moab came the Moabites, and from the birth of Benammi came the Ammonites. Both nations were thus considered close relatives to the Israelites since Lot was the nephew of Abraham. Many years later when Naomi took men from the Moabites as husbands for Orpah and Ruth, Orpah and Ruth did not marry men

outside the lineage of the Terah family (See Rt 1:1-5).

CHAPTER 20

20:1-7 *She is my sister:* It seems that Abraham was always apprehensive when journeying into the land of pagan powers. Since such environments were filled with immorality of every sort, we would not question his fears. As with the Pharaoh of Egypt in 12:14-20, so again here he asks Sarah, his half sister, to state that she is only his sister. It was a half truth, but still a deception. ***God came to Abimelech:*** God came to Abimelech in this case, not to Abraham. Abimelech had done the deed in ignorance, saying that he and his nation were righteous. Through some providential manner God kept Abimelech from touching Sarah, or else he would have reaped the judgment of God. ***Prophet:*** Abraham was a prophet in that God in these times spoke through the fathers of extended families in order to reveal His will (Hb 1:1).

20:8-13 Abraham was a migrant in the land of strangers, both in Canaan and in the land of Abimelech. The customs

of his homeland were different in marriage, for he had married one of his father's daughters through another wife other than his mother. Knowing that he was in pagan territory as a sojourner, he had agreed with Sarah that wherever they went, Sarah would resort to saying that she was his sister, when actually she was only his stepsister.

20:14-18 To Abimelech's credit, he did what a righteous man would do. He restored Sarah to Abraham, as well as gave him a thousand pieces of silver. He then offered to Abraham the hospitality of dwelling anywhere in his land. Sarah was rebuked in the sense that Abimelech said that she should never be ashamed to state that Abraham was her husband. ***God healed Abimelech:*** Abimelech's wife and female servants could not have children during the time Sarah and Abraham were living the deception in his house. Thus Sarah and Abraham dwelt for some time in Abimelech's presence before the truth was known.

CHAPTER 21

21:1-7 *Sarah conceived:* In the conception of the child in the womb of Sarah, the fulfillment of God's promise was realized (See 17:15-17; 18:9-15). What was impossible for man, in that an old woman as Sarah, who was beyond the years of conceiving a child, was possible for God. Both Abraham and Sarah had laughed at the impossible, but through the birth, no one could ever conclude that God

was not at work in the conception and birth. It was truly a miracle of God that Isaac was born to continue the posterity of Abraham, and thus continue the seedline of the coming Savior of the world.

21:8-14 *Feast:* A Near East custom was to have a feast in celebration of a newborn child. The feast here took place when the child was weaned, which could have been up to three years after the birth.

It was Ishmael, not Hagar, who was the occasion for discord in the family. The older son Ishmael was mocking the small child Isaac. **Distressful:** The matter was now stressful to Abraham, though originally the conflict was between Sarah and Hagar (16:4-6). In this case, God stated that Abraham should listen to his wife, Sarah. He must reassure her that God also had great plans for Ishmael, for from Ishmael would come a great nation. The custom was that the son of the servant woman was to be cared for by the father of the child. He was to do this even though the true wife eventually gave birth to a son. In this case, however, the custom was set aside. It was to be set aside in order to make it perfectly clear that the posterity of Abraham would be continued through Isaac, not Ishmael.

21:15-21 When the water was gone, Hagar expected death to occur soon. It is not known if she knew of the promise that was made to Abraham that through Ishmael a great nation would come. If she were not knowledgeable of this information, at least on this occasion she was told by God that she and the child would not die, for a great nation would come from Ishmael. **Wilderness of Paran:** This was the area south of Canaan. One cannot miss the placement of buffeting nations that would develop around the land of Palestine. The two sons of Lot, Abraham's nephew, grew into the two nations of Moab and Ammon on the east side of the Jordan, east of Palestine. Now Ishmael would develop a buffer nation to the south of Canaan. It seems that God was providentially set-

ting up Canaan for the possession of Abraham's descendants that would take place about four hundred years from the time these events happened in Abraham's life. These nations would serve as buffer cultures from the truly pagan and polytheistic cultures that existed in Abraham's time and would continue to the day when Israel would enter Canaan. The buffer nations would all come from Abraham's seed, though they would not be of the seed through Isaac who would bring the Redeemer into the world. The concept of buffer nations around Israel who would settle in Palestine reveals the fact that God planned to reserve Israel as a nation as long as possible in the midst of an idolatrous world.

21:22-24 Swear to me: It seems that Abimelech still remembered how he had been previously deceived by Abraham (20:1-18). **Kindness:** Since he had been kind to Abraham in the past, he was asking the favor in return.

21:25-34 After Abraham swore to an agreement with Abimelech, he rebuked him for the behavior of his servants concerning a water well that had been stolen from Abraham's servants. An interesting principle of godly behavior is here illustrated. Abraham's servants had labored to dig the well. When it was finished, Abimelech's servants stole it from them. They stole the labor of others who dug the well without compensating them for it. It was thus an act of theft. **Made a covenant:** This is the first mention of covenants in the Old Testament that men commonly made with one another in ancient times. What transpired in the mak-

ing of a covenant was that the conditions for the covenant were first made by both parties (vs 23). Each party then swore by the covenant (vs 24). Then the sacrifice of animals was made in order to seal the covenant (vs 28). In the sacrifice of the animals, everyone involved in making the covenant ate of the sacrificed animals in a great feast. Such was the custom of Abraham's culture in making covenants. In this case, Abraham wanted to provide the animals for the sacrifice,

though it was customary that both parties provide the offering. **Beersheba:** The place where the covenant was made was named Beersheba, which meant either "well of swearing" or "well of seven." (The Hebrew word for "swear" and "seven" are the same.) This location would eventually become the southern extremity of the promised land that would be given to Abraham's descendants four hundred years from the time of this event.

CHAPTER 22

22:1,2 Tested: It is not that God here proceeds to tempt Abraham to sin, as is indicated by some translations. The Hebrew word *nissah* means to either test or put on trial. The purpose of what follows is a test of Abraham's faith. God does not tempt men to sin (Js 1:13).

22:3-8 Verse 2 indicates that it was possibly in the evening hours that God issued the command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, for Abraham had to rise in the morning. **Rose up early:** There was no debate with God from a loving father who made the command. There seems to have been no sleepless nights, for he rose up early in order to carry out the instructions of the command. We should not assume that Sarah was informed of the matter, for Abraham told no one what was transpiring. He simply prepared for the journey and for the sacrifice, and then headed for the God-appointed location. After three days of journey, Abraham saw at a distance, Moriah, the appointed place of the sacrifice. **We will come again:** Though Abraham had no previous expe-

rience of a bodily resurrection, he trusted that God would resurrect the body he would put to death. "*He concluded that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also figuratively received him back*" (Hb 11:19). **Where is the lamb:** It is at this time that Isaac is wondering concerning what animal they would use for the sacrifice. Abraham's response was, "God will provide." Abraham's faith, therefore, went to the limit of trusting that God in the final minute would provide the sacrifice. And so He did for us in Jesus.

22:9-12 One wonders what was going through the mind of Abraham as he built the altar upon which he would offer his son in obedience to God. One wonders what was going through the mind of Isaac as his father bound his hands and laid him upon the altar. There seems to have been no struggle, only a faithful son who relinquished to the faith of his father. **Took the knife:** We would suppose that both the father and son had now tensed up as Abraham raised his

hand to inflict the mortal blow. God allowed the test to go as far as an extended arm ready to thrust a knife into the heart of a firstborn son. And then the words came, *“Do not lay your hand upon the lad.”* **Your son, your only son:** It is in this statement that we now understand the reason for the command to offer the son. It was truly a test of Abraham's faith. He would become the father of faith to all those who would in the future put their faith in an only begotten Son. Our Father placed His Son on a cross and did not stay the hand of the executioner. As Moses inscribes these words for the posterity of Israel, he wanted all Israel throughout history never to forget this event. There was coming a time when an only Son would be sacrificed for the sins of all humanity. And a loving Father would allow it to happen.

22:13-19 *Because you have done*

this thing: In what he had done, Abraham was truly justified by works (Js 2:21). If he had not done the work, there would have been no evidence of his faith. He thus showed his faith by his works (Js 2:18). And because of his manifested faith he earned the right to be the father of many nations and the one through whom all nations of the world would be blessed. In the test we would suppose that Satan was rejoicing in the darkest chambers of hell because God was asking Abraham to terminate the seedline of Abraham. But such was not the case, for the promises remained. *“In your seed will all the nations of the earth be blessed”* (Gn 12:3).

22:20-24 Rebekah: This genealogy is given in order to bring Rebekah, the future wife of Isaac (ch 24), into the lineage of Abraham for the continuation of the seedline of Abraham.

CHAPTER 23

23:1-20 It was a noble gesture for the children of Heth to offer free of charge any burial place within their territory for Sarah's burial. But in his integrity, Abraham would not allow his respect for Sarah to be taken from him by the free offering of others. Abraham paid for what he needed. In his last show of

respect for his wife, he purchased the burial site. He thus took possession of the only part of the promised land that he would ever possess. So when a price was agreed upon, through the mediation of the children of Heth, a cave was purchased from Ephron, the son of Zohar. Abraham did not take handouts.

CHAPTER 24

24:1-9 It was a Near East custom that the father had the responsibility of finding a wife for his son. Since the daughters of the Canaanites did not share either Abraham's heritage or faith, he made Eliezer swear with an oath that he

would not find a woman among the Canaanites for Isaac. As was the custom, Eliezer had to place his hand under his master's thigh in making the oath. Abraham then sent his servant back to the land of his relatives.

24:10-28 Eliezer's task was guided by the hand of God. Abraham first said that he would be directed by an angel. With a great deal of Abraham's possessions, Eliezer went to the city of Nahor, a city named after Abraham's grandfather (11:22-26). He came to a well where women drew water for their livestock, and then prayed that God do the rest. It seems that the answer to the prayer was already in progress before he closed the prayer, for Rebekah, Abraham's niece, was already making her way to the well. The servant nature of Rebekah was then revealed in that she drew water for Eliezer and all his camels. When Eliezer heard that Rebekah was of the house of Nahor, his response was worship to the Lord for bringing to pass all that had transpired. He realized that his encounter with Rebekah was the work of God and not a mere coincidence. It is significant that Eliezer carried out this mission through prayer and perception of the work of God in answer to his prayers. He asked that God lead him to the right woman. Because of his faith in God that he would be led to the right person, he remained alert to the work of God in his life, and thus perceived that when the mission was accomplished it was the work of God.

24:29-51 Rebekah's report to the house of Laban created great excitement concerning the visitor. While overwhelming Eliezer with hospitality, Eliezer had to first inform everyone why he was sent. The reason Eliezer re-

hearsed the events concerning his encounter with Rebekah was to explain to everyone that what had just transpired was not his own invention. He identified his master, Abraham, from whom he came. Then he identified that the encounter with Rebekah could be nothing less than the work of God. The events that happened, therefore, were given as proof that Rebekah was truly the one who would become the wife of Isaac.

24:52-60 The events that were taking place were happening too fast for the relatives. Though they knew that it was the work of God, their sending away of Rebekah was very difficult. They thus requested that she stay ten more days. But Eliezer felt that since the Lord had prospered him this far in his quest for a wife for Isaac, he must not delay in returning to Abraham. The relatives, therefore, left the decision to Rebekah. We must admire this young woman for her bravery, for she immediately agreed to leave her family in order to go with a stranger to a new country to which she had never been. It takes brave women as this to carry out the mission of God.

24:61-67 Rebekah journeyed from the far north, the land of Nahor. At the same time, Isaac came from the far south, the Negev. It was only right that the two meet somewhere in the middle of the promised land with an encounter that would perpetuate the promises of God that the land be given to the descendants of Abraham through Isaac.

CHAPTER 25

25:1-6 God's promise to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations was continued through Keturah (17:4). Through Keturah he had six sons, seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Since Abraham was well over one hundred years old at the time he married Keturah, it is certain that as God aided him and Sarah to give birth to Isaac, He also aided in making it possible for his physically old body to implant his seed in Keturah's womb in order for her to give birth to six sons. **Zimran:** Probably settled in the interior of Arabia. **Jokshan:** Probably settled in southern Arabia. **Medan and Midia:** This is east of the Elamitic gulf in Arabia. **Ishbak:** Possibly in the land of the Edomites. **Shuah:** Possibly northern Idumea (Jb 2:11). **Sheba:** This is probably the father of the Sabeans (Jb 1:15; 6:19). **Deban:** This could be those mentioned in Jeremiah 25:23. **Asshurim:** A war-like tribe south of Hejas. **Letuahim:** Those of Hejas. **Leummim:** Tribal groups that extended to Babylon and the Mesopotamian valley. The other sons also produced tribal groups that encircled the land of Palestine. With the other descendants of Esau and Ishmael, Palestine was buffered with those who came from the seed of Abraham. All these descendants of Abraham produced nations in preparation for the giving of the land of Canaan to the children of Israel after their deliverance from Egyptian captivity about four hundred years from the time of Abraham.

25:7-11 Both Isaac and Ishmael joined in the burial of their father with Rebekah in the cave of Machpelah. **Gathered to his people:** This is a common phrase that is used in reference to the death of patriarchs (25:17; 35:29; 49:29; Nm 20:24; 27:13). The phrase possibly implied that the patriarch joined those of his people who had already died (Compare 15:15; Mt 22:31-33; Hb 11:13-16).

Generations Of Ishmael

(25:12-18)

Outline: (1) The sons of Ishmael (25:12-18)

THE SONS OF ISHMAEL

25:12-18 There were two reasons for recording this genealogy of Ishmael. First, God wanted the Israelites to know that He had fulfilled His promise to Hagar, that through Ishmael many nations would come (16:12; 21:18). Second, God wanted a written record available to Israel in order to remind her that the nations that came from Ishmael were the descendants of Isaac's half brother. By the time of the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian captivity, Palestine was encircled with the nations that had come from the seed of Abraham. Since the Israelites received preferential treatment by God, there arose a jealousy between Israel and the surrounding seed of Abraham through Hagar and Keturah, which jealousy has caused strife even to this day.

Generations Of Isaac

(25:19 - 35:29)

Outline: (1) Birth of Esau and Jacob (25:19-34), (2) Isaac's encounter with Abimelech (26:1-33), (3) The marriages of Esau (26:34,35), (4) Isaac's blessing of Jacob (27:1-40), (5) Jacob's flight from Esau (27:41 – 28:22), (6) Jacob's marriage to Leah and Rachel (29:1-30), (7) Birth of Jacob's sons (29:31 – 30:24), (8) Jacob's struggles with Laban (30:25-43), (9) Jacob's flight from Laban (31:1-42), (10) Jacob's covenant with Laban (31:43-55), (11) Jacob's reunion with Esau (32:1 – 33:20), (12) The rape of Dinah (34:1-31), (13) Birth of Benjamin and death of Rachel and Isaac (35:1-26)

BIRTH OF ESAU & JACOB

25:19-26 *Padan-aram:* This was the homeland of Rebekah north of Palestine that stretched to the upper Mesopotamian valley of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. ***She was barren:*** A comparison between verses 20 & 26 seem to indicate that she was barren for twenty years. ***Struggled together:*** From the womb, these two different nations that were within Rebekah would be different in character, and thus struggle with one another throughout their existence. It could be that the order of their birth was what later produced the tension between the two sons. ***Esau:*** The name means "hairy." ***Jacob:*** This name means "heel catcher." It was the custom of the day that the firstborn in-

herited the legal rights of the family. In this case, Esau was the firstborn son, and thus had the legal rights to the heritage of Isaac. But such was not to be in reference to the heritage through whom God would establish the nation of Israel.

25:27-34 The gentle Isaac loved his strong son, Esau, and the strong Rebekah loved the less aggressive son, Jacob. Opposites do attract. ***Rebekah loved Jacob:*** In the development of the nations that came from these two sons, it seems that the love of the mother won out over the preference of the father in determining the chosen people of Israel (See comments Rm 9:10-13). ***Perfect man:*** This Hebrew word that is translated "perfect" (*tam*) is also translated "perfect" in reference to Noah in Genesis 6:9. He was perfect, not in the sense of being sinless, but in his perfect focus on the one true and living God. ***Birthright:*** The fact that Esau did not appreciate the significance of the birthright that was due the firstborn is manifested in the fact that he counted the birthright of less value than a dish of porridge. He traded a nation with God's blessing for a bowl of soup. The Hebrew writer said he was a "profane" person for doing such. His attitude thus disqualified him from being the father of a nation through whom God would bring the Savior into the world.

CHAPTER 26

ISAAC'S ENCOUNTER WITH ABIMELECH

26:1-5 It seems that history is here repeating itself. Another famine forced

the Isaac clan to move to the coastal Mediterranean Sea area that was within the territory of Abimelech, the pagan king with whom Abraham had an uneasy relation-

ship. In order to reassure Isaac, God rehearsed the promise that he had made to Abraham, saying that his seed would be a blessing to all nations. The conditions of the covenant for these promises was illustrated by the life of Abraham, who obeyed all that God had instructed him. Abraham's obedience thus became an exhortation to Isaac that the condition for receiving the promises of the covenant was that he also must be obedient to all that he was instructed by God to do.

26:6-11 *She is my sister:* The customs of the culture from which Rebekah came would indeed make Rebekah the "sister" of Isaac. Any one of the family lineage of those from Ur of the Chaldees, of which Nahor, Terah and Abraham originated, would be considered close relatives. In this case, and according to our terminology today, Rebekah would have been Isaac's cousin. But according to their custom, a cousin would be considered a sister, and thus the marriage would be a sister/wife relationship. Abimelech understood nothing of this, and thus the claim that Rebekah was a sister, knowing that the pronouncement would be misunderstood, was a lie. *He was afraid:* The reason for the deception was that Isaac, a foreigner, felt very insecure in the land of the Philistines at this time. He knew that the pagan kings could claim any woman in the king's territory to be his wife. And if the woman was married, even the subjects of the pagan king could easily kill the husband in order to make the wife available for marriage.

26:12-16 *Go from us:* The wealth

of Isaac intimidated Abimelech. God had blessed Isaac so much that he had actually become stronger in wealth and manpower than Abimelech.

26:17-25 Isaac continued to dig wells. But the Philistines filled them in order to move him out of their territory. Instead of struggling over the matter, Isaac simply moved on. However, in naming the wells, he left a reminder for all to remember his digging of the wells and the strife that was caused by those who stole them from him. *Esek:* "Quarrel." *Sitnah:* "Feud." *Rehoboth:* "Room." *Do not fear:* Isaac and his family had now been forced to move to Beersheba (21:30,31) where God encouraged him to stay and fear no more.

26:26-33 Abimelech took the initiative to establish a covenant with Isaac, knowing that Isaac was much stronger than he. In the manner of establishing covenants, promises were made and a feast was given in order to celebrate the covenant.

THE MARRIAGES OF ESAU

26:34,35: The tragedy of a polygamous marriage with a pagan woman is here illustrated with the marriage of Esau to Judith and Bashemath. He rejected the moral standards of his fathers and followed after the low moral standards of the pagan nations. It seems that Esau had at this time drifted away from being righteous before God, for his family now brought grief to God's chosen Isaac and Rebekah. Marriage to an unbeliever is the signal that the believer is not taking his or her faith seriously.

CHAPTER 27

ISAAC'S BLESSING OF JACOB

27:1-4 In his sickness, Isaac believed that he was going to die, though he lived until he was 180 years old (35:28). His sickness here reminded him of the brevity of life, and thus he needed to take care of his inheritance matters. Since Esau was his firstborn, it was legally his right to receive a special blessing (inheritance) from the father of the family. But this blessing of Esau ignored the prophecy that the elder (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob) (25:23). It also ignored the fact that Esau had already sold his birthright to Jacob (25:29-34).

27:5-17 Rebekah remembered both the prophecy and the selling of the birthright. Because of the deceit that now took place in the family, it seems that an understanding of the plan of God through Jacob had broken down in the communication between Rebekah and Isaac, and surely between Jacob and Esau. So in the scheme of things in reference to the blessing, Rebekah took things into her own hands in order that the son she loved (Jacob) would receive the family blessing (25:28). We assume that in His foreknowledge God knew that all this would take place.

27:18-29 By the direction of his mother, the patriarch lied to his father in saying that he was the firstborn and that the Lord had helped him to quickly acquire the game. He also lied when he claimed to be Esau his brother. **Blessed:** Among the patriarchs, the blessing was a last will and testament. Though the

blessing was oral, it was as binding as a written contract. **Lord over:** Not only did Isaac give a blessing that Esau inherit his possession, he also blessed him that he be the lord over the heritage of Esau. In the blessing, Isaac stated that if one would rise up against the heritage of Jacob, he would be cursed.

27:30-40 **Isaac trembled exceedingly:** Once Isaac knew that he had been tricked, he knew that the blessing could not be passed to another. The pronouncement of the blessing was final, and Esau realized the same (Hb 12:17). Esau's demise took place some time before when he had already sold his birthright to Jacob (25:29-34; see Hb 12:15,16). **He took away my birthright:** This was not the case, for Esau sold the birthright for a bowl of soup. However, because he was of an unrepentant nature, he blamed his brother Jacob for his troubles. Unrepentant people never take ownership of their sin, concluding that the fault for their problems always lies with someone else. **Blessing ... for me:** The blessing for Esau was a prophecy of the behavior of the nation that would come from him. They would live by the sword. Esau was given the role of living in a servant position in relation to the heritage of his brother, but was given the right to cast off eventually the lordship of Jacob's heritage.

JACOB'S FLIGHT FROM ESAU

27:41-46 **Esau hated Jacob:** Esau's bitterness turned to hatred. His hatred then turned into a scheme to murder his

brother. This again was at a time when Rebekah's ingenuity came into play as she sought to save Jacob by devising a plan that he take a wife from their relatives in Haran, from the house of Laban her brother. Her strategy was to convince Isaac that Jacob should not, as Esau, take a wife from the daughters of Heth, which

daughters brought grief into the Isaac family. Isaac thus agreed with the plan, and Jacob was sent from the fury of his brother Esau. **Few days:** Though she believed the trip to Haran would be brief, little did Rebekah know that it would be about twenty years before Jacob would return.

CHAPTER 28

28:1-9 It seems that Isaac was not aware of the scheme of Rebekah to separate Jacob from Esau, since Esau planned to murder Jacob. Because of Isaac's blessing of Jacob on his departure, it was now believed by all that Jacob would be the one through whom the posterity of Abraham would be continued. **Esau ... took Mahalath:** Esau had a hard time pleasing his father. He did not understand that it was his behavior that was contrary to the behavior of godly men. His association with ungodly men and women made it impossible for him to live according to the faith of Isaac.

28:10-17 Jacob's trip to Haran would be almost 500 kilometers from Beersheba. The event of the night proved

to be miraculous in the sense that Jacob did not expect such to happen. **Ladder:** The symbolism is that a connection was made between heaven and earth. **Angels:** These were the messengers between man and God. The purpose of the event was to reassure Jacob that through him the promises made to Abraham would be continued (12:1-3).

28:18-22 Jacob responded in three ways to the vision. **Stone:** He set up the stone he used for a pillow and anointed it with oil to memorialize the location. **Bethel:** He changed the name from Luz to Bethel. **Vow:** He made a commitment to return to God a tenth of those blessings that would come his way by the blessing of God.

CHAPTER 29

JACOB'S MARRIAGE TO LEAH & RACHEL

29:1-8 **People of the east:** These were probably the people of the upper Mesopotamian region that included Haran. Jacob's first encounter with the people of the region was at a common well where the flocks were watered. Once everyone had arrived at the well, the stone was then rolled away for the

watering. When Rachel arrived, the stone could be moved away and the livestock could be watered.

29:9-14 Rachel was the cousin of Jacob. It seems that what took several people to do—roll the stone from the well's mouth—Jacob was motivated to do by himself in his response at seeing Rachel. **Kissed Rachel:** Jacob was an emotional person, and thus out of his ex-

citement, he kissed the one who would eventually become his wife. ***Her father's relative:*** Jacob identified himself as Rachel's cousin. Jacob was the nephew of Laban, and thus the term "brother" refers to him as a kinsman. Because Jacob was a kinsman to the family of Terah, there was a warm welcome for him in Laban's family. However, there seems to be less religious significance to this encounter than what happened when Eliezer came for Rebekah (See 24:32-49).

29:15-30 Wages: Jacob had evidently been working for Laban during the month that he was staying with him. He did not stay with Laban for free. He worked for his food and shelter (See comments At 20:34,35). ***What will your wages be:*** We could assume that Laban had noticed that Jacob was very interested in Rachel. Since she was the youngest, this placed him in an advantageous position when Jacob said he would work for seven years for her hand. ***Leah:*** It was the custom that the eldest first be married, and then the younger daughters. However, it was through the deceptive thinking of Laban that Leah would first be given to Jacob instead of Rachel. It was not until the morning after the wedding, however, that Jacob discovered the deception. ***We will give you this one also for the service that you will serve:*** Though Jacob was greatly irritated at the deception, he agreed to work another seven years for Rachel. After Leah was given her week with Jacob, Rachel was then given to him in advance of the seven years of work he was to do for her. Part

of the problem in this situation was with Jacob who did not inquire concerning the legalities of marriage in the land in which he was a stranger. He was culturally far removed from the homeland culture from which his grandfather Abraham had come. He could have prevented the misunderstanding on this occasion if he had first inquired concerning marriage legalities among the people with whom he dwelt. Laban, however, was short of honesty in the matter. He did, according to the laws of the land, marry off his eldest, and possibly unattractive daughter, plus gain another seven years of work from Jacob.

BIRTH OF JACOB'S SONS

29:31-35 Leah was unloved: This would certainly be a sad situation in which Laban had placed his daughter. Jacob did not hate her, as some translations have portrayed the meaning. Since his affection was first toward Rachel, Leah would certainly have developed a very low self-esteem as a wife and person. Because of her faith, however, Leah found comfort in the fact that the Lord had opened her womb for the bearing of children, while Rachel remained barren. The meanings of the names of the sons she bore possibly signified her feelings. ***Reuben:*** "Behold, a son." She was given the honor of bearing the firstborn. ***Sim-eon:*** The Lord "has heard." God answered her prayers for children. ***Levi:*** "Attachment." She felt bonded to Jacob. ***Judah:*** "Praise." She was grateful to God for being the one who would bear children, since the bearing of four sons

took place over a period of possibly four years. Rachel would have been barren during this time. The irony of the sons is that though Leah was unloved, from her

came Reuben, the firstborn. Levi would eventually give birth to the tribe of priests within the nation of Israel. Through Judah would come the Messiah.

CHAPTER 30

30:1-8 *Give me children:* Desperation is in this statement of Rachel. Jacob certainly could not make such happen, but he felt Rachel's frustration. Both agreed, therefore, to resort to the custom to which Abraham and Sarah resorted with Hagar (16:2). A handmaid, Bilhah, was thus brought forward in order that children be produced for Rachel through the handmaid. As a result of the union between Jacob and Bilhah, Dan ("judge") was born. Through Bilhah Rachel had legal claim to the children, and thus Bilhah bore another son, Naphtali ("wrestling").

30:9-13 The competition for children continued through Leah who also gave her handmaid, Zilpah, to Jacob. From Zilpah came Gad ("good fortune") and Asher ("happy").

30:14-21 *Mandrakes:* According to the superstitious beliefs of the time it was believed that the berries of this plant would induce fertility. Regardless of the mandrakes, Rachel remained barren, but Leah bore a fifth son, Issachar ("hire"). She also bore a sixth son whom she named Zebulun ("dwelling"). She then bore the only daughter of Jacob, Dinah ("judgment").

30:22-24 The superstitious belief in the mandrakes proved worthless in reference to making Rachel fruitful. However, after many years as Jacob's wife,

God listened to her pleas, and thus she finally bore a son, Joseph ("addition").

JACOB'S STRUGGLES WITH LABAN

30:25-36 *The Lord has blessed me:* Laban was certainly a selfish man. He had deceived Jacob in order to gain seven extra years of work out of him, and now he was asking Jacob to stay with him because he had been blessed by Jacob's presence. ***Name me your wages:*** It seems that Jacob is now given the opportunity to extract from Laban more than what Laban would be willing to give. So Jacob took the offer in order to gain the best animals from the flocks of Laban. ***My honesty will testify:*** Jacob wanted to cull out of Laban's flocks the speckled, spotted and brown sheep and the spotted and speckled goats, which animals were considered the inferior breed of the flocks. He would use these off-colored sheep and goats to develop his own flocks. By making this separation in the flocks it would later be easy to determine which animals belonged to Laban and which animals belonged to Jacob. However, the very day that Laban made the deal, he secretly culled out of his flocks the colored goats and sheep that Jacob had said he wanted. This was certainly a violation of the agreement, but manifested the devious nature of Laban

in his business dealings.

30:37-43 What Jacob seems to have done here appears on the surface to be a superstitious practice that would encourage the fertility of those animals which he had agreed to take. However, he later told his wives that the practice of selective breeding came by the instructions of God (31:10-12). What he was doing in the breeding process was limiting the

breeding with the males that had peculiar coloring. When the goats and sheep gave birth, he separated the peculiar colored ones in order that they alone be raised for breeding among themselves. He kept the spotted and speckled animals for his own and left the other animals for Laban's flock. The result of the breeding was that Jacob's livestock increased exceedingly.

CHAPTER 31

JACOB'S FLIGHT FROM LABAN

31:1-16 Jacob's success generated jealousy in the heart of Laban's sons, and where there is jealousy, malicious actions usually follow. Jealousy always leaves a trail of heartache. Jacob thus sensed that it was time to leave. **Return to the land:** In order to reassure Jacob, the Lord first instructed Jacob to return to the house of Isaac and Rebekah. God then promised Jacob that He would be with him. **Changed my wages:** It seems that the pagan culture of Laban and his sons justified the dishonest dealings by which he treated Jacob. In the eyes of Laban and his sons, therefore, what they did was not dishonest, but the manner by which one would deal in business with others. But according to the ethics and morals of God, his actions were sinful. So Jacob explained to Rachel and Leah that it was time to depart from the presence of such influence. **The flock of your father:** Jacob reassured Rachel and Leah that the work was of God, not his own invention. And thus it was God's will that Jacob prosper for a greater purpose, that purpose being that Jacob's possessions in-

crease for his return to Palestine. Both Rachel and Leah agreed that their father had been unfair in his dealings with Jacob, so they agreed with Jacob to leave secretly. **Foreigners ... money:** It seems that both Rachel and Leah harbored some resentment toward their father since he had treated them as foreigners and used their inheritance for his own means. Because their own relationship with their father was now strained, they agreed with Jacob that it was now time to migrate as a family. The lesson from Laban's life is that he lost his daughters, his grandchildren, and the greater part of his possessions. He also lost his best shepherd, Jacob, because of his unrighteous dealings with Jacob. He thus suffered the curse of God because he dealt unrighteously with the one whom God had chosen and blessed to continue the promises made to Abraham.

31:17-24 A plan was devised by which Jacob would take his wives, children and possessions and flee from the presence of Laban. **The idols:** These were essentially the deeds of ownership of the property of Laban. Whoever pos-

essed them had legal rights to the inheritance of Laban. ***Dream by night:*** If Laban's intentions were to harm Jacob, surely this would have been a nightmare. In order to strike fear in the heart of Laban, God warned him not even to speak harshly with the heir of Abraham and the one through whose seedline the promises would be fulfilled.

31:25-36 In this suspense filled encounter, Laban had no sense of conscience about his own unrighteous behavior. He accused Jacob of stealing away his family, of being discourteous in fleeing, of ignoring his supposed generosity, and of being denied the right to send his daughters away with a feast. The irony of his speech is in the fact that he was guilty of all that he accused Jacob. But such is the character of ungodly behavior and ethics that are molded by ungodly values. ***Stolen my gods:*** Laban even accused Jacob of being a thief in reference to the idols that Rachel had concealed in her goods. Since Jacob was unaware of this, such an accusation was false. ***Jacob answered:*** In Jacob's answer to Laban's accusations, he did not defend himself. When slandered by those who are slanderous in their character, defense is often futile since the slander comes from an evil heart. Evil hearts usually never correctly interpret the response of those they slander simply because their thinking is twisted by jealous motives. ***Manner of women:*** Rachel had hidden the idols in the saddle of her camel. When it came time to search all that belonged to her, she excused herself from the search, saying that she was in her

monthly period of womanhood, and thus should not be moved from her saddle.

31:36-42 ***Jacob was angry:*** Now the man of God was stirred with righteous indignation. The accusation that he was a thief greatly angered Jacob. As a result, he proceeded to upbraid Laban for his unrighteous behavior throughout their relationship with one another, which upbraiding Laban rightly deserved.

JACOB'S COVENANT WITH LABAN

31:43-55 ***Let us make a covenant:***

It seems that Jacob's rebuke of Laban produced some repentance in the heart of the accuser. It was true that all that Jacob had was the result of his stay with Laban. But Jacob was not Laban's slave, and thus he had justly worked according to Laban's conditions to produce all that he had. Everything that Jacob possessed was legally his. Now Laban initiated the making of a covenant. The normal procedure for establishing covenants between men was carried out in that a memorial was erected out of stone, oaths were made, and a feast was conducted by eating the meat of a sacrificed animal. Laban named the heap of stones Jegar-sahadutha, after the Aramaic language, but Jacob named it Galeed ("the heap of witness") after the Hebrew language. It was also called Mizpah which means "watchtower." The monument was an agreement that Laban would not increase his territory south of the monument and Jacob would not increase his north of the monument in order that they not infringe on one another's pasture

lands. **Mistreat my daughters:** Laban's final request was that Jacob treat his daughters well and that he take no more wives. It seems that Laban realized the unfortunate consequences that came with

polygamous marriages, and thus, he exhorted Jacob not to increase his problems by taking other wives, especially wives from the Canaanites in whose land he would dwell.

CHAPTER 32

JACOB'S REUNION WITH ESAU

32:1-8 After the encounter with Laban, Jacob turned his face toward another great struggle with a relative, the struggle to deal with his brother Esau who many years before had sought to murder him. The anxiety that Jacob felt concerning his brother's attempt to murder him helps us understand why it was easy for Jacob to stay so long with the house of Laban. He was in no hurry, therefore, to return to his father and mother simply because he believed throughout the years that Esau was going to do him harm. **Mahanaim:** The name means "two camps." There was the camp of his family, and there was the invisible camp of the angels who surrounded him for his protection. He was thus to have no fear because God was near with His protecting angels. **Find favor:** Jacob knew that he must now give account to his brother for the sins of the past. His offering here was a means by which to seek forgiveness and to show a heart of repentance. **Greatly afraid:** Because of his guilt that he felt over the things he had done in the past to Esau, he interpreted the band of 400 men to be an army to inflict punishment on him for the sins of the past.

32:9-12 It seems that Jacob was at this time taking a stand against what he considered an impending danger. He did

not flee, knowing that with his flocks, wives and children he could not outrun 400 men. He thus, with a humble heart, placed his trust in God who had commissioned him to return to his family. God's response was the renewal of the promise that He would make his descendants as the sand of the sea.

32:13-21 Jacob made every effort to appease what he thought was the wrath of his brother. **Appease:** This is the first use of this word in the Bible. It is a word used in reference to the one who is seeking the forgiveness of another in order that a relationship be established between two parties. In this case, Jacob, the one who was seeking forgiveness, sought to appease the supposed wrath of his brother in order that a relationship once gain be established between the two. In our relationship with God, we, through our obedience, seek to appease the judgment of God upon our sins.

32:22-32 **A man wrestled with him:** The man here is identified as God who wrestled with Jacob's soul. **The socket of his thigh:** During the wrestling, Jacob dislocated his hip. **Bless me:** Jacob continued the wrestling, realizing that he needed a blessing from the One with whom he wrestled. **Israel:** Jacob would not let the man go. As a result of the wrestling match, Jacob's name was

changed to Israel, meaning, “the one who strives with God,” or “the one who prevails with God.” **Peniel:** As we, Jacob did not know exactly with whom or what he was struggling. He did know that in some way it was a messenger from God, and thus the wrestling was with God. He named the place “Peniel,” or “Penuel.” Peniel means “face-to-face with God.” **Sinew of the hip:** In case Jacob might have thought the wrestling was only a

dream, his physical impairment in the hip was a reminder that the struggle was real. From the day of this struggle the descendants of Israel refrained from eating the sciatic muscle of animals. **Now as he passed over:** The point is that before one can face his enemies, he must first face God and reconcile his differences with God. One must struggle in repentance, and thus be on the side of God before he can be victorious over his enemies.

CHAPTER 33

33:1-11 Regardless of the wrestling with God and the subsequent blessing, Jacob still harbored anxiety concerning the imminent encounter with his brother. He thus separated his household into groups, making ready for the clash. **Esau ... embraced him:** One can only imagine what was going through Jacob's mind as his brother ran toward him and embraced him. The tremendous release of tension resulted in both men weeping before one another. **This company:** Reference is to the offering of the flocks that Jacob would give to Esau in order to gain his favor. He sought to buy Esau's favor. But Esau said he had enough of his own. It was like trying to buy the grace of God. God has enough. It is not for sale. It is free. **As one sees the face of God:** This is surely one of the greatest illustrations of the grace of God. In

his former years, Jacob had dealt deceitfully with his brother Esau. He had caught Esau in a time of weakness in order to secure his birthright. He had deceived Isaac in order to receive the blessing of the firstborn. Filled with guilt and repentance, he had to face his brother. He expected nothing short of justice and retribution. But instead, as God would do, Esau ran toward Jacob with embraces and tears and forgiveness (See Lk 15:11-32). It was as Jacob said, like seeing the face of God who is a God of love and grace.

33:12-20 Since Jacob, his family and flocks, could not keep up with the pace of Esau's men, he asked to be allowed to part from Esau in order to go on to Succoth and then to Shechem (See 12:6). It was here that he set up an altar, Elelohe-Israel, meaning, “God, the God of Israel.”

CHAPTER 34

THE RAPE OF DINAH

34:1-7 Dinah's error was in her action to go out and mingle among pagan people, and thus put herself in a social

environment wherein she would be raped. Shechem, the son of a local prince, took advantage of the teenager, and thus set the stage for more evil to come. **Get**

me this young girl: Because of his arrogant request to his father, Hamor, it is apparent that Shechem did not have any moral judgment. When Jacob heard the news of the rape, he said nothing until the family of sons could be brought together in a family council.

34:8-12 The defilement of Dinah, and Shechem's desire to marry her called for a meeting of the two families. Though the meeting was polite, the brothers of Dinah were seething for revenge. For his son, Hamor argued that Jacob and his sons would be given the privilege of intermarriage with his family, plus trade in the land and ownership of property. This offer indicated that at this time Jacob and his family were still traveling guests in the land, though they had been in the area for at least ten years.

34:13-24 *You be circumcised:* A scheme had already been devised by the brothers. The brothers had no intention of allowing the marriage to transpire. The plan was to have the men of Hamor in a physically incapacitated condition after their circumcision in order to strike a mortal blow. *Will not their ... substance ... be ours:* Hamor and Shechem's argument to the men of the city seemed to indicate that they were attempting to graft the family of Jacob into the culture of the land. The proposition may have been a good economic plan, but more than economics were involved. If Jacob and his family compromised their religious beliefs by making a covenant with the pagans of the land of Canaan, then the plan of God to keep Israel distinct from the pagan beliefs and behavior of the

Canaanites would be doomed before the seedline heritage of Abraham could be developed into the nation of Israel. This was thus a temptation of Satan through Shechem and Hamor to destroy the posterity of Abraham.

34:25-31 *They slew all the males:* The plan was a genocide against the house of Hamor. The front men were Simeon and Levi and the follow-up was carried out by the other brothers. Jacob knew nothing of the plan, and thus when he heard of what happened, he was greatly grieved. His fear now was that the other families of the Canaanites and Perizzites would form a league and come against his family. But the sons justified their actions, not on a religious basis, but on the basis of the honor of their sister, that she should not be dealt with as a harlot. The error of the two brothers, Simeon and Levi, was that they used violence to correct a problem, assuming that another evil would correct an evil. In their own posterity in the years to come, they would receive from their father, Jacob, their own punishment (See 49:5-7). As interpreters of what transpired among the descendants of Abraham, we must not conclude that God approves of any sin in the lives of individuals or group of individuals. He only uses the sin of people to turn the work of Satan against himself. The posterity of the faith of Abraham would eventually lead to the unveiling of the mystery of salvation through the Jews (Ep 3:3-5). God would turn the sin of people around in order to carry out this eventual end. But we must not conclude that God was approving the sin in the

lives of Abraham's descendants. He used His eternal plan.
the sin of the descendants to carry out

CHAPTER 35

BIRTH OF BENJAMIN & DEATH OF RACHEL & JACOB

35:1-7 Bethel: It was here that God first appeared to Jacob on his flight from Esau. **Put away the foreign gods:** It seems that the influence of the Canaanites was creeping into the behavior of the children of Israel. Jacob thus took a stand for his family to cleanse themselves from all influences of the pagan religions around them. The symbols of idolatry were buried by Jacob under an oak that was by Shechem. **Terror of God:** Instead of the surrounding cities forming an alliance to attack Jacob and his family, they were filled with the fear of God. We must assume that these idolatrous peoples assumed that the God of Jacob was strong in allowing two men, Simeon and Levi, to overpower all the men of Hamor. Word spread fast among the people of Palestine, and thus, Jacob's fears of their attack were unfounded. Even in their superstitious beliefs, the Canaanites came to the correct conclusion that God was protecting His people.

35:8-15 God again reaffirmed the promises that were made to Abraham. From Abraham came many nations and kings (17:5,6). And now from Jacob also many nations and kings would come. God also renewed the land promise. **Bethel:** The name means "house of God." Jacob established a memorial of the place where God made these promises. The monument was a witness to

Jacob's faith that he trusted in the promises of God, and thus walked according to the covenant of the promises.

35:16-20 Before her death in childbirth, Rachel named the son Benoni ("son of my sorrow"). But Jacob later named the son Benjamin ("son of the right hand"). Rachel was subsequently buried on the way to Bethlehem where many centuries later One would be born who would sit at the right hand of God (See Ep 1:20-23; Hb 8:1). It could have been that the change of the name was by the inspiration of God in preparation for the future. Whatever the case, the Son of Man was born in Bethlehem (Mc 5:2) and now sits at the right hand of God.

35:21-26 Reuben ... lay with Bilhah: This sin of incest against a wife of Jacob was a flagrant violation of the immediate household of Jacob. It seems that this eldest son of Jacob was showing contempt for the patriarchal authority of Jacob. Though he did nothing about this at the time, Jacob later excluded Reuben as a leader in the covenant (49:3,4). **The sons of Jacob were:** This list of Jacob's sons is according to their mothers (Leah and Rachel), with the sons of the handmaids (Bilhah and Zilpah) placed second. The list mentions that they were born in Padan-aram, without mentioning Benjamin who was born in Canaan. **Jacob came to Isaac:** Many years before these events, Isaac thought he was going to die (27:1,2). But he lived until

Jacob returned from the house of Laban to be reunited with Esau, and thus, the two brothers were able to bury their father, Isaac, in peace.

CHAPTER 36

Generations Of Esau

(36:1 - 37:1)

Outline: (1) The descendants of Esau (36:1 – 43)

THE DESCENDANTS OF ESAU

36:1-8 Wives: It was common in Near East culture for people to change their names. In this context it is possible that Bashemath in 26:34 is the same as Adah (vs 2), and that Mahalath in 28:9 is the same as Bashemath (vs 3). Judith of 26:34 is probably different from Aholibamah in this text (vs 2). Judith, the daughter of Beerli (26:34), was either childless or died. Aholibamah possibly took her place. Her father, Anah, and grandfather, Zibeon, are listed with the Seirites (vs 20). Other texts, however, mention her as the “daughter of Anah, son of Zibeon,” which is probably the correct reading. **Hivite:** This would better be understood as Horite (vs 20). **Esau is Edom:** Twice in the text this statement is made, thus emphasizing the fact that in genealogy, God seems to want Israel to understand that the descendants of Esau became the Edomites, which people fought against the children of Israel when they came out of Egyptian captivity. Edom was judged for the persecution of this brother, and thus, God eventually destroyed the nation of Edom from history.

36:9-14 This text carries on with the descendants of Esau through Eliphaz (vs 12). From his second wife he had

Amalek, the descendants of whom became the enemies of the children of Israel when they immediately came out of Egyptian captivity on their way to Mt. Sinai.

36:15-19 Chiefs: Some translations have used the word “duke” to translate the Hebrew word *alluf*. The word “prince” has also been used. However, the fathers mentioned here established extended families, each family being led by a patriarch or chief.

36:20-30 The Horites were already in the land before the arrival of Esau. What seems to have happened is that the descendants of Esau intermarried with the Horites. By the time this information is written by Moses after the Egyptian exodus, it seems that this intermarriage had already been completed, and thus the Edomites were a mixture of the descendants from Esau with the Horites.

36:31-43 Before any king reigned there over the children of Israel: This statement has been used to affirm that the Pentateuch was not written by Moses, but by someone who lived during the days there were kings in Israel, which would have been after the kingship of Saul, the first king of Israel. The argument assumes, however, that there were no kings reigning in Edom at the time of Moses. There is no archaeological evidence to prove there were no kings in Edom at the time of Moses. Consider also the fact that there would have been no reason for

God to tarry in writing the Pentateuch books until after the reign of Saul, whose reign was in the 11th century B.C. It is not reasonable to conclude that God would leave Israel without the Pentateuch from the time of the exodus from Egypt (1445 B.C.) to the time after the kings were established in Israel, the time of Saul and following. The fact that verse 31 mentions the “kings of Israel” would be explained in the fact that through inspiration Moses inscribed these words. God knew that Israel would eventually want a king, and thus He gave instructions for the reign of this king. By inspiration of Moses, God here mentions the kings that would come before they existed.

Generations Of Jacob

(37:1 - 50:26)

Outline: (1) Joseph and his brothers (37:1-28), (2) Joseph goes to Egypt (37:29-36), (3) Relationship between Judah and Tamar (38:1-30), (4) Joseph and Potiphar's wife (39:1-23), (5) Joseph in prison (40:1-23), (6) Pharaoh's dreams (41:1-57), (7) First visit of Joseph's brothers (42:1-38), (8) Second visit of Joseph's brothers (43:1-34), (9) Benjamin brought to Joseph (44:1-34), (10) Joseph reveals himself (45:1-15), (11) Jacob's move to Egypt (45:16 - 46:27), (12) Jacob's family settles in Goshen (46:28 - 47:12), (13) Joseph's administration of Egypt (47:13-26), (14) Last days of Jacob (47:27 - 50:14), (15) Last years of Joseph (50:15-26)

CHAPTER 37

JOSEPH & HIS BROTHERS

37:1-4 The book of Genesis now turns from the life of Jacob to focus on the circumstances surrounding the life of Joseph. The important lesson of Joseph's life is that God can use the unrighteous behavior of those who surround a righteous man in order to work out something for the good of His cause. In the case of Joseph we must understand the greater picture, that God was working in order to take the descendants of Jacob into Egypt where He would build them into a great nation of people. *Israel loved Joseph more:* The beginning of the problems in Joseph's life started with a father who favored one child over another. Jacob had suffered the same in the family of his father Isaac (25:28), and now he is doing the same with Joseph in ref-

erence to the other sons. In Joseph's case, the problem seems to have been exemplified when Jacob gave him the special gift of the coat of many colors, or ornaments. Another lesson is in the fact that if Jacob would have spent as much time with all his sons as he did with Joseph, they too would have had the faith of Joseph that kept him close to God throughout his ordeals.

37:5-8 The first dream of Joseph was correctly understood by the brothers, that they would give obeisance to Joseph. The truth of the dream was that he would eventually reign over them.

37:9-11 The second dream reemphasized the meaning of the first dream, though portrayed by the sun, moon and stars of heaven. The first dream generated hate in the heart of the brothers, and

this second dream stirred a rebuke even from Jacob and envy in the hearts of the brothers. God knew that the brothers would have hateful reactions to the dreams, and thus, we must conclude that God was setting the stage for what He knew the brothers would do in selling Joseph to Midianite traders who would take him to Egypt. The lesson is that God also works through unfortunate circumstances in order to accomplish His will in our lives.

37:12-17 *Shechem*: It was in this city that Simeon and Levi slew all the men of the city. Jacob is somewhat worried about his sons being in this area, and thus sent Joseph to see how they were faring. By the time of Joseph's arrival, however, they had moved on to Dothan.

37:18-22 *They conspired*: The conspiracy of all the brothers, except for the eldest, Reuben, was murder. With this act of aggression, they believed they would terminate the possible fulfillment of Joseph's dreams, that he would reign over them and they would be obedient to his commands. However, Reuben sought to save Joseph, and thus talked the other brothers into casting Joseph into a pit, or cistern, from where he would later secretly restore him to his father. Unfortunately, the other brothers sold Joseph when Reuben was not present.

37:23-28 *Ishmaelites*: These trav-

eling merchants were taking their products on to Egypt, which products were used for the embalming work and medicine of Egypt. ***Midianites*:** This was another name for the Ishmaelites, who were descendants of Abraham through Ishmael who lived in most of the area of Arabia (See also Jg 8:22,24). ***Twenty pieces of silver*:** These were pieces of metal that were weighed in a balance (Compare Lv 27:3-7). The common price of a slave during the time of Moses was thirty pieces of silver (See Ex 21:32; Zc 11:12, compare Mt 26:15).

JOSEPH GOES TO EGYPT

37:29-36 Reuben was grieved concerning the sale of Joseph. The deceit of the other brothers was continued by a lie to the father. ***Sackcloth*:** This was a rough goat's hair material that was worn in times of grief or repentance. ***His father wept*:** The brothers witnessed the tremendous impact of the loss of Joseph on the father. They sought to comfort him, but failed to do the one thing that would have comforted the father, that is, tell the truth. If they told the truth, they possibly thought that their father would send them to Egypt to reclaim Joseph. Whatever the case, their hearts were hardened both against Joseph and in their relationship with their father.

CHAPTER 38

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JUDAH & TAMAR

38:1-11 This interlude of genealogical information happened at the time of

Joseph's venture into Egypt. It is given here by Moses in order to list an important link in the family genealogy of Israel through Judah. Another reason for

the inclusion of this affair was to give Israel a history of how immoral and idolatrous fornication brought immorality and idolatry into Israel. This event begins by Judah going out among the Canaanites, where he married a Canaanite woman. **Go in to your brother's wife:** The levirate marriage law was widely practiced in Near East cultures. The purpose of the practice was to preserve the heritage of a brother who died without sons to carry on his posterity. If an older brother died, then it was the duty of the next living brother to go into the widow, the dead brother's wife, and bear children by the widow for the sake of continuing the posterity of the dead brother. The children of the dead brother's wife would have all legal rights to the deceased's property, and subsequently carry on the family lineage of the dead brother (See Lv 21:9; Dt 22:5-24; see Ruth 1:11-13; 4:5-11). In this case, Onan refused to carry out the levirate responsibility, and thus suffered the judgment of God.

38:12-23 It seems that Tamar sought for Shelah to be given to her as a husband in order to carry on the heritage of Er. But she was denied Shelah. So she schemed a plan to entice Judah into bearing children through her for the sake of Er. **Signet and cord:** Both of these carried the name or insignia of its owner. Because her purpose for enticing Judah to lie with her was not for money, but to continue the heritage of Er, Tamar was not interested in the payment of a com-

mon harlot, but in evidence that would later positively identify Judah as the one with whom she would conceive. **Harlot:** The word here is different than the word translated "harlot" in verses 15 & 24 where the word means a professional street harlot. Here reference is to one who gives herself to sexual rites in honor of a pagan god.

38:24-26 Let her be burned: Judah was infuriated that Tamar had violated his instructions. It seems that he was furious with her in that she had also played the part of a harlot, thus mocking the family in such actions. **Burned:** See Lv 20:10. **More righteous than I:** As it turned out, the problem of Shelah continuing the heritage of Er was not with Tamar, but with Judah. Though Tamar had given herself to the affair with Judah in order to accomplish a legally justified objective, she still was not innocent in the matter. However, Judah had to bear the greater responsibility because he had refused to carry out his legal duty in providing Shelah for Tamar. Both had behaved wrongly, but Judah had to bear the greater responsibility.

38:27-30 Perez: The name means "to make a breach" or "to forge through." The purpose for the record of the incident between Judah and Tamar is revealed in the fact that through Perez came Boaz, and then David, and eventually the Christ (1 Ch 2:3-15; Mt 1:3-16; Lk 3:23-33).

CHAPTER 39

JOSEPH & POTIPHAR'S WIFE

39:1-6 The promise of God to Abraham that he would be a blessing to others was here continued through Joseph. Potiphar's house was greatly blessed because of the presence of Joseph. Throughout the following story of Joseph in Egypt, the work of God in the life of the righteous is clearly evident. Because of his great faith, Joseph remained positive in life, and thus did not mourn over his predicament or environment. He did not blame God for his situation. There is no self-pity in his character. ***Left all ... in Joseph's hand:*** When those of the world witness the honesty and integrity of the righteous, they will entrust the righteous with great responsibility. Advancement in the world comes through the integrity of righteous behavior, not deceptive schemes.

39:7-18 ***Lie with me:*** Potiphar's wife was without morals and marital commitment to her husband. She did not care for the consequences of her wicked actions, and thus propositioned a righteous man for her own satisfaction. ***Left his garment:*** Not only was the woman immoral, but she was a liar. The garment thus became the evidence that Joseph was in her presence, but was not evidence that he had made any advances toward her.

39:19,20 ***Put him in prison:*** The fact that Joseph was not immediately killed for the supposed immoral advance on Potiphar's wife seems to indicate that Potiphar was not completely convinced

that his wife was telling the truth. Instead of death, therefore, Joseph was sent to prison. Since Potiphar was a royal officer, Joseph was put in a special prison that was a better environment than the prisons for the common slaves.

39:21-23 ***Committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners:*** This is the second time God providentially moved Joseph into a situation where he could be prepared for the eventual supervision of all Egypt under Pharaoh, and thus the fulfillment of the dreams of his youth. He first had the opportunity to prepare for leadership in Potiphar's house. He is now given the opportunity to learn even while in prison. He evidently manifested in his behavior great leadership abilities, which abilities were used by those he encountered. It could have been that it was this leadership that Joseph's brothers saw in him even at the age of seventeen, leadership abilities that intimidated them, for they knew the dreams of Joseph that they would eventually give obeisance to him. They knew that if Joseph continued to grow in his leadership abilities, they would indeed eventually bow down to him. The lesson is that leadership ability often intimidates those who would presume to be leaders. Those who are thus insecure or arrogant, often reject the leadership ability that is manifested in great leaders. One should not be jealous of those to whom God has given abilities to lead.

CHAPTER 40

JOSEPH IN PRISON

40:1-23 These dreams were sent from God in order to give Joseph an opportunity to be delivered out of prison and seated before the Pharaoh of Egypt. They were dreams given in order to fulfill Joseph's previous prophetic dreams. Joseph's deliverance did not immediately happen because the cupbearer, in his excitement in being delivered from prison, forgot Joseph. However, Joseph was eventually delivered from prison after two years. Each dream came to pass according to the interpretation that was given by Joseph, and thus the stage was set for Joseph to be released from prison once God again made the opportunity for the interpretation of a dream, which

dream would eventually come to Pharaoh. We would assume that God was delaying the rise of Joseph to prominent power in Egypt until certain events transpired in Palestine with Jacob and his sons. We must always keep in mind in our interpretation of these events that God was working everything together for the purpose of bringing the household of Jacob into Egypt, and keeping the household there for four hundred years until He would take them back to the land of Palestine in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. All that He did was for the purpose of preserving the seedline of Abraham in order to bring the Messiah and Savior into the world.

CHAPTER 41

PHARAOH'S DREAMS

41:1-8 Pharaoh's dreams of the cows and ears (a reference to some type of grain) could have been interpreted by Pharaoh's advisors if they were inspired. However, even in their simplicity the interpretation of the dreams was too great for Pharaoh's presumptuous men. To their credit, however, it was obvious that they knew the interpretation was generally not favorable. Mixed with seven years of plenty, there would be seven years of famine. The Egyptians considered Pharaoh to be the sun god, but here he could not even interpret his own dreams.

41:9-32 *God will give Pharaoh an answer:* Two years after his release from

prison, the butler remembered the one who gave interpretations from God. Both of Pharaoh's dreams referred to the future condition of the crops and condition of Egypt. There would be seven years of abundant harvest and seven years of famine. What would occur would be a drought many kilometers to the south of Egypt toward the source of the Nile River. The farms of Egypt were watered by the overflowing waters of the Nile, the longest river in the world. There was always little rain in Egypt, and thus all crops in Egypt depended on the overflowing waters of the Nile. When a drought occurred in the regions where the Nile received its water from countless tributaries to the south, then the river would

not overflow by the time it reached Egyptian soil.

41:33-43 With the interpretation came also advice from Joseph. This would be only natural from one who had the skills of leadership in organizing people. Joseph organized people in Potiphar's house and in prison. Pharaoh knew that the interpretation was true. He thus took off his ring of authority and gave it to Joseph. This gave Joseph the authority to act on behalf of Pharaoh in organizing the harvest of the good years in preparation for the coming famine years. **The second chariot:** In order to inaugurate Joseph to his position before the people, a public display of Joseph's position was indicated through the fact that he was publicly paraded before the people in the chariot behind Pharaoh's. Thus Pharaoh made Joseph the ruler over all Egypt. The stage was now set for the fulfillment of Joseph's own dreams that he had when he was a boy in Palestine, that his brothers would bow before him.

41:44-57 Since Joseph was seventeen when he entered Egypt, and at the time of this event he was thirty, he had been in Egypt for thirteen years, at least two of which he was in prison. **Asenath:** Through his wife, Asenath, he had two sons. Manasseh ("forgetting") was so named in that by this time Joseph had forgotten the sad events that brought him to Egypt. Ephraim ("double fruitful-

ness") was so named because God had exalted Joseph to a greater position than what he could have had if he had stayed with his family in Palestine. The name could also have been given in view of the fact that Joseph was placed in a position where he was able to save many lives through his skillful planning during the time of the Egyptian famine. **On:** This was the city of the sun god that was later called Heliopolis. **Famine was over all ... the earth:** These years of famine did not only strike the nation of Egypt, but every nation in the region of Egypt. In view of what happened with the family of Jacob, we would conclude that God is the one who caused the famine. God meant to take the children of Israel into Egypt for four hundred years while the wickedness of the Canaanites increased. Since there was already some inner marriage with the Canaanites going on in the lives of Jacob's family, God's plan was to extract the family from Canaan in order to preserve the posterity of Abraham. In Egypt, they would be separated from the Egyptians in the land of Goshen, and thus the purity of Abraham's seed through Jacob would be guarded from the evil influence of the immoral and idolatrous culture of Canaan. Since it was the work of God to get the household of Jacob to Egypt, we would conclude that God works through many events in order to carry out His purpose.

CHAPTER 42

FIRST VISIT OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS 42:1-5 *There is grain in Egypt:*

From what Jacob said in the statement of verse 1, it seems that he thought his sons should have come up with this idea.

It may be that the sons still remembered that Egypt was where they sent their brother Joseph many years before, and thus they wanted to stay away from the land. They are no doubt still suffering from guilt for what they did with Joseph and their lie to their father concerning Joseph's supposed death.

42:6-24 Bowed themselves down before him: And so the dream of the young man Joseph was fulfilled. **Spoke roughly ... spies:** Because of the character of Joseph, it is hard to think that he was seeking vengeance by his conduct. Because he had to make an effort to speak roughly indicates that he was not this type of person. It seems from his first encounter with his brothers that it was his intent to see his father. He could have made the accusation that they were spies in order to keep one of them in custody to force their return to Egypt. **His blood is now required of us:** The brothers had for years lived with the guilt of what they had done to their brother Joseph. Reuben now states that it was time to reap the whirlwind of justice. He reminded them

that they had imprisoned Joseph, and now they were imprisoned in the country to which they had sold their brother.

Simeon: We do not know exactly why Simeon was chosen other than the fact that it may have been Simeon who had years before instigated the plan to have Joseph sold to Midianite traders.

42:25-34 Joseph may have had their money placed in their sacks of grain as a benevolent gesture, but the brothers interpreted it as an act of God's judgment on them. Since Simeon was held as a hostage in an Egyptian prison, they had to return to Egypt. But they did not know how to deal with the returned money.

42:35-38 You have bereaved me: In Jacob's response to all that had transpired concerning their trip to Egypt, he accused them for being responsible for the loss of Joseph and the imprisonment of Simeon. And now they were threatening the life of Benjamin. Though Reuben had offered his two sons as hostages, Jacob's distrust of his sons still would not allow him to release Benjamin into their care.

CHAPTER 43

SECOND VISIT OF JOSEPH'S BROTHERS

43:1-14 The brothers did not immediately return to Egypt after their first return to Jacob, their father. So Simeon had to languish in prison until the need for more food demanded that they return to Egypt. **Judah:** It is now Judah who makes a plea to Jacob that Benjamin must be sent with them to Egypt. After much persuasion, Jacob finally agrees to allow

Benjamin to go. The famine must have been so severe that Jacob knew that it was now a life and death situation in Palestine. **Best fruits:** They had a water supply from wells by which they could produce a garden of fruits. But if they did not secure the grain from Egypt, surely all their livestock would perish, and eventually, they themselves would be in danger of starvation.

43:15-25 Joseph sensed that the at-

titudes of the brothers had changed, for certainly they came with contrite attitudes in reference to what they had to do. ***These men will dine with me:*** The brothers were certainly mystified by the actions of Joseph. Because they could not comprehend what was happening, they were afraid. Once the brothers explained that their money had been placed in their sacks on the previous journey, the steward of Joseph reassured them that he had placed the money in the sacks. This surely confounded the anxious brothers as they waited in anticipation for a meeting with Joseph at noon.

43:26-34 *Is this your younger brother:* Being informed that this was Benjamin from Rachel his own mother, Joseph was overcome with emotion. He hurried out from the presence of the brothers in order to weep for joy in fi-

nally seeing his brother after so many years. ***Abomination to the Egyptians:*** The Egyptians were a proud people. In this setting, therefore, the Hebrews, who were considered a lower class of people because they were shepherds, were not allowed to sit with Egyptians. It is also believed that as shepherds, the Hebrews ate some animals that the Egyptians considered sacred. ***The men looked in astonishment at one another:*** What else could we expect from such an encounter. Their minds are filled with questions and confusion, for they did not understand their presence at this meal with someone who had previously treated them so harshly. ***Benjamin's serving:*** In order to show preference, Joseph gave more to his full brother, Benjamin, the son of his mother, Rachel (See 1 Sm 1:5).

CHAPTER 44

BENJAMIN BROUGHT TO JOSEPH

44:1-13 *The sack of the youngest:*

It seems that Joseph is working a scheme that is based on his understanding of how his brothers behaved many years before, that they were dishonest in their dealings. And thus his plan is to force them to bring their father to him in Egypt. Feelings for revenge would be unlikely since Joseph had long forgotten his Palestinian family by the time of the birth of his children. He realized that if he had not been sold into Egypt he would not be where he was. Of course, it is probable that Joseph was teaching his brothers a lesson that would change their lives forever.

They had delayed in returning to Egypt after the first visit, thus giving the impression that they had abandoned Simeon in prison. But he also concluded that his father was unwilling to come to Egypt. With this maneuver, therefore, Joseph would be trying to teach them a lesson, as well as bring his father into Egypt. In all things that Joseph did with his brothers throughout these events, we must not forget that Joseph now believed that it was God who wanted him to be sold into Egypt.

44:14-17 The brothers were certainly devastated by the discovery of the cup in Benjamin's sack. In their bitter agony, they offered themselves as slaves.

Joseph extended mercy by saying that they could leave, but Benjamin had to stay. **God has found out:** God always knows our sins. We lead ourselves to believe that at the time we reap the consequences of our sins it is only then that He discovers our sin.

44:18-34 Judah came near: It was now time for confession and pleading for mercy. Judah related what transpired in getting the father to allow Benjamin to come to Egypt. His pleas to the Egyptian ruler who now had control over their destinies was that the father of Benjamin would surely die if the young son did not

return to his father. Judah then confessed to Joseph the whole truth concerning their sin in reference to the other son of Jacob with which they had dealt wickedly twenty-two years before. Judah thus made an emotional appeal to the heart of one he thought was an unmerciful Egyptian ruler. Judah continued his appeal to the point of offering himself as a slave to the one he had many years before sold into slavery. He was willing to give himself into slavery for the sake of another. He had indeed changed throughout the years, and thus stood before Joseph a repentant man.

CHAPTER 45

JOSEPH REVEALS HIMSELF

45:1-15 Joseph said: At this time Joseph spoke to them in their Canaanite language, which in itself would have shocked the brothers (See 43:23). **I am Joseph:** The drama of the play was over. Joseph was convinced by Judah's plea that his brothers were no longer the heartless men who had sold him into slavery. They were changed men who had a deep concern for one another and their father. Through great tears of compassion, therefore, he revealed himself to his astonished brothers who were shocked beyond speech. They were stunned in silence. The scene brings tears to our eyes as the brother who had been gone for over twenty years had now revealed himself to his family. **God sent me before you to preserve life:** And now we know how and why God turned Satan's work through the brothers to sell Joseph into His purpose of preserving the posterity

of Israel. It is apparent that at some point in the past God revealed to Joseph what his mission in Egypt was. **God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant:** It seems that God had revealed to Joseph the purpose for which Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been called out of the nations of the world (12:1-3). A remnant of humanity was to be preserved for a reason yet to be revealed centuries later, which reason was still a mystery. But at least Joseph knew that his presence in Egypt was not just the result of the heartless actions of his brothers who sold him many years before (50:20). God was taking the work of Satan and turning it against him in order to bring about a greater purpose, the preservation of the nation of Israel that would be born in the land of Egypt. **He kissed all his brothers:** The drama of the reconciliation remains a lesson for all. The brothers had to first face their sin of the past

(42:21,22). They had to endure the punishment of their guilt (42:28). Their inability to deal with their own guilt had to move them to plead for mercy (44:27-32). And finally, they had to manifest in their lives that they were truly sorry for the sin of selling their brother into slavery (44:33,34).

JACOB'S MOVE TO EGYPT

45:16-28 Because Pharaoh esteemed Joseph greatly, he issued a royal dictate that everything possible be done in order to bring Joseph's family into the best of the land of Egypt. Since the Egyptians considered anyone from the Canaanite area to be an abomination, this was certainly a benevolent gesture on the part of

the Pharaoh (See 43:32). Wagons of goods were provided in order that the entire family of Jacob be brought from Palestine into the land of Goshen, the most fertile pasture land of Egypt. ***Jacob their father revived:*** The initial news of Joseph was at first shocking and unbelievable for Jacob. But once the truth started to be comprehended, he revived. In the report, the repentant brothers revealed the truth of their sin which they had committed many years before when they sold their brother into slavery. But once it was understood that the work was of God, repentance and forgiveness changed this family forever, and thus laid the foundation upon which a nation could be built.

CHAPTER 46

46:1-7 *Make of you a great nation:*

In this revelation to Jacob everyone was reassured that the years of drama that were brought on by the selling of Joseph, Joseph's promotion in Egypt, and the famine were all in the plan of God to preserve a remnant and build a nation. After over 400 years they would leave Egypt (15:13,14).

46:8-27 See 36:1-43. The genealogy of this section lists the descendants of Jacob according to mothers. The number of descendants is listed according to children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. The total of sixty-six omits Jacob, Joseph and his two sons, thus the final total is seventy people. The wives are not included in the total, but one daughter and granddaughter are included. In Acts 7:14 Stephen mentions that sev-

enty-five people of Jacob's family moved to Egypt. Stephen refers to the Greek Septuagint which included the five grandsons of Joseph, thus making the seventy-five people from whom the entire nation of Israel would be born in the land of Egypt.

JACOB'S FAMILY SETTLES IN GOSHEN

46:28-34 *Now let me die:* Jacob had now realized the fulfillment of God's promise that from him a great nation would be born. While in Canaan he surely saw that the influence of the Canaanite immorality and idolatry would soon creep into his descendants, and thus they would vanish from history as they assimilated into the cultures around them. But in Egypt, things would be different. ***Land of Goshen:*** Judah now assumed

his role of leadership by taking the lead to resettle the house of Jacob in Egypt. Joseph led in determining the place of settlement. Goshen was the delta region of the Nile River. It was the best pasture lands of the entire nation (See 45:10; 47:11,12). **Shepherds:** In the sight of Egyptians, shepherds were of the low class of people, and thus were an abomi-

nation to the Egyptians. The Egyptians had shepherds, but they were not allowed into the heart of Egypt. They took care of Pharaoh's livestock in the area of Goshen. Jacob's family was given the eastern border area of Goshen that would border with the Canaanite territory of Palestine.

CHAPTER 47

47:1-12 Joseph was able to allow Jacob and his family to enter Egypt, but permission to reside in the land had to come from Pharaoh. Joseph thus followed customary procedures in order to receive the permission of Pharaoh for the permanent dwelling of his father's household in Egypt. **If you know of any capable men:** This is Pharaoh's invitation that the Israelites become a part of the Egyptian economy. Since the Egyptians considered shepherds a lower class of society, and Goshen the land for pastures, then there would be no threat to the Egyptian economy or culture from the Semitic shepherds of Israel. **How old are you:** It is interesting that Pharaoh asked this question of Jacob. Since Joseph had said that he was as "a father to Pharaoh," we might assume that Pharaoh was younger than Joseph. But the age of Jacob certainly intrigued Pharaoh. All of Pharaoh's fathers died according to the "three score and ten" the common life span of men. But here in his presence was a man who was 130 years old, a young age in reference to Jacob's forefathers. This certainly puzzled the young Pharaoh who was considered a god-king

of the land of Egypt. **Land of Rameses:** In this region, in the northeastern part of Goshen, a city would eventually be built that would be named after Ramses II (See Ex 1:11).

JOSEPH'S ADMINISTRATION OF EGYPT

47:13-26 The seven years of abundance established the economic foundation upon which Pharaoh possessed the land of Egypt. Previous to the famine, there existed in the economy the right of private land ownership, with the priests being granted land directly from Pharaoh. As the famine progressed, however, private land was turned over to Pharaoh in order to purchase grain, and thus, the former landowners became tenants of the land. The famine, therefore, brought the house of Pharaoh into control of all the land of Egypt. Throughout the famine, it is significant to note that the people did not expect Pharaoh to just hand out free the grain for the survival of the people. The Egyptian people had enough integrity to sell what they had in order to buy the grain. There was no dependency thinking in the minds of the people that

the “government” should take care of them. For this reason, the Egyptian culture was one of the great cultures of the ancient world. **One fifth:** This twenty percent tax is less than many countries today. It set a new law of tax that provided for the function of Pharaoh’s house, as well as provide an opportunity for people to function in a free-market economy. What they earned from their free-market work was theirs, except for the twenty percent tax that was to be paid to the government of Pharaoh. The taxes to Pharaoh supported a government that

protected them in the land.

LAST DAYS OF JACOB

47:27-31 God blessed Jacob with seventeen more years of life in order that he might see the great growth of his household as God began to fulfill His promise that from him would come a great nation. **I will lie with my fathers:** Jacob now made Joseph promise that he would be buried in the land that was promised to his fathers (28:13-15; 35:11,12). Once the promise was made by Joseph, then Jacob could die in peace.

CHAPTER 48

48:1-22 *Your two sons ... are mine:* God had appeared to Jacob in Bethel (Luz, 28:10-22). Now the covenant promises were to be continued throughout his posterity. In order to do this, Jacob had to first claim the two sons of Joseph as part of this posterity. In doing so, he elevated the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, to the level of his eleven other sons. **Redeemed me:** This is the first time that the word “redeem” is used in the Bible. Its meaning is seated in the custom laws where kinsmen were obligated to buy back the mortgaged property of a relative who had lost it through unfortunate circumstances. The word also signifies that a relative was obligated to buy back a relative who had given himself as a slave in order to repay his debt (See Lv 25:25-55). Jacob had seen the work of God to redeem him from his own mischief in deceiving both Esau for his birthright and Isaac for the blessing that

was due Esau. Because he had been brought to Egypt in the company of his son, Joseph, Jacob had witnessed the redemptive work of God. **His younger brother will be greater:** In his blindness, Jacob knew by the direction of God that Manasseh was the firstborn. However, the descendants of Ephraim would be greater. In blessing Ephraim, Jacob made Ephraim the representative of the covenant. **Land of your fathers:** Though Jacob was only a sojourner in the land of Canaan, he trusted in God’s promises to the extent that now he had claimed it as the land of the fathers, Abraham and Isaac, those to whom the land was promised. **One portion above your brothers:** Joseph’s portion of the promised land would be located near Shechem, which land Jacob had taken in a battle with the Amorites. This conflict is not recorded in Scripture. It was here that Jacob was buried (Jn 4:5,6; see Ja 24:32).

CHAPTER 49

49:1-28 These final prophetic utterances of Jacob were given in poetic Hebrew parallelisms that are seated in rich metaphors. Their fulfillment would come about only in the descendants of each particular son. **Reuben:** Though the first-born of Jacob, Reuben should have retained his legal leadership of the sons. However, through an act of immoral incest he defiled his father's bed (35:22). He had forfeited his honored position through an act of immorality. **Simeon and Levi:** As a team, they had massacred the men of Shechem (34:25-29). Neither of these two sons would have a designated tribal territory, but would be scattered among the other tribes (Ja 19:1-9; 21:1-42). **Judah:** Because he had shown his leadership maturity, Judah would eventually be the dominant military and political leader of the nation of Israel. **Until Shiloh comes:** Royalty would come from Judah (See 1 Sm 16:1-13; 2 Sm 2:1-4; 5:1-5). It is not clear what the specific meaning of the word "Shiloh" is, either "rest" or "rest giver," but both Christian and Jewish scholars have affirmed that this verse is a prophetic reference to the Messiah. Christians have affirmed that the prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, but Jews are still awaiting the coming of their messiah. **Zebulun:** The descendants of Zebulun

would be sea merchants. **Issachar:** Since the descendants of Issachar did not drive out the Canaanites from Palestine when Israel returned to the land, they eventually became the slaves of the Canaanites (Jg 1:30). **Dan:** Though the name Dan means "judge," his descendants would be known for their treachery and deception against Israel's enemies. **Gad:** Though raiders would overcome these descendants, they would eventually be victorious. **Naphtali:** In his freedom, the posterity of Naphtali would be poetic in their communication with others. **Joseph:** Though he at first suffered tragedy in his life, God would continue to care for this son of Jacob, and thus, he would be greatly blessed because of his suffering. **Benjamin:** As a ravenous wolf, the descendants of Benjamin were known for their swordsmen and left-handed stone slingers (Jg 20:15,16). As illustrated with King Saul, a Benjaminite, they would defeat their enemies (See 1 Sm 14:46).

49:29-33 *Cave ... in the field of Machpelah:* Jacob's desire was to be buried in the cave that Abraham purchased (23:1-20). The desire to be buried with his ancestors in Canaan was meant to remind his sons that Canaan would eventually be their land as a possession.

CHAPTER 50

50:1-14 Jacob was embalmed for burial after the tradition of the Egyptians. Embalming originated in Egypt. The vi-

tal organs were removed from the body, but were buried in a jar with the body. The cavity of the body was filled with

preserving salt. Myrrh and spices were added for scent. The body was tightly wrapped with layers of cloth and encased as a mummy in a stone or wooden coffin, depending on either the wealth or royalty of the person. As an embalmed mummy, Jacob's body was thus preserved for the long journey to the cave in the field of Machpelah near Shechem. Permission was granted from Pharaoh for Joseph to take his father for burial. The uniqueness of the event was magnified in the fact that a delegation of Egyptians also went on this journey with the family. During the seven days of mourning, the Canaanites also witnessed the mourning of the Egyptians, for they viewed the burial delegation as an Egyptian burial.

LAST YEARS OF JOSEPH

50:15-21 The guilt of what Joseph's brothers had done to him in selling him into slavery still lingered in their minds. Such is the nature of sin. Though forgiveness can be granted, one's own guilt will stay with him until his grave. Sin builds a library of guilt in the mind of the transgressor. ***Fell down before his face:*** See 37:5-8. ***Am I in God's place:*** The brothers' motives were evil when

they sold Joseph into slavery. They still could not feel that God could use their evil for the purpose of His good. As the moral leadership of those in power sets the standard by which the people determine their morality, at least at the end of their lives, the sons of Jacob set a high standard of a contrite heart for their posterity to follow.

50:22-26 ***God will surely ... bring you out of this land:*** In reminding his brothers that Egypt was not their homeland, but the promised land of Canaan, he asked them for an oath that his body also be carried out of Egypt to the land of their fathers. Joseph was thus embalmed and placed in a coffin, in preparation for the time over 400 years later when the great nation of Israel would walk for freedom from Egyptian captivity. In his statement, Joseph was renewing the promise that was made to Abraham, that God would give them a land for a possession of their own. However, they had to be providentially kept in the land of Goshen until the wickedness of the Canaanites was full, and thus the land was ready to be cleansed of the wickedness of the Canaanites.